

J.F.H.
Crisle

AN

ESSAY ON ENGLISH POETRY;

WITH

NOTICES OF THE BRITISH POETS.

BY

THOMAS CAMPBELL,

AUTHOR OF 'THE PLEASURES OF HOPE,' &C.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following reprint of Mr. Campbell's Essay on English Poetry, and his Prefatory Notices of the principal English Poets, has been made to supply a want which many have felt of a pocket edition of the work *without* the Specimens. The Essay and Notices are complete in themselves, and the real value of the work may be said to consist, not in the selection of extracts, which, from a desire not to give the same specimens as Ellis or Headley had given, is often defective and unjust, but in the beautiful discriminating character of the criticisms, and the wider feeling which the work evinces for poetry in its enlarged sense than is to be found in any other body of criticism in the English language. No work indeed of any importance on our literary history has been written since they were published without commendatory references to them. They have been appealed to by Lord Byron, applaudingly quoted by Sir Walter Scott, and frequently cited and referred to by Mr. Hallam.

For the notes distinguished throughout by brackets the present Editor is responsible, to whom, with Mr. Campbell's express approval, the revision of the second edition was intrusted. Various inaccuracies of the former editions have been removed in this—some silently, for it would have burdened the book with useless matter to have retained them in the text, and pointed them out in a note—while others, entangled in a thought, have been allowed to stand, but not without notes to stop the perpetuity of the error. Mr. Campbell is not properly chargeable with many of the inaccuracies in dates and mere minutiae discovered since he wrote; some may be laid to the excursive nature of his task, and others to the imperfect information of the period.

The first edition of Mr. Campbell's work appeared in 1819, in 7 vols. 8vo., and the second in 1841, in one thick volume 8vo.

PETER CUNNINGHAM.

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ESSAY ON ENGLISH POETRY.

PART I.

THE influence of the Norman Conquest upon the language of England was like that of a great inundation, which at first buries the face of the landscape under its waters, but which, at last subsiding, leaves behind it the elements of new beauty and fertility. Its first effect was to degrade the Anglo-Saxon tongue to the exclusive use of the inferior orders; and by the transference of estates, ecclesiastical benefices, and civil dignities, to Norman possessors, to give the French language, which had begun to prevail at court from the time of Edward the Confessor, a more complete predominance among the higher classes of society. The native gentry of England were either driven into exile, or depressed into a state of dependence on their conqueror which habituated them to speak his language. On the other hand, we received from the Normans the first germs of romantic poetry; and our language was ultimately indebted to them for a wealth and compass of expression which it probably would not have otherwise possessed.

The Anglo-Saxon, however, was not lost, though it was superseded by French, and disappeared as the language of superior life and of public business. It is found written in prose at the end of Stephen's reign, nearly a century after the Conquest; and the 'Saxon Chronicle,' which thus exhibits it,* contains even a

* [As the Saxon Chronicle relates the death of Stephen, it must have been written after that event.—Ellis, *Early Eng. Poets*, vol. i. p. 60, and vol. iii. p. 404, ed. 1801.

What is commonly called the 'Saxon Chronicle' is continued to the death of Stephen, in 1154, and in the same language, though with some loss of its purity. Besides the neglect of several grammatical rules, French words now and then obtrude themselves, but not very frequently, in the latter pages of this Chronicle.—Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 59.]

fragment of verse, professed to have been composed by an individual who had seen William the Conqueror. To fix upon any precise time when the national speech can be said to have ceased to be Saxon, and begun to be English, is pronounced by Dr. Johnson to be impossible.* It is undoubtedly difficult, if it be possible, from the gradually progressive nature of language, as well as from the doubt, with regard to dates, which hangs over the small number of specimens of the early tongue which we possess. Mr. Ellis fixes upon a period of about forty years, preceding the accession of Henry III., from 1180 to 1216, during which he conceives modern English to have been formed.† The opinions of Mr. Ellis, which are always delivered with candour, and almost always founded on intelligent views, are not to be lightly treated; and I hope I shall not appear to be either captious or inconsiderate in disputing them. But it seems to me that he rather arbitrarily defines the number of years which he supposes to have elapsed in the formation of our language, when he assigns forty years for that formation. He afterwards speaks of the vulgar English having *suddenly* superseded the pure and legitimate Saxon.‡ Now, if the supposed period could be fixed with any degree of accuracy to thirty or forty years, one might waive the question whether a transmutation occupying so much

* *Introduction to Johnson's Dictionary.* [Nor can it be expected, from the nature of things gradually changing, that any time can be assigned when Saxon may be said to cease, and the English to commence. . . . Total and sudden transformations of a language seldom happen.]

About the year 1150 the Saxon began to take a form in which the beginning of the present English may be plainly discovered: this change seems not to have been the effect of the Norman Conquest, for very few French words are found to have been introduced in the first hundred years after it; the language must therefore have been altered by causes like those which, notwithstanding the care of writers and societies instituted to obviate them, are even now daily making innovations in every living language.—Johnson.]

† [It is only justice to Mr. Ellis to give his date correctly, 1185. "We may fairly infer," Mr. Ellis writes, "that the Saxon language and literature began to be mixed with the Norman about 1185; and that in 1216 the change may be considered as complete."]

‡ "The most striking peculiarity in the establishment of our vulgar English is, that it seems to have very suddenly superseded the pure and legitimate Saxon, from which its elements were principally derived, instead of becoming its successor, as generally has been supposed, by a slow and imperceptible process."—Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Poetry*, vol. iii. p. 404. *Conclusion.*

time could, with propriety or otherwise, be called a sudden one; but when we find that there are no sufficient data for fixing its boundaries even to fifty years, the idea of a sudden transition in the language becomes inadmissible.

The mixture of our literature and language with the Norman, or, in other words, the formation of English, commenced, according to Mr. Ellis, in 1180 [5]. At that period he calculates that Layamon, the first translator from French into the native tongue, finished his version of Wace's 'Brut.' This translation, however, he pronounces to be still unmixed, though barbarous Saxon.* It is certainly not very easy to conceive how the sudden and distinct formation of English can be said to have commenced with unmixed Saxon; but Mr. Ellis possibly meant the period of Layamon's work to be the date *after*, and not *at*, which the change may be understood to have begun. Yet, while he pronounces Layamon's language unmixed Saxon, he considers it to be such a sort of Saxon as required but the substitution of a few French for Saxon words to become English.† Nothing more, in Mr. Ellis's opinion, was necessary to change the old into the new native tongue, and to produce an exact resemblance between the Saxon of the twelfth century and the English of the thirteenth; early in which century, according to Mr. Ellis, the new language was fully formed, or, as he afterwards more cautiously expresses himself, was "*in its far advanced state.*" The reader will please to recollect, that the two main circumstances in the change of Anglo-Saxon into English are the adoption of French words, and the suppression of the inflec-

* [Mr. Ellis (p. 73) says, "*very barbarous Saxon.*" "So little," says Sir Walter Scott in his Review of Mr. Ellis's *Specimens*, "were the Saxon and Norman languages calculated to amalgamate, that, though Layamon wrote in the reign of Henry II., his language is almost pure Saxon; and hence it is probable, that, if the mixed language now called English at all existed, it was deemed as yet unfit for composition, and only used as a piebald jargon for carrying on the indispensable intercourse betwixt the Anglo-Saxons and Normans. In process of time, however, the dialect so much dispersed made its way into the service of the poets, and seems to have superseded the use of the Saxon, although the French, being the court language, continued to maintain its ground till a later period."—*Misc. Pr. Works*, vol. xvii. p. 8.]

† [It seems reasonable to infer that Layamon's work was composed at or very near the period when the Saxons and Normans in this country began to unite into one nation, and to adopt a common language.—Ellis, vol. i. p. 75.]

tions of the Saxon noun and verb. Now, if Layamon's style exhibits a language needing only a few French words to be convertible into English, the Anglo-Saxon must have made some progress before Layamon's time to an English form. Whether that progress was made gradually or suddenly, we have not sufficient specimens of the language, anterior to Layamon, to determine. But that the change was not sudden, but gradual, I conceive, is much more probably to be presumed.*

Layamon, however, whether we call him Saxon or English, certainly exhibits a dawn of English. And when did this dawn appear? Mr. Ellis computes that it was in 1180 [5], placing it thus late because Wace took a great many years to translate his 'Brut' from Geoffrey of Monmouth; and because Layamon, who translated that 'Brut,' was probably twenty-five years engaged in the task.† But this is attempting to be precise

* If Layamon's work was finished in 1180 [1185], the verses in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' on the death of William the Conqueror, said to be written by one who had seen that monarch, cannot be considered as a specimen of the language immediately anterior to Layamon. But St. Godric is said to have died in 1170, and the verses ascribed to him might have been written at a time nearly preceding Layamon's work. Of St. Godric's verses a very few may be compared with a few of Layamon's.

ST. GODRIC.

Sainté Marie Christie's bur!
Maiden's clenhud, Modere's flur!
Dillie mine sinnen, rix in mine mod,
Bring me to winne with selfé God.

In English. Saint Mary, Christ's bower—Maiden's purity, Motherhood's flower—Destroy my sin, reign in my mood (or mind)—Bring me to dwell with the very God.

LAYAMON.

And of alle than folke
The wuneden ther on folde,
Wes thisses loudes folk
Leodene hendest itald;
And alswa the wimmen
Wunliche on heowen.

In English. And of all the folk that dwelt on earth was this land's folk the handsomest (people told); and also the women handsome of hue.

Here are four lines of St. Godric, in all probability earlier than Layamon's; and yet does the English reader find Layamon at all more intelligible, or does he seem to make anything like a sudden transition to English as the poetical successor of St. Godric?

† [Wace finished his translation in 1155, after, Mr. Ellis supposes, thirty years' labour: Layamon, he assumes, was the same period, finishing it in 1185; "perhaps," he says, "the earliest date that can be assigned to it."—*Specimens of Early English Poetry*, vol. i. pp. 75-6.

"Layamon's

in dates where there is no ground for precision. It is quite as easy to suppose that the English translator finished his work in ten as in twenty years; so that the change from Saxon to English would commence in 1265 [1165?], and thus the forty years' Exodus of our language, supposing it bounded to 1216, would extend to half a century. So difficult is it to fix any definite period for the commencing formation of English. It is easy to speak of a child being born at an express time; but the birth-epochs of languages are not to be registered with the same precision and facility.* Again, as to the end of Mr. Ellis's period: it is inferred by him that the formation of the language was either completed or far advanced in 1216, from the facility of rhyming displayed in Robert of Gloucester,† and in pieces belonging to the middle of the thirteenth century, or perhaps to an earlier date. I own that, to me, this theorizing by conjecture seems like stepping in quicksand. Robert of Gloucester wrote in 1280;‡ and surely his rhyming with facility *then* does not

“Layamon's age,” says Mr. Hallam, “is uncertain; it must have been after 1155, when the original poem was completed, and can hardly be placed below 1200. His language is accounted rather Anglo-Saxon than English.” *Lit. Hist.* vol. i. p. 59. Since the former editions of this Essay Layamon has been printed by the Society of Antiquaries of London, under the able superintendence of Sir F. Madden.]

* [Nothing can be more difficult, except by an arbitrary line, than to determine the commencement of the English language. When we compare the earliest English of the thirteenth century with the Anglo-Saxon of the twelfth, it seems hard to pronounce why it should pass for a separate language, rather than a modification or simplification of the former. We must conform, however, to usage, and say that the Anglo-Saxon was converted into English—1st, by contracting or otherwise modifying the pronunciation and orthography of words; 2ndly, by omitting many inflections, especially of the nouns, and consequently making more use of articles and auxiliaries; 3rdly, by the introduction of French derivatives; 4thly, by using less inversion and ellipsis, especially in poetry. Of these, the second alone I think can be considered as sufficient to describe a new form of language; and this was brought about so gradually, that we are not relieved from much of our difficulty—whether some compositions shall pass for the latest offspring of the mother, or the earliest fruits of the daughter's fertility. It is a proof of this difficulty, that the best masters of our ancient language have lately introduced the word Semi-Saxon, which is to cover everything from 1150 to 1250.—Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 57.]

† [Robert of Gloucester, who is placed by the critics in the thirteenth century, seems to have used a kind of intermediate diction, neither Saxon nor English; in his work, therefore, we see the transition exhibited.—Johnson.]

‡ [As Robert of Gloucester alludes to the canonisation of St. Louis in 1297, it is obvious, however much he wrote before, he was writing after that event. See Sir F. Madden's *Havelok*, p. liiii.]

prove the English language to have been fully formed in 1216. But we have pieces, it seems, which are supposed to have been written early in the thirteenth century. To give any support to Mr. Ellis's theory, such pieces must be proved to have been produced very early in the thirteenth century. Their coming towards the middle of it, and showing facility of rhyming at that late date, will prove little or nothing.

But of these poetical fragments *supposed* to commence either with or early in the thirteenth century, our antiquaries afford us dates which, though often confidently pronounced, are really only conjectural; and in fixing those conjectural dates, they are by no means agreed. Warton speaks of this and that article being certainly not later than the reign of Richard I.; but he takes no pains to authenticate what he affirms. He pronounces the love-song, 'Blow, northern wind, blow, blow, blow!' to be as old as the year 1200.* Mr. Ellis puts it off only to about half a century later. Hickes places the 'Land of Cokayne' just after the Conquest. Mr. Warton would place it *before* the Conquest, if he were not deterred by the appearance of a few Norman words, and by the learned authority of Hickes.† Layamon would thus be superseded, as quite a modern. The truth is, respecting the 'Land of Cokayne,' that we are left in total astonishment at the circumstance of men, so well informed as Hickes and Warton, placing it either before or immediately after the Conquest, as its language is comparatively modern. It contains allusions to pinnacles in buildings, which were not introduced till the reign of Henry III.‡ Mr. Ellis is not so rash as to place that production, which Hickes and Warton removed to near the Conquest, earlier than the thirteenth century; and I

* [Warton says, "before or about," which is lax enough.—Price's *Warton*, vol. i. p. 28, ed. 1824.]

† [It is not of the 'Land of Cokayne' that Warton says this, but of a religious or moral ode, consisting of one hundred and ninety-one stanzas.—Price's *Warton*, vol. i. p. 7. Of the 'Land of Cokayne' he has said that it is a satire, which clearly exemplifies the Saxon adulterated by the Norman, and was evidently written soon after the Conquest, at least soon after the reign of Henry II.—p. 9. Mr. Price (p. 7) follows Mr. Campbell in the age he would attach to the verse quoted in the first section of Warton, which is, he says, very arbitrary and uncertain.]

‡ [So says Gray to Mason (*Works* by Mitford, vol. iii. p. 305); but this is endeavouring to settle a point by a questionable date—one uncertainty by another.]

believe it may be placed even late in that century. In short, where shall we fix upon the first poem that is decidedly English? and how shall we ascertain its date to a certainty within any moderate number of years? Instead of supposing the period of the formation of English to commence at 1180 [1185?], and to end at 1216, we might, without violence to any known fact, extend it back to *several* years earlier, and bring it down to a *great many* years later. In the fair idea of English, we surely, in general, understand a considerable mixture of French words.* Now, whatever may have been done in the twelfth century, with regard to that change from Saxon to English which consists in the extinction of Saxon grammatical inflections, it is plain that the other characteristic of English, viz. its Gallicism, was only beginning in the thirteenth century. The English language could not be said to be saturated with French till the days of Chaucer, *i. e.* it did not, till his time, receive all the French words which it was capable of retaining. Mr. Ellis nevertheless tells us that the vulgar English, not gradually, but suddenly, superseded the legitimate Saxon. When this sudden succession precisely began, it seems to be as difficult to ascertain, as when it ended. The sudden transition, by Mr. Ellis's own theory, occupied about forty years; and, to all appearance, that term might be lengthened, with respect to its commencement and continuance, to fourscore years at least.

The Saxon language, we are told, had ceased to be poetically cultivated for some time previous to the Conquest. This might be the case with regard to lofty efforts of composition; but Ingulphus, the secretary of William the Conqueror, speaks of the popular ballads of the English, in praise of their heroes, which were sung about the streets; and William of Malmsbury, in the twelfth century, continues to make mention of them.† The pretensions of these ballads to the name of poetry we are unhappily, from the loss of them, unable to estimate. For a long time after the Conquest, the native minstrelsy, though it probably was never

* [In comparing Robert of Gloucester with Layamon, a native of the same county, and a writer on the same subject, it will appear that a great quantity of French had flowed into the language since the loss of Normandy.—Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 61.]

† William of Malmsbury drew much of his information from those Saxon ballads.

altogether extinct, may be supposed to have sunk to the lowest ebb. No human pursuit is more sensible than poetry to national pride or mortification; and a race of peasants, like the Saxons, struggling for bare subsistence, under all the dependence, and without the protection, of the feudal system, were in a state the most ungenial to feelings of poetical enthusiasm. For more than one century after the Conquest, as we are informed, an Englishman was a term of contempt. So much has time altered the associations attached to a name, which we should now employ as the first appeal to the pride or intrepidity of those who bear it. By degrees, however, the Norman and native races began to coalesce, and their patriotism and political interests to be identified. The crown and aristocracy having become during their struggles, to a certain degree, candidates for the favour of the people, and rivals in affording them protection, free burghs and chartered corporations were increased, and commerce and social intercourse began to quicken. Mr. Ellis alludes to an Anglo-Norman jargon having been spoken in commercial intercourse, from which he conceives our synonymes to have been derived. That individuals, imperfectly understanding each other, might accidentally speak a broken jargon, may be easily conceived; but that such a *lingua Franca* was ever the distinct dialect, even of a mercantile class, Mr. Ellis proves neither by specimens nor historical evidence. The synonymes in our language may certainly be accounted for by the gradual entrance of French words, without supposing an intermediate jargon. The national speech, it is true, received a vast influx of French words; but it received them by degrees, and subdued them, as they came in, to its own idioms and grammar.

Yet, difficult as it may be to pronounce precisely when Saxon can be said to have ceased and English to have begun, it must be supposed that the progress and improvement of the national speech was most considerable at those epochs which tended to restore the importance of the people. The hypothesis of a sudden transmutation of Saxon into English appears, on the whole, not to be distinctly made out. At the same time, some public events might be highly favourable to the progress and cultivation of the language. Of those events, the establishment of municipal governments and of elective magistrates in the

towns must have been very important, as they furnished materials and incentives for daily discussion and popular eloquence. As property and security increased among the people, we may also suppose the native minstrelsy to have revived. The minstrels, or those who wrote for them, translated or imitated Norman romances; and, in so doing, enriched the language with many new words, which they borrowed from the originals, either from want of corresponding terms in their own vocabulary, or from the words appearing to be more agreeable. Thus, in a general view, we may say that, amidst the early growth of her commerce, literature, and civilization, England acquired the new form of her language, which was destined to carry to the ends of the earth the blessings from which it sprang.

In the formation of English from its Saxon and Norman materials, the genius of the native tongue might be said to prevail, as it subdued to Saxon grammar and construction the numerous French words which found their way into the language.* But it was otherwise with respect to our poetry—in which, after the Conquest, the Norman Muse must be regarded as the earliest preceptress of our own. Mr. Tyrwhitt has even said, and his opinion seems to be generally adopted, that we are indebted for the use of rhyme, and for all the forms of our versification, entirely to the Normans.† Whatever might be the case with

* *Vide* Tyrwhitt's Preface to the 'Canterbury Tales,' where a distinct account is given of the grammatical changes exhibited in the rise and progress of English.

† It is likely that the Normans would have taught us the use of rhyme and their own metres, whether these had been known or not to the Anglo-Saxons before the Conquest. But respecting Mr. Tyrwhitt's position that we owe all our forms of verse and the use of rhyme entirely to the Normans, I trust the reader will pardon me for introducing a mere *doubt* on a subject which cannot be interesting to many. With respect to rhyme, I might lay some stress on the authority of Mr. Turner, who, in his 'History of the Anglo-Saxons,' says that the Anglo-Saxon versification possessed occasional rhyme; but as he admits that rhyme formed no part of its constituent character, for fear of assuming too much, let it be admitted that we have no extant specimens of rhyme in our language before the Conquest. One stanza of a ballad shall indeed be mentioned, as an exception to this, which may be admitted or rejected at the reader's pleasure. In the mean time let it be recollected, that, if we have not rhyme in the vernacular verse, we have examples of it in the poetry of the Anglo-Saxon churchmen—abundance of it in Bede's and Boniface's Latin verses. We meet also, in the same writers, with lines which resemble modern verse in their trochaic and

regard to our forms of versification, the chief employment of our earliest versifiers certainly was to transplant the fictions of the Norman school, and to naturalise them in our language.

iambic structure, considering that structure not as classical but accentual metre. Take, for example, these verses:—

“ Quando Christus Deus noster
Natus est ex Virgine—”

which go precisely in the same cadence with such modern trochaics as

“ Would you hear how once repining
Great Eliza captive lay.”

And we have many such lines as these:—

“ Ut floreas cum domino
In sempiterno solio
Qua Martyres in cuneo,” &c.—

which flow exactly like the lines in ‘ L’ Allegro :’—

“ The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty.
* * * * *
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With masque, and antique pageantry.”

Those Latin lines are, in fact, a prototype of our own eight syllable iambic. It is singular that rhyme and such metres as the above, which are generally supposed to have come into the other modern languages from the Latin rhymes of the church, should not have found their way from thence into the Anglo-Saxon vernacular verse. But they certainly did not, we shall be told; for there is no appearance of them in the specimens of Anglo-Saxon verse before the Conquest. Of such specimens, however, it is not pretended that we have anything like a full or regular series. On the contrary, many Saxon ballads, which have been alluded to by Anglo-Norman writers as of considerable antiquity, have been lost with the very names of their composers. And from a few articles saved in such a wreck, can we pronounce confidently on the whole contents of the cargo? The following solitary stanza, however, has been preserved, from a ballad attributed to Canute the Great:—

“ Merry sungen the Muneches binnen Ely,
The Cnut Ching reüther by,
Roweth Cnites noer the land,
And here we thes Muniches sang.”

“ Merry sang the Monks in Ely,
When Canute King was sailing by:
Row, ye knights, near the land,
And let us hear these Monks’ song.”

There is something very like rhyme in the Anglo-Saxon stanza. I have no doubt that Canute heard the monks singing Latin rhymes; and I have some suspicion that he finished his Saxon ballad in rhyme also. Thomas of Ely, who knew the whole song, translates his specimen of it in Latin lines, which, whether by accident or design, rhyme to each other. The genius of

The most liberal patronage was afforded to Norman minstrelsy in England by the first kings of the new dynasty. This encouragement, and the consequent cultivation of the northern dialect of French, gave it so much the superiority over the southern or troubadour dialect, that the French language, according to the acknowledgment of its best informed antiquaries, received from England and Normandy the first of its works which deserve to be cited. The Norman *trouveurs*, it is allowed, were more eminent narrative poets than the Provençal troubadours. No people had a better right to be the founders of chivalrous poetry than the Normans. They were the most energetic generation of modern men. Their leader, by the conquest of England in the eleventh century, consolidated the feudal system upon a broader basis than it ever had before possessed. Before the end of the same century, chivalry rose to its full growth as an institution, by the circumstance of martial zeal being enlisted under the banners of superstition. The crusades, though they certainly did not give birth to jousts and tournaments, must have imparted to them a new spirit and interest, as the preparatory images of a consecrated warfare. And those spectacles constituted a source of description to the romancers, to which no exact counterpart is to be found in the heroic poetry of antiquity. But the growth of what may properly be called romantic poetry was not instantaneous after the Conquest; and it was not till "English Richard ploughed the deep" that the crusaders seem to have found a place among the heroes of romance. Till the middle of the twelfth century, or possibly later, no work of professed fiction, or bearing any semblance to epic fable, can be traced in Norman verse—nothing but songs, satires, chronicles, or didactic works, to all of which, however, the name of Ro-

the ancient Anglo-Saxon poetry, Mr. Turner observes, was obscure, periphrastical, and elliptical; but, according to that writer's conjecture, a new and humble but perspicuous style of poetry was introduced at a later time in the shape of the narrative ballad. In this plainer style we may conceive the possibility of rhyme having found a place; because the verse would stand in need of that ornament to distinguish it from prose, more than in the elliptical and inverted manner. With regard to our anapæstic measure, or triple-time verse, Dr. Percy has shown that its rudiments can be traced to Scaldic poetry. It is often found very distinct in Langland; and that species of verse, at least, I conceive, is not necessarily to be referred to a Norman origin.

mance, derived from the Roman descent of the French tongue, was applied in the early and wide acceptance of the word. To these succeeded the genuine metrical romance, which, though often rhapsodical and desultory, had still invention, ingenuity, and design, sufficient to distinguish it from the dry and dreary chronicle. The reign of French metrical romance may be chiefly assigned to the latter part of the twelfth, and the whole of the thirteenth century; that of English metrical romance to the latter part of the thirteenth, and the whole of the fourteenth* century. Those ages of chivalrous song were, in the mean time, fraught with events which, while they undermined the feudal system, gradually prepared the way for the decline of chivalry itself. Literature and science were commencing, and even in the improvement of the mechanical skill employed to heighten chivalrous or superstitious magnificence, the seeds of arts, industry, and plebeian independence were unconsciously sown. One invention, that of gunpowder, is eminently marked out as the cause of the extinction of chivalry; but even if that invention had not taken place, it may well be conjectured that the contrivance of other means of missile destruction in war, and the improvement of tactics, would have narrowed that scope for the prominence of individual prowess which was necessary for the chivalrous character, and that the progress of civilisation must have ultimately levelled its romantic consequence. But to anticipate the remote effects of such causes, if scarcely within the ken of philosophy, was still less within the reach of poetry. Chivalry was still in all its glory, and to the eye of the poet appeared as likely as ever to be immortal. The progress of civilisation even ministered to its external importance. The early arts made chivalrous life, with all its pomp and ceremonies, more august and imposing, and more picturesque as a subject for description. Literature, for a time, contributed to the same effect, by her jejune and fabulous efforts at history, in which the athletic worthies of classical story and of modern romance were gravely connected by an ideal genealogy.† Thus the dawn of

* The practice of translating French rhyming romances into English verse, however, continued down to the reign of Henry VII.

† Geoffrey of Monmouth's History, of which the modern opinion seems to be, that it was not a forgery, but derived from an Armorican original, and

human improvement smiled on the fabric which it was ultimately to destroy, as the morning sun gilds and beautifies those masses of frost-work which are to melt before its noonday heat.

The elements of romantic fiction have been traced up to various sources; but neither the Scaldic, nor Saracenic, nor Armorican theory of its origin can sufficiently account for all its materials. Many of them are classical, and others derived from the Scriptures. The migrations of Science are difficult enough to be traced; but Fiction travels on still lighter wings, and scatters the seeds of her wild flowers imperceptibly over the world, till they surprise us by springing up with similarity in regions the most remotely divided.* There was a vague and unselecting love of the marvellous in romance, which sought for adventures, like its knights errant, in every quarter where they could be found; so that it is easier to admit of all the sources which are imputed to that species of fiction, than to limit our belief to any one of them.†

the pseudo-Turpin's '*Life of Charlemagne*,' were the grand historical magazines of the romancers.—Ellis's *Met. Rom.*, vol. i. p. 75. Popular songs about Arthur and Charlemagne (or, as some will have it, Charles Martel) were probably the main sources of Turpin's forgery and of Geoffrey's Armorican book. Even the proverbial mendacity of the pseudo-Turpin must have been indebted for the leading hints to songs that were extant respecting Charlemagne. The stream of fiction, having thus spread itself in those grand prose reservoirs, afterwards flowed out from thence again in the shape of verse, with a force renewed by accumulation. Once more, as if destined to alternations, romance, after the fourteenth century, returned to the shape of prose, and in many instances made and carried pretensions to the sober credibility of history.

* [It is common fairness to Mr. Campbell to say that the late Mr. Price has cited this passage as one distinguishable alike for its truth and its beauty,—that establishes the fact that popular fiction is in its nature traditive.—*Introd. to Warton's Hist.*, p. 92.]

† [Various theories have been proposed for the purpose of explaining the origin of romantic fiction. Percy contended for a Scandinavian, Warton for an Arabian, and Leyden for an Armorican birth, to which Ellis inclined; while some have supposed it to be of Provençal, and others of Norman invention. If every argument has not been exhausted, every hypothesis has. But all their systems, as Sir Walter Scott says, seem to be inaccurate, in so far as they have been adopted exclusively of each other, and of the general proposition—that fables of a nature similar to the Romances of chivalry, modified according to manners and the state of society, must necessarily be invented in every part of the world, for the same reason that grass grows upon the surface of the soil in every climate and in every country.—*Misc. P. W.* vol. vi. p. 174. "In reality," says Southey, "mythological and romantic tales are current among all savages of whom we have any full

Norman verse dwelt for a considerable time in the tedious historic style, before it reached the shape of amusing fable; and we find the earliest efforts of the Native Muse confined to translating Norman verse, while it still retained its uninviting form of the chronicle. The first of the Norman poets, from whom any versifier in the language is known to have translated, was Wace, a native of Jersey, born in the reign of Henry II.* In the year 1155 Wace finished his 'Brut d'Angleterre,' which is a French version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'History of Great Britain,' deduced from Brutus to Cadwallader, in 689. Layamon, a priest of Ernleye-upon-Severn, translated Wace's 'Metrical Chronicle' into the verse of the popular tongue; and, notwithstanding Mr. Ellis's date of 1180 [1185?], may be supposed, with equal probability, to have produced his work within ten or fifteen years after the middle of the twelfth century. Layamon's translation may be considered as the earliest specimen of metre in the native language posterior to the Conquest; except some lines in the 'Saxon Chronicle' on the death of William I., and a few religious rhymes, which, according to Matthew Paris, the Blessed Virgin was pleased to dictate to St. Godric, the hermit, near Durham; unless we add to these the specimen of Saxon poetry published in the 'Archæologia' by Mr. Conybeare, who supposes that composition to be posterior to the Conquest, and to be the last expiring voice of the Saxon Muse.† Of the dialect of Layamon, Mr. Mitford, in his 'Harmony of Languages,' observes that it has "all the appearance of a language thrown into confusion by the circumstances of

account; for man has his intellectual as well as his bodily appetites, and these things are the food of his imagination and faith. They are found wherever there is language and discourse of reason,—in other words, wherever there is man. And in similar stages of civilisation, or states of society, the fictions of different people will bear a corresponding resemblance, notwithstanding the difference of time and scene."—*Pref. to Morte d'Arthur.*]

* [Ellis (p. 44) says Henry I., whom he professes to have seen. Warton (p. 67) says he was educated at Caen, was canon of Bayeux, and chaplain to Henry II.]

† Two specimens of the ancient state of the language—viz. the stanzas on Old Age, beginning "He may him sore adreden," and the quotation from the *Ormulum*, which Dr. Johnson placed, on the authority of Hickes, nearly after the Conquest—are considered by Mr. Tyrwhitt to be of a later date than Layamon's translation. Their language is certainly more modern.

those who spoke it. It is truly neither Saxon nor English."* Mr. Ellis's opinion of its being simple Saxon has been already noticed. So little agreed are the most ingenious speculative men on the characteristics of style which they shall entitle Saxon or English. We may, however, on the whole, consider the style of Layamon to be as nearly the intermediate state of the old and new languages as can be found in any ancient specimen:—something like the new insect stirring its wings before it has shaken off the aurelia state. But of this work, or of any specimen *supposed* to be written in the early part of the thirteenth century, displaying a sudden transition from Saxon to English, I am disposed to repeat my doubts.

Without being over credulous about the antiquity of the 'Lives of the Saints,' and the other fragments of the thirteenth century, which Mr. Ellis places in chronological succession next to Layamon, we may allow that before the date of Robert of Gloucester, not only the legendary and devout style, but the amatory and satirical, had begun to be rudely cultivated in the language. It was customary in that age to make the minstrels sing devotional strains to the harp on Sundays, for the edification of the people, instead of the verses on gayer subjects which were sung at public entertainments; a circumstance which, while it indicates the usual care of the Catholic church to make use of every hold over the popular mind, discovers also the fondness of the people for their poetry, and the attractions which it had already begun to assume. Of the satirical style I have already alluded to one example in the 'Land of Cokayne,' an allegorical satire on the luxury of the church, couched under the description of an imaginary paradise, in which the nuns are represented as houris, and the black and grey monks as their paramours. This piece has humour, though not of the most delicate kind, and the language is easy and fluent, but it

* [Mitford, p. 170. In the Specimen of Layamon, published by Mr. Ellis, not a Gallicism is to be found, nor even a Norman term: and so far from exhibiting any "appearance of a language thrown into confusion by the circumstances of those who spoke it," nearly every important form of Anglo-Saxon grammar is rigidly adhered to; and so little was the language altered at this advanced period of Norman influence, that a few slight variations might convert it into genuine Anglo-Saxon.—Price, *Warton*, vol. i. p. 109.]

possesses nothing of style, sentiment, or imagery, approaching to poetry. Another specimen of the pleasantry of the times is more valuable, because it exhibits the state of party feeling on real events, as well as the state of language at a precise time.* It is a ballad, entitled 'Richard of Alemaigne,' composed by one of the adherents of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, after the defeat of the royal party at the battle of Lewes in 1264. In the year after that battle the royal cause was restored, and the earl of Warren and Sir Hugh Bigod returned from exile, and assisted in the king's victory. In this satirical ballad those two personages are threatened with death if they should ever fall into the hands of their enemies. Such a song and such threats must have been composed by Leicester's party in the moment of their triumph, and not after their defeat and dispersion; so that the date of the piece is ascertained by its contents.† This political satire leads me to mention another, which the industrious Ritson published,‡ and which, without violent anachronism, may be spoken of among the specimens of the thirteenth century, as it must have been composed within a few years after its close, and relates to events within its verge. It is a ballad on the execution of the Scottish patriots, Sir William Wallace and Sir Simon Fraser. The diction is as barbarous as we should expect from a song of triumph on such a subject. It relates the death and treatment of Wallace very minutely. The circumstance of his being covered with a mock crown of laurel in Westminster Hall, which Stowe repeats, is there mentioned; and that of his legs being fastened with iron fetters "*under his horses wombe*" is told with savage exultation. The piece was probably endited in the very year of the political murders which it celebrates; certainly before 1314, as it mentions the skulking of Robert Bruce, which, after the battle of Bannockburn, must have become a jest out of season.§

* "Though some make slight of libels," says Selden, "yet you may see by them how the wind sits; as, take a straw, and throw it up into the air, you shall see by that which way the wind is, which you shall not do by casting up a stone. More solid things do not show the complexion of the times so well as *ballads and libels*."—*Table Talk*.

† [See it in Percy's 'Reliques,' and in Wright's 'Political Songs of England,' p. 69.]

‡ Ritson's 'Ancient Songs.'

§ [Wright assigns it to 1306.—*Political Songs*, p. 212.]

A few love-songs of that early period have been preserved, which are not wholly destitute of beauty and feeling. Their expression, indeed, is often quaint, and loaded with alliteration; yet it is impossible to look without a pleasing interest upon strains of tenderness which carry us back to so remote an age, and which disclose to us the softest emotions of the human mind in times abounding with such opposite traits of historical recollection. Such a stanza as the following* would not disgrace the lyric poetry of a refined age.

For her love I cark and care,
 For her love I droop and dare;
 For her love my bliss is bare,
 And all I wax wan.
 For her love in sleep I slake, †
 For her love all night I wake;
 For her love mourning I make
 More than any man.

In another pastoral strain the lover says,—

When the nightingale singés the woods waxen green;
 Leaf, and grass, and blosme, springs in Averyl, I ween:
 And love is to my heart gone with one spear so keen,
 Night and day my blood it drinks—my heart doth me teen.

Robert, a monk of Gloucester, whose surname is unknown, is supposed to have finished his 'Rhyiming Chronicle' about the year 1280. ‡ He translated the Legends of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and continued the History of England down to the time of Edward I., in the beginning of whose reign he died. The topographical, as well as narrative, minuteness of his 'Chronicle' has made it a valuable authority to antiquaries; and as such it was consulted by Selden, when he wrote his Notes to Drayton's 'Polyolbion.' After observing some traits of humour and sentiment, moderate as they may be, in compositions as old as the middle of the thirteenth century, we might naturally expect to find in Robert of Gloucester not indeed a decidedly poetical

* It is here stripped of its antiquated spelling. † I am deprived of sleep.

‡ [Ellis, vol. i. p. 97. It was evidently written after the year 1278, as the poet mentions King Arthur's sumptuous tomb, erected in that year before the high altar of Glastonbury church; and he declares himself a living witness of the remarkably dismal weather which distinguished the day upon which the battle of Evesham was fought, in 1265. From these and other circumstances this piece appears to have been composed about the year 1280.—Warton, vol. i. p. 52.]

manner, but some approach to the animation of poetry. But the 'Chronicle' of this *English Ennius*, as he has been called,* whatever progress in the state of the language it may display, comes in reality nothing nearer the character of a work of imagination than Layamon's version of Wace, which preceded it by a hundred years. One would not imagine, from Robert of Gloucester's style, that he belonged to a period when a single effusion of sentiment, or a trait of humour and vivacity, had appeared in the language. On the contrary, he seems to take us back to the nonage of poetry, when verse is employed not to harmonise and beautify expression, but merely to assist the memory. Were we to judge of Robert of Gloucester not as a chronicler but as a candidate for the honours of fancy, we might be tempted to wonder at the frigidity with which he dwells, as the first possessor of such poetical ground, on the history of Lear, of Arthur, and Merlin; and with which he describes a scene so susceptible of poetical effect as the irruption of the first crusaders into Asia, preceded by the sword of fire which hung in the firmament, and guided them eastward in their path. But, in justice to the ancient versifier, we should remember, that he had still only a rude language to employ—the speech of boors and burghers, which, though it might possess a few songs and satires, could afford him no models of heroic narration. In such an age, the first occupant passes uninspired over subjects which might kindle the highest enthusiasm in the poet of a riper period; as the savage treads unconsciously, in his deserts, over mines of incalculable value, without sagacity to discover, or implements to explore them. In reality, his object was but to be historical. The higher orders of society still made use of French; and scholars wrote in that language or in Latin. His 'Chronicle' was therefore recited to a class of his contemporaries to whom it must have been highly acceptable, as a history of their native country believed to be authentic, and composed in their native tongue. To the fabulous legends of antiquity he added a record of more recent events, with some of which he was contemporary. As a relater of events, he is tolerably succinct and perspicuous; and wherever the fact is of any importance, he shows a watchful attention to keep the reader's memory distinct with regard to

* [By Tom Hearne, his very accurate editor.]

chronology, by making the date of the year rhyme to something prominent in the narration of the fact.

Our first known versifier of the fourteenth century is Robert, commonly called De Brunne. He was born (according to his editor, Hearne) at Malton, in Yorkshire; lived for some time in the house of Sixhill, a Gilbertine monastery in Yorkshire; and afterwards became a member of Brunne or Browne, a priory of black canons in the same county. His real surname was Mannyng; but the writers of history in those times (as Hearne observes) were generally the religious, and when they became celebrated they were designated by the names of the religious houses to which they belonged. Thus, William of Malmsbury, Matthew of Westminster, and John of Glastonbury, received those appellations from their respective monasteries.* De Brunne was, as far as we know, only a translator. His principal performance is a Rhyming Chronicle of the History of England, in two parts, compiled from the works of Wace and Peter de Langtoft.† The declared object of his work is “not for the lerid (learned) but for the lewed (the low).”

“For tho^a that in this land womn,^b
That the latyn no^c Frankys^d conn.”^e

He seems to reckon, however, if not on the attention of the “lerid,” at least on that of a class above the “lewed,” as he begins his address to “Lordynges that be now here.” He declares also that his verse was constructed simply, being intended neither for seggers (reciters) nor harpours (harpers). Yet it is clear, from another passage, that he intended his ‘Chronicle’ to be sung, at least by parts, at public festivals. In the present day it would require considerable vocal powers to make so dry a recital of facts as that of De Brunne’s work entertaining to an audience; but it appears that he could offer one of the most

* [Sir F. Madden supposes, and on very fair grounds, that Mannyng was born at Brunne.—*Havelok*, p. xiv.]

† Peter de Langtoft was an Augustine canon of Bridlington, in Yorkshire, of Norman origin, but born in England. He wrote an entire ‘History of England’ in French rhymes, down to the end of the reign of Edward I.—Robert de Brunne, in his ‘Chronicle,’ follows Wace in the earlier part of his History, but translates the latter part of it from Langtoft.

^a Those. ^b Live. ^c Nor. ^d French. ^e Know.

ancient apologies of authorship, namely, "the request of friends"—for he says,

"Men besoght me many a time
To torn it bot in light rhyme."

His 'Chronicle,' it seems, was likely to be an acceptable work to social parties, assembled

"For to haf solace and gamen^a
In fellawship when they sit samen."^b

In rude states of society verse is attached to many subjects from which it is afterwards divorced by the progress of literature; and primitive poetry is found to be the organ not only of history, but of science,* theology, and of law itself. The ancient laws of the Athenians were sung at their public banquets. Even in modern times, and within the last century, the laws of Sweden were published in verse.

De Brunne's versification, throughout the body of the work, is sometimes the entire Alexandrine, rhyming in couplets; but for the most part it is only the half Alexandrine, with alternate rhymes. He thus affords a ballad metre, which seems to justify the conjecture of Hearne, that our most ancient ballads were only fragments of metrical histories.† By this time (for the date of De Brunne's 'Chronicle' brings us down to the year 1339)‡ our popular ballads must have long added the redoubted names of Randal [earl] of Chester, and Robin Hood, to their list of native subjects. Both of these worthies had died before the middle of the preceding century, and, in the course of the next hundred years, their names became so popular in English song,

^a Game.

^b Together.

* Virgil, when he carries us back to very ancient manners, in the picture of Dido's feast, appropriately makes astronomy the first subject with which the bard Iopas entertains his audience.

Cithara crinitus Iopas
Personat aurata, docuit quæ maximus Atlas;
Hic canit errantem lunam, solisque labores.

Æneid I.

† ["The conjectures of Hearne," says Warton (vol. i. p. 91), "were generally wrong." An opinion re-echoed in part by Ellis.—*Spec.* vol. i. p. 117.]

‡ Robert de Brunne, it appears, from internal evidence, finished his 'Chronicle' in May of that year.—Ritson's *Minot*, XIII. [He began it in 1303, as he tells us himself in very ordinary verse.]

that Langlande, in the fourteenth century, makes it part of the confession of a sluggard, that he was unable to repeat his pater-noster, though he knew plenty of rhymes about Randal of Chester and Robin Hood.* None of the extant ballads about Robin Hood are however of any great antiquity.

The style of Robert de Brunne is less marked by Saxonisms than that of Robert of Gloucester; and though he can scarcely be said to come nearer the character of a true poet than his predecessor, he is certainly a smoother versifier, and evinces more facility in rhyming. It is amusing to find his editor, Hearne, so anxious to defend the moral memory of a writer, respecting whom not a circumstance is known beyond the date of his works and the names of the monasteries where he wore his cowl. From his willingness to favour the people with historic rhymes for their "fellowship and gamen," Hearne infers that he must have been of a jocular temper. It seems, however, that the priory of Sixhill, where he lived for some time, was a house which consisted of women as well as men, a discovery which alarms the good antiquary for the fame of his author's personal purity. "Can we therefore think," continues Hearne, "that, since he was of a jocular temper, he could be wholly free from vice, or that he should not sometimes express himself loosely to the sisters of that place? This objection" (he gravely continues) "would have had some weight, had the priory of Sixhill been any way noted for luxury or lewdness; but whereas every member of it, both men and women, were very chaste, we ought by no means to suppose that Robert of Brunne behaved himself otherwise than became a good Christian during his whole abode there." This conclusive reasoning, it may be hoped, will entirely set at rest any idle suspicions that may have crept into the reader's mind respecting the chastity of Robert de Brunne. It may be added, that his writings betray not the least symptom of his having been either an Abelard among priests, or an Ovid among poets.

Considerably before the date of Robert de Brunne's 'Chronicle,' as we learn from De Brunne himself, the English minstrels, or those who wrote for them, had imitated from the French many

* [Pierce Plowman's Visions, as quoted by Warton (vol. i. p. 92). Langlande tells it of a friar, perhaps with truthful severity.]

compositions more poetical than those historical canticles, namely, genuine romances. In most of those metrical stories, irregular and shapeless as they were, if we compare them with the symmetrical structure of epic fable, there was still some portion of interest, and a catastrophe brought about, after various obstacles and difficulties, by an agreeable surprise. The names of the writers of our early English romances have not, except in one or two instances, been even conjectured, nor have the dates of the majority of them been ascertained with anything like precision. But in a general view, the era of English metrical romance may be said to have commenced towards the end of the thirteenth century. Warton, indeed, would place the commencement of our romance poetry considerably earlier; but Ritson challenges a proof of any English romance being known or mentioned, before the close of Edward I.'s reign, about which time, that is, the end of the thirteenth century, he conjectures that the romance of 'Hornchild' may have been composed. It would be pleasing, if it were possible, to extend the claims of English genius in this department to any considerable number of original pieces. But English romance poetry, having grown out of that of France, seems never to have improved upon its original, or, rather, it may be allowed to have fallen beneath it. As to the originality of old English poems of this kind, we meet, in some of them, with heroes whose Saxon names might lead us to suppose them indigenous fictions, which had not come into the language through a French medium. Several old Saxon ballads are alluded to, as extant long after the Conquest, by the Anglo-Norman historians, who drew from them many facts and inferences; and there is no saying how many of these ballads might be recast into a romantic shape by the composers for the native minstrelsy. But, on the other hand, the Anglo-Normans appear to have been more inquisitive into Saxon legends than the Saxons themselves; and their Muse was by no means so illiberal as to object to a hero because he was not of their own generation. In point of fact, whatever may be alleged about the minstrels of the North Country, it is difficult, if it be possible, to find an English romance which contains no internal allusion to a French prototype. Ritson very grudgingly allows that three old stories may be called original English romances,

until a Norman original shall be found for them;* while Mr. Tyrwhitt conceives that we have not one English romance, anterior to Chaucer, which is not borrowed from a French one.

* Those are, 'The Squire of Low Degree,' 'Sir Tryamour,' and 'Sir Eglamour.' Respecting two of those, Mr. Ellis shows that Ritson might have spared himself the trouble of making any concession, as the antiquity of 'The Squire of Low Degree' [Ritson, vol. iii. p. 145] remains to be proved, it being mentioned by no writer before the sixteenth century, and not being known to be extant in any ancient MS. 'Sir Eglamour' contains allusions to its Norman pedigree.

The difficulty of finding an original South British romance of this period, unborrowed from a French original, seems to remain undisputed: but Mr. Walter Scott, in his edition of 'Sir Tristrem,' has presented the public with an ancient Scottish romance, which, according to Mr. Scott's theory, would demonstrate the English language to have been cultivated earlier in Scotland than in England.^a I have elsewhere (*post*, Scottish Poetry) expressed myself in terms of more unqualified assent to the supposition of Thomas of Erceldoune having been an *original* romancer, than I should

[^a "The strange appropriation of the Auchinleck poem as a Scottish production, when no single trace of the Scottish dialect is to be found throughout the whole romance which may not with equal truth be claimed as current in the north of England, while every marked peculiarity of the former is entirely wanting, can hardly require serious investigation. From this opinion the ingenious editor himself must long ago have been reclaimed. The singular doctrines relative to the rise and progress of the English language in North and South Britain may also be dismissed, as not immediately relevant. But when it is seriously affirmed that the English language was once spoken with greater purity in the Lowlands of Scotland than in this country, we 'Sothrons' receive the communication with the same smile of incredulity that we bestow upon the *poetic* dogma of the honest Frieslander:—

Buwtter, breat, en greene tzies,
Is guth Inglisch eu guth Fries.
Butter, bread, and green cheese,
Is good English and good Friese."

—Price, *Warton's Hist.*, vol. i. p. 196., ed. 1824.

"As to the Essayist's assertion (Mr. Price's) that the language of 'Sir Tristrem' has in it nothing distinctively *Scottish*—this is a point on which the reader will, perhaps, consider the authority of Sir Walter Scott as sufficient to countervail that of the most accomplished English antiquary."

—Lockhart, *Advt.* to 'Sir Tristrem,' 1833.

No one has yet satisfactorily accounted for the Elizabethan-like *Inglis* of Barbour and Blind Harry, or the Saxon Layamon-like *Inglis* of Gawain Douglas. Did Barbour, who wrote in 1375, write in advance of his age, and Douglas, who began and ended his 'Æueid' in 1513-14, behind his age? Or did each represent the spoken language of the times they wrote in?

Scott's view of the priority in cultivation of *Inglis* in Scotland over England is sanctioned by Ellis in the Introduction (p. 127) to his 'Metrical Romances.']

In the reign of Edward II., Adam Davie, who was marshal of Stratford-le-Bow, near London, wrote 'Visions' in verse, which

be inclined to use upon mature consideration. Robert de Brunne certainly alludes to 'Sir Tristrem,' as "the most famous of all gests" in his time.^a He mentions Erceldoune, its author, and another poet of the name of Kendale. Of Kendale, whether he was Scotch or English, nothing seems to be known with certainty. With respect to Thomas of Erceldoune, or Thomas the Rhymer, the Auchinleck MS. published by my illustrious friend professes to be the work not of Erceldoune himself, but of some minstrel or reciter who had heard the story from Thomas. Its language is confessed to be that of the fourteenth century, and the MS. is not pretended to be less than eighty years older than the supposed date of Thomas of Erceldoune's romance. Accordingly, whatever Thomas the Rhymer's production might be, this Auchinleck MS. is not a transcript of it, but the transcript of the composition of some one who heard the story from Thomas of Erceldoune. It is a specimen of Scottish poetry not in the thirteenth but the fourteenth century. How much of the matter or manner of Thomas the Rhymer was retained by his deputy reciter of the story, eighty years after the assumed date of Thomas's work, is a subject of mere conjecture.

Still, however, the fame of Erceldoune and Tristrem remain attested by Robert de Brunne; and Mr. Scott's doctrine is, that Thomas the Rhymer, having picked up the chief materials of his romantic history of 'Sir Tristrem' from British traditions surviving on the border, was not a translator from the French, but an original authority to the continental romancers. It is nevertheless acknowledged that the story of 'Sir Tristrem' had been told in French, and was familiar to the romancers of that language, long before Thomas the Rhymer could have set about picking up British traditions on the border, and in all probability before he was born. The possibility, therefore, of his having heard the story in Norman minstrelsy, is put beyond the reach of denial.^b On the other hand, Mr. Scott argues that the Scottish bard must have been an authority to the continental romancers, from two circumstances. In the first place, there are two metrical fragments of French romance preserved in the library of Mr. Douce, which, according to Mr. Scott, tell the story of 'Sir Tristrem' in a manner corresponding with the same tale as it is told by Thomas of Erceldoune, and in which a reference is made to the authority of *a Thomas*. But the whole force of this argument evidently depends on the supposition of Mr. Douce's fragments being the work of one and the same author—whereas they are not, to all appearance,

^a [Over gestic it has the steem
Over all that is or was,
If men it sayd as made Thomas.]

^b ['Sir Tristrem,' like almost all our romances, had a foreign origin—its language alone is ours. Three copies—in French, in Anglo-Norman, and in Greek—composed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and edited by Francisque Michel, appeared in two vols. 8vo. at London in 1835. But Scott never stood out for Thomas's invention. "The tale," he says, "lays claim to a much higher antiquity." (P. 27, ed. 1833.) To a British antiquity, however. See also Scott's 'Essay on Romance,' in *Misc. Prose Works* (vol. vi. p. 201), where he contends that it was derived from Welsh traditions, though told by a Saxon poet.]

appear to be original; and 'The Battle of Jerusalem,' in which he turned into rhyme the contents of a French prose romance.* In

by the same author. A single perusal will enable us to observe how remarkably they differ in style. They have no appearance of being parts of the same story, one of them placing the court of King Mark at Tintagil, the other at London. Only one of the fragments refers to the authority of a Thomas, and the style of that one bears very strong marks of being French of the twelfth century, a date which would place it beyond the possibility of its referring to Thomas of Erceldoune.^a The second of Mr. Scott's proofs of the originality of the Scottish romance is, that Gotfried von Strasburg, in a German romance written about the middle of the thirteenth century, refers to Thomas of Britania as his original. Thomas of Britania is, however, a vague word; and among the Anglo-Norman poets there might be one named Thomas, who might have told a story which was confessedly told in many shapes in the French language, and which was known in France before the Rhymer could have flourished; and to this Anglo-Norman Thomas, Gotfried might refer. Eichhorn, the German editor, says that Gotfried translated his romance from the Norman French. Mr. Scott, in his edition of 'Sir Tristrem,' after conjecturing one date for the birth of Thomas the Rhymer, avowedly alters it for the sake of identifying the Rhymer with Gotfried's Thomas of Britania, and places his birth before the end of the twelfth century. This, he allows, would extend the Rhymer's life to upwards of ninety years, a pretty fair age for the Scottish Tiresias; but if he survived 1296, as Harry the Minstrel informs us, he must have lived to beyond an hundred.^b

* [His other works were, 'The Legend of St. Alexius,' from the Latin; 'Scripture Histories;' and 'Fifteen Tokens before the Day of Judgment.' The last two were paraphrases of Scripture. Mr. Ellis ultimately retracted his opinion, adopted from Warton, that he was the author of a romance entitled 'The Life of Alexander,' printed in Weber's Collection.—See Ellis's *Met. Rom.*, vol. i. p. 130.]

^a [This passage is quoted by the late learned Mr. Price in a Note to 'Sir Tristrem,' appended to Warton's History. "In addition," says Price, "it may be observed that the language of this fragment, so far from vesting Thomas with the character of an original writer, affirms directly the reverse. It is clear that in the writer's opinion the earliest and most authentic narrative of Tristrem's story was to be found in the work of Breri. From his relation later minstrels had chosen to deviate; but Thomas, who had also composed a romance upon the subject, not only accorded with Breri in the order of his events, but entered into a justification of himself and his predecessor, by proving the inconsistency and absurdity of these newfangled variations. If, therefore, the romance of Thomas be in existence, it must contain this vindication; the poem in the Auchinleck MS. is entirely silent on the subject."]

^b [There is now but one opinion of Scott's 'Sir Tristrem'—that it is not, as he would have it, the work of Thomas of Erceldoune, but the work of some after bard that had heard Thomas tell the story—in other words, an imperfect transcript of the Erceldoune copy. Thomas's own tale is something we may wish for, but we may despair of finding. That Kendale wrote Scott's 'Sir Tristrem' is the fair enough supposition of Mr. David Laing.—*Dunbar*, vol. i. p. 38.]

the course of Adam Davie's account of the siege of Jerusalem, Pilate challenges our Lord to single combat. From the specimens afforded by Warton, no very high idea can be formed of the genius of this poetical marshal. Warton anticipates the surprise of his reader, in finding the English language improve so slowly when we reach the verses of Davie. The historian of our poetry had, in a former section, treated of Robert de Brunne as a writer anterior to Davie; but as the latter part of De Brunne's 'Chronicle' was not finished till 1339, in the reign of Edward III., it would be surprising indeed if the language should seem to improve when we go back to the reign of Edward II.* Davie's work may be placed in our poetical chronology posterior to the first part of De Brunne's 'Chronicle,' but anterior to the latter.

Richard Rolle, another of our earliest versifiers, died in 1349.† He was a hermit, and led a secluded life near the nunnery of Hampole, in Yorkshire. Seventeen of his devotional pieces are enumerated in Ritson's 'Bibliographia Poetica.' The penitential psalms and theological tracts of a hermit were not likely to enrich or improve the style of our poetry; and they are accordingly confessed, by those who have read them, to be very dull. His name challenges notice only from the paucity of contemporary writers.

Laurence Minot, although he is conjectured to have been a monk, had a Muse of a livelier temper; and, for want of a better poet, he may, by courtesy, be called the Tyrtæus of his age. His few poems which have reached us are, in fact, short narrative ballads on the victories obtained in the reign of Edward III., beginning with that of Hallidown Hill, and ending with the siege of Guisnes Castle. As his poem on the last of these events was evidently written recently after the exploit, the era of his poetical career may be laid between the years 1332 and 1352. Minot's works lay in absolute oblivion till late in the last century, in a MS. of the Cotton Collection, which was supposed to be a transcript of the works of Chaucer. The name of Richard Chawfir having been accidentally scrawled on a spare leaf of the MS.

* [In this the usual accuracy and candour of Mr. Campbell appear to have forsaken him. Warton's observation is far from being a general one, and might have been interpreted to the exclusion of De Brunne. That such was Warton's intention is obvious, &c.—Price, *Warton*, vol. ii. p. 52.]

† [Ellis, vol. i. p. 146. Warton (vol. ii. p. 90) calls him Richard Hampole.]

(probably the name of its ancient possessor), the framer of the Cotton catalogue very goodnatureedly converted it into Geoffrey Chaucer. By this circumstance Mr. Tyrwhitt, when seeking materials for his edition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' accidentally discovered an English versifier older than Chaucer himself. The style of Minot's ten military ballads is frequently alliterative, and has much of the northern dialect. He is an easy and lively versifier, though not, as Mr. G. Chalmers denominates him, either elegant or energetic.*

In the course of the fourteenth century our language seems to have been inundated with metrical romances, until the public taste had been palled by the mediocrity and monotony of the greater part of them. At least, if Chaucer's Host in the 'Canterbury Tales' be a fair representation of contemporary opinion, they were held in no great reverence, to judge by the comparison which the vintner applies to the "drafty rhymings" of 'Sir Topaz.'† The practice of translating French metrical romances into English did not, however, terminate in the fourteenth century. Nor must we form an indiscriminate estimate of the ancient metrical romances, either from Chaucer's implied contempt for them, nor from mine host of the Tabard's ungainly comparison with respect to one of them. The ridiculous style of 'Sir Topaz' is not an image of them all. Some of them, far from being chargeable with impertinent and prolix description, are concise in narration, and paint, with rapid but distinct sketches, the battles, the banquets, and the rites of worship of chivalrous life. Classical poetry has scarcely ever conveyed in shorter boundaries so many interesting and complicated events as may be found in the good old romance of 'Le Bone Florence.'‡ Chaucer himself, when he strikes into the new or allegorical school of romance, has many passages more tedious and less affecting than the better parts of those simple old fablers. For in spite of their puerility in the

* [An edition of Minot's poems was one of Ritson's many contributions to the elucidation of early English language and literature.]

† [The 'Rime of Sir Topaz,' which Chaucer introduces as a parody, undoubtedly, of the rhythmical romances of the age, is interrupted by mine host Harry Bailly with the strongest and most energetic expressions of total and absolute contempt.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. vi. p. 209.]

‡ Given in Ritson's 'Old Metrical Romances.'

excessive use of the marvellous, their simplicity is often touching, and they have many scenes that would form adequate subjects for the best historical pencils.

The reign of Edward III. was illustrious not for military achievements alone ; it was a period when the English character displayed its first intellectual boldness. It is true that the history of the times presents a striking contrast between the light of intelligence which began to open on men's minds, and the frightful evils which were still permitted to darken the face of society. In the scandalous avarice of the church, in the corruptions of the courts of judicature, and in the licentiousness of a nobility who countenanced disorders and robbery, we trace the unbanished remains of barbarism ; but, on the other hand, we may refer to this period for the genuine commencement of our literature, for the earliest diffusion of free inquiry, and for the first great movement of the national mind towards emancipation from spiritual tyranny. The abuses of religion were, from their nature, the most powerfully calculated to arrest the public attention ; and poetry was not deficient in contributing its influence to expose those abuses, both as subjects of ridicule and of serious indignation. Two poets of this period, with very different powers of genius, and probably addressing themselves to different classes of society, made the corruptions of the clergy the objects of their satire —taking satire not in its mean and personal acceptance, but understanding it as the moral warfare of indignation and ridicule against turpitude and absurdity. Those writers were Langlande and Chaucer, both of whom have been claimed as primitive reformers by some of the zealous historians of the Reformation. At the idea of a full separation from the Catholic church both Langlande and Chaucer would possibly have been struck with horror. The doctrine of predestination, which was a leading tenet of the first Protestants, is not, I believe, avowed in any of Chaucer's writings, and it is expressly reprobated by Langlande. It is, nevertheless, very likely that their works contributed to promote the Reformation. Langlande, especially, who was an earlier satirist and painter of manners than Chaucer, is undaunted in reprobating the corruptions of the papal government. He prays to Heaven to amend the Pope, whom he charges with pillaging the church, interfering unjustly with the king, and causing

the blood of Christians to be wantonly shed ; and it is a curious circumstance that he predicts the existence of a king who, in his vengeance, would destroy the monasteries.

The work entitled 'Visions of William concerning Piers Plowman,'* and concerning the origin, progress, and perfection of the Christian life, which is the earliest known original poem, of any extent, in the English language, is ascribed to Robert Langlande [or Longlande], a secular priest, born at Mortimer's Cleobury, in Shropshire, and educated at Oriel College, Oxford. That it was written by Langlande, I believe, can be traced to no higher authority than that of Bale, or of the printer Crowley ; but his name may stand for that of its author until a better claimant shall be found.

Those 'Visions,' from their allusions to events evidently recent, can scarcely be supposed to have been finished later than the year 1362, almost thirty years before the appearance of the 'Canterbury Tales.'†

It is not easy, even after Dr. Whitaker's laborious analysis of this work, to give any concise account of its contents. The general object is to expose, in allegory, the existing abuses of society, and to inculcate the public and private duties both of the laity and clergy. An imaginary seer, afterwards described by the name of William, wandering among the bushes of the Malvern hills, is overtaken by sleep, and dreams that he beholds a magnificent tower, which turns out to be the tower or fortress of Truth, and a dungeon, which we soon after learn is the abode of Wrong. In a spacious plain in front of it the whole race of mankind are employed in their respective pursuits ; such as husbandmen, merchants, minstrels with their audiences, begging friars, and itinerant venders of pardons, leading a dissolute life under the cloak of religion. The last of these are severely satirized. A transition is then made to the civil grievances of society ; and the policy, not the duty, of submitting to bad princes, is illustrated by the parable of the Rats and Cats. In the second canto, True Religion descends, and demonstrates, with many

* The work is commonly entitled the 'Visions of Piers Plowman,' but incorrectly, for Piers is not the dreamer who sees the visions, but one of the characters who is beheld, and who represents the Christian life.

[† See Mr. Price's Note in *Warton*, vol. ii. p. 101, and Appendix to the same volume.]

precepts, how the conduct of individuals and the general management of society may be amended. In the third and fourth cantos, Mede or Bribery is exhibited, seeking a marriage with Falsehood, and attempting to make her way to the courts of justice, where it appears that she has many friends, both among the civil judges and ecclesiastics. The poem after this becomes more and more desultory. The author awakens more than once; but, forgetting that he has told us so, continues to converse as freely as ever with the moral phantasmagoria of his dream. A long train of allegorical personages, whom it would not be very amusing to enumerate, succeeds. In fact, notwithstanding Dr. Whitaker's discovery of a plan and unity in this work, I cannot help thinking, with Warton, that it possesses neither; at least, if it has any design, it is the most vague and ill-constructed that ever entered into the brain of a waking dreamer. The appearance of the visionary personages is often sufficiently whimsical. The power of Grace, for instance, confers upon Piers Plowman, or "Christian Life," four stout oxen, to cultivate the field of Truth; these are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the last of whom is described as the gentlest of the team. She afterwards assigns him the like number of stots or bullocks, to harrow what the evangelists had ploughed; and this new horned team consists of Saint or stot Ambrose, stot Austin, stot Gregory, and stot Jerome.*

The verse of Langlande is alliterative, without rhyme, and of triple time. In modern pronunciation it divides the ear between an anapæstic and dactylic cadence; though some of the verses are reducible to no perceptible metre. Mr. Mitford, in his 'Harmony of Languages,' thinks that the more we accommodate the reading of it to ancient pronunciation, the more generally we shall find it run in an anapæstic measure. His style, even making allowance for its antiquity, has a vulgar air, and seems to indicate a mind that would have been coarse, though strong, in any state of society. But, on the other hand, his work, with all its tiresome homilies, illustrations from school divinity, and uncouth phraseology, has some interesting features of originality.

* [If some of the criticisms in this genial Essay prove rather startling to the zealous admirer of our early literature, he will attribute them to the same cause which, during an age of romantic poetry, makes the effusions of Mr. Campbell's Muse appear an echo of the chaste simplicity and measured energy of Attic song.—Price, *Warton*, vol. i. p. 107.]

He employs no borrowed materials; he is the earliest of our writers in whom there is a tone of moral reflection; and his sentiments are those of bold and solid integrity. The zeal of truth was in him; and his vehement manner sometimes rises to eloquence, when he denounces hypocrisy and imposture. The mind is struck with his rude voice, proclaiming independent and popular sentiments from an age of slavery and superstition, and thundering a prediction in the ear of papacy, which was doomed to be literally fulfilled at the distance of nearly two hundred years. His allusions to contemporary life afford some amusing glimpses of its manners. There is room to suspect that Spenser was acquainted with his works; and Milton, either from accident or design, has the appearance of having had one of Langland's passages in his mind when he wrote the sublime description of the lazar-house, in 'Paradise Lost.'*

Chaucer was probably known and distinguished as a poet anterior to the appearance of Langland's 'Visions.' Indeed, if he had produced nothing else than his youthful poem, 'The Court of Love,' it was sufficient to indicate one destined to harmonise and refine the national strains. But it is likely that before his thirty-fourth year, about which time Langland's 'Visions' may be supposed to have been finished, Chaucer had given several compositions to the public.

The simple old narrative romance had become too familiar in Chaucer's time to invite him to its beaten track. The poverty of his native tongue obliged him to look round for subsidiary materials to his fancy, both in the Latin language and in some modern foreign source that should not appear to be trite and exhausted. His age was, unfortunately, little conversant with the best Latin classics. Ovid, Claudian, and Statius were the chief favourites in poetry, and Boethius in prose.† The allegorical style of the last of those authors seems to have given an early bias to the taste of Chaucer. In modern poetry, his first and long-continued predilection was attracted by the new and

* [B. xi. l. 475, &c. This coincidence is remarked by Mrs. Cooper in her 'Muses' Library.'—Ellis, vol. i. p. 157.]

† [The 'Consolation of Boethius' was translated by Alfred the Great and by Queen Elizabeth. No unfair proof of its extraordinary popularity may be derived from 'The Quair' of King James I. It seems to have been a truly regal book.]

allegorical style of romance which had sprung up in France in the thirteenth century, under William de Lorris. We find him, accordingly, during a great part of his poetical career, engaged among the dreams, emblems, flower-worshippings, and amatory parliaments of that visionary school. This, we may say, was a gymnasium of rather too light and playful exercise for so strong a genius; and it must be owned that his allegorical poetry is often puerile and prolix. Yet, even in this walk of fiction, we never entirely lose sight of that peculiar grace and gaiety which distinguish the Muse of Chaucer; and no one who remembers his productions of 'The House of Fame,' and 'The Flower and the Leaf,' will regret that he sported for a season in the field of allegory. Even his pieces of this description the most fantastic in design and tedious in execution are generally interspersed with fresh and joyous descriptions of external nature.

In this new species of romance, we perceive the youthful Muse of the language in love with mystical meanings and forms of fancy, more remote, if possible, from reality than those of the chivalrous fable itself; and we could sometimes wish her back from her emblematic castles to the more solid ones of the elder fable; but still she moves in pursuit of those shadows with an impulse of novelty, and an exuberance of spirit, that is not wholly without its attraction and delight.

Chaucer was afterwards happily drawn to the more natural style of Boccaccio, and from him he derived the hint of a subject * in which, besides his own original portraits of contemporary life, he could introduce stories of every description, from the most heroic to the most familiar.

Gower, though he had been earlier distinguished in French poetry, began later than Chaucer to cultivate his native tongue. His 'Confessio Amantis,' the only work by which he is known as an English poet, did not appear till the sixteenth year of Richard II. He must have been a highly accomplished man for his time, and imbued with a studious and mild spirit of reflection. His French sonnets are marked by elegance and sensibility, and his English poetry contains a digest of all that constituted the knowledge of his age. His contemporaries greatly esteemed him; and the Scottish as well as English writers of the subse-

* [The Canterbury Tales.]

quent period speak of him with unqualified admiration. But though the placid and moral Gower might be a civilising spirit among his contemporaries, his character has none of the bold originality which stamps an influence on the literature of a country. He was not, like Chaucer, a patriarch in the family of genius, the scattered traits of whose resemblance may be seen in such descendants as Shakspeare and Spenser.* The design of his 'Confessio Amantis' is peculiarly ill contrived. A lover, whose case has not a particle of interest, applies, according to the Catholic ritual, to a confessor, who, at the same time, whimsically enough, bears the additional character of a pagan priest of Venus. The holy father, it is true, speaks like a good Christian, and communicates more scandal about the intrigues of Venus than pagan author ever told. A pretext is afforded by the ceremony of confession for the priest not only to initiate his pupil in the duties of a lover, but in a wide range of ethical and physical knowledge; and at the mention of every virtue and vice a tale is introduced by way of illustration. Does the confessor wish to warn the lover against impertinent curiosity? he introduces, à propos to that failing, the history of Actæon, of peeping memory. The confessor inquires if he is addicted to a vain-glorious disposition; because, if he is, he can tell him a story about Nebuchadnezzar. Does he wish to hear of the virtue of conjugal patience? it is aptly inculcated by the anecdote respecting Socrates, who, when he received the contents of Xantippe's pail upon his head, replied to the provocation with only a witticism. Thus, with shriving, narrations, and didactic speeches, the work is extended to thirty thousand lines, in the course of which the virtues and vices are all regularly allegorized. But in allegory Gower is cold and uninventive, and enumerates qualities when he should conjure up visible objects. On the whole, though copiously stored with facts and fables, he is unable either to make truth appear poetical, or to render fiction the graceful vehicle of truth.

* [Milton was the poetical son of Spenser, and Mr. Waller of Fairfax. Spenser more than once insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfused into his body, and that he was begotten by him two hundred years after his decease.—Dryden, *Malone*, vol. iv. p. 592.]

PART II.

WARTON, with great beauty and justice, compares the appearance of Chaucer in our language to a premature day in an English spring; after which the gloom of winter returns, and the buds and blossoms, which have been called forth by a transient sunshine, are nipped by frosts and scattered by storms. The causes of the relapse of our poetry, after Chaucer, seem but too apparent in the annals of English history, which during five reigns of the fifteenth century continue to display but a tissue of conspiracies, proscriptions, and bloodshed. Inferior even to France in literary progress, England displays in the fifteenth century a still more mortifying contrast with Italy. Italy too had her religious schisms and public distractions; but her arts and literature had always a sheltering place. They were even cherished by the rivalry of independent communities, and received encouragement from the opposite sources of commercial and ecclesiastical wealth. But *we* had no Nicholas V., nor house of Medicis. In England the evils of civil war agitated society as one mass. There was no refuge from them—no enclosure to fence in the field of improvement—no mound to stem the torrent of public troubles. Before the death of Henry VI., it is said that one half of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom had perished in the field or on the scaffold. Whilst in England the public spirit was thus brutalised, whilst the value and security of life were abridged, whilst the wealth of the rich was employed only in war, and the chance of patronage taken from the scholar, in Italy princes and magistrates vied with each other in calling men of genius around them, as the brightest ornaments of their states and courts. The art of printing came to Italy to record the treasures of its literary attainments; but when it came to England, with a very few exceptions, it could not be said, for the purpose of diffusing native literature, to be a necessary art. A circumstance, additionally hostile to the

national genius may certainly be traced in the executions for religion which sprang up as a horrible novelty in our country in the fifteenth century. The clergy were determined to indemnify themselves for the exposures which they had met with in the preceding age, and the unhallowed compromise which Henry IV. made with them, in return for supporting his accession, armed them, in an evil hour, with the torch of persecution. In one point of improvement, namely, in the boldness of religious inquiry, the North of Europe might already boast of being superior to the South, with all its learning, wealth, and elegant acquirements. The Scriptures had been opened by Wickliff, but they were again to become "a fountain sealed, and a spring shut up." Amidst the progress of letters in Italy, the fine arts threw enchantment around superstition; and the warm imagination of the South was congenial with the nature of Catholic institutions. But the English mind had already shown, even amidst its comparative barbarism, a stern independent spirit of religion; and from this single proud and elevated point of its character it was now to be crushed and beaten down. Sometimes a baffled struggle against oppression is more depressing to the human faculties than continued submission.

Our natural hatred of tyranny, and, we may safely add, the general test of history and experience, would dispose us to believe religious persecution to be necessarily and essentially baneful to the elegant arts, no less than to the intellectual pursuits of mankind. It is natural to think that, when punishments are let loose upon men's opinions, they will spread a contagious alarm from the understanding to the imagination. They will make the heart grow close and insensible to generous feelings, where it is unaccustomed to express them freely; and the graces and gaiety of fancy will be dejected and appalled. In an age of persecution, even the living study of his own species must be comparatively darkened to the poet. He looks round on the characters and countenances of his fellow-creatures; and instead of the naturally cheerful and eccentric variety of their humours, he reads only a sullen and oppressed uniformity. To the spirit of poetry we should conceive such a period to be an impassable Avernus, where she would drop her wings and expire. Undoubtedly this inference will be found warranted by a general survey of the

history of Genius. It is, at the same time, impossible to deny, that wit and poetry have in some instances flourished coeval with ferocious bigotry, on the same spot, and under the same government. The literary glory of Spain was posterior to the establishment of the Inquisition. The fancy of Cervantes sported in its neighbourhood, though he declared that he could have made his writings still more entertaining, if he had not dreaded the Holy Office. But the growth of Spanish genius, in spite of the co-existence of religious tyranny, was fostered by uncommon and glorious advantages in the circumstances of the nation. Spain (for we are comparing Spain in the sixteenth with England in the fifteenth century) was, at the period alluded to, great and proud in an empire on which it was boasted that the sun never set. Her language was widely diffused. The wealth of America for awhile animated all her arts. Robertson says that the Spaniards discovered at that time an extent of political knowledge which the English themselves did not attain for more than a century afterwards. Religious persecutions began in England at a time when she was comparatively poor and barbarous, yet after she had been awakened to so much intelligence on the subject of religion as to make one half of the people indignantly impatient of priestly tyranny. If we add to the political troubles of the age the circumstance of religious opinions being silenced and stifled by penal horrors, it will seem more wonderful that the spark of literature was kept alive, than that it did not spread more widely. Yet the fifteenth century had its redeeming traits of refinement, the more wonderful for appearing in the midst of such unfavourable circumstances. It had a Fortescue, although he wandered in exile, unprotected by the constitution which he explained and extolled in his writings. It had a noble patron and lover of letters in Tiptoft,* although he died by the hands of the executioner. It witnessed the founding of many colleges in both of the universities, although they were still the haunts of scholastic quibbling; and it produced, in the venerable Pecock, one conscientious dignitary of the church, who wished to have converted the Protestants by appeals to reason, though for so doing he had his books, and, if he had not recanted in good time, would have had his body also, committed to the flames. To these

* Earl of Worcester.

causes may be ascribed the backwardness of our poetry between the dates of Chaucer and Spenser. I speak of the chasm extending to, or nearly to, Spenser; for, without undervaluing the elegant talents of Lord Surrey, I think we cannot consider the national genius as completely emancipated from oppressive circumstances till the time of Elizabeth. There was indeed a commencement of our poetry under Henry VIII. It was a fine, but a feeble one. English genius seems then to have come forth, but half assured that her day of emancipation was at hand. There is something melancholy even in Lord Surrey's strains of gallantry. The succession of Henry VIII. gave stability to the government, and some degree of magnificence to the state of society. But tyranny was not yet at an end; and to judge not by the gross buffoons, but by the few minds entitled to be called poetical, which appear in the earlier part of the sixteenth century, we may say that the English Muse had still a diffident aspect and a faltering tone.

There is a species of talent, however, which may continue to endite what is called poetry, without having its sensibilities deeply affected by the circumstances of society; and of luminaries of this description our fifteenth century was not destitute. Ritson has enumerated about seventy of them.* Of these, Occleve and Lydgate were the nearest successors to Chaucer. Occleve speaks of himself as Chaucer's scholar. He has, at least, the merit of expressing the sincerest enthusiasm for his master. But it is difficult to controvert the character which has been generally assigned to him, that of a flat and feeble writer. Excepting the adoption of his story of Fortunatus by William Browne in his Pastorals, and the modern republication of a few of his pieces, I know not of any public compliment which has ever been paid to his poetical memory.

Lydgate is altogether the most respectable versifier of the fifteenth century. A list of 250 of the productions ascribed to him (which is given in Ritson's 'Bibliographia Poetica') attests at least the fluency of his pen; and he seems to have ranged with the same facility through the gravest and the lightest subjects of composition. Ballads, hymns, ludicrous stories, legends, romances, and allegories, were equally at his command. Verbose

* In his 'Bibliographia Poetica.'

and diffuse as Dan John of Bury must be allowed to have been, he is not without occasional touches of pathos. The poet Gray was the first in modern times who did him the justice to observe them.* His 'Fall of Princes' may also deserve notice, in tracing back the thread of our national poetry, as it is more likely than any other English production to have suggested to Lord Sackville the idea of his 'Mirror for Magistrates.' 'The Mirror for Magistrates' again gave hints to Spenser in allegory, and may also have possibly suggested to Shakspeare the idea of his historical plays.

I know not if Hardyng,† who belonged to the reign of Edward IV., be worth mentioning as one of the obscure luminaries of this benighted age. He left a 'Chronicle of the History of England,' which possesses an incidental interest from his having been himself a witness to some of the scenes which he records; for he lived in the family of the Percys, and fought under the banners of Hotspur; but from the style of his versified 'Chronicle,' his head would appear to have been much better furnished for sustaining the blows of the battle, than for contriving its poetical celebration.

The Scottish poets of the fifteenth, and of a part of the sixteenth century, would also justly demand a place in any history of our poetry that meant to be copious and minute; as the northern "makers," notwithstanding the difference of dialect, generally denominate their language "Inglis." Scotland produced an entire poetical version of the 'Æneid' before Lord

* Lydgate translated largely from the French and Latin. His principal poems are 'The Fall of Princes,' 'The Siege of Thebes,' and 'The Destruction of Troy.' The first of these is from Laurent's French version of Boccaccio's book, 'De Casibus virorum et feminarum illustrium.' His 'Siege of Thebes,' which was intended as an additional 'Canterbury Tale,' and in the introduction to which he feigns himself in company with 'the host of the Tabard and the Pilgrims,' is compiled from Guido Colonna, Statius, and Seneca. His 'Destruction of Troy' is from the work of Guido Colonna, or from a French translation of it. His 'London Lickpenny' is curious for the minute picture of the metropolis which it exhibits in the fifteenth century. A specimen of Lydgate's humour may be seen in his tale of 'The Prioress and her Three Wooers,' which Mr. Jamieson has given in his 'Popular Ballads and Songs' [vol. i. p. 249-266]. I had transcribed it from a manuscript in the British Museum [Harl. MS. 78], thinking that it was not in print, but found that Mr. Jamieson had anticipated me.

† [A kind of Robert of Gloucester *redivivus*.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Pr. Works*, vol. xvii. p. 13.]

Surrey had translated a single book of it; indeed before there was an English version of any classic, excepting Boëthius, if he can be called a classic. Virgil was only known in the English language through a romance on the Siege of Troy, published by Caxton, which, as Bishop Douglas observes, in the prologue to his Scottish 'Æneid,' is no more like Virgil than the devil is like St. Austin.* Perhaps the resemblance may not even be so great. But the Scottish poets, after all that has been said of them, form nothing like a brilliant revival of poetry. They are on the whole superior, indeed, in spirit and originality to their English contemporaries, which is not saying much; but their style is, for the most part, cast, if possible, in a worse taste. The prevailing fault of English diction, in the fifteenth century, is redundant ornament, and an affectation of anglicising Latin words. In this pedantry and use of "*aureate terms*" the Scottish versifiers went even beyond their brethren of the South. Some exceptions to the remark, I am aware, may be found in Dunbar, who sometimes exhibits simplicity and lyrical terseness; but even *his* style has frequent deformities of quaintness, false ornament, and alliteration. The rest of them, when they meant to be most eloquent, tore up words from the Latin, which never took root in the language, like children making a mock garden with flowers and branches stuck in the ground, which speedily wither.

From Lydgate down to Wyat and Surrey, there seem to be no southern writers deserving attention, unless for the purposes of the antiquary, excepting Hawes, Barklay, and Skelton; and even their names might perhaps be omitted without treason to the cause of taste.†

Stephen Hawes,‡ who was groom of the chamber to Henry VII., is said to have been accomplished in the literature of France and Italy, and to have travelled into those countries. His most

* [Warton, vol. iii. p. 112. Douglas is said to have written his translation in the short space of sixteen months, and to have finished it in 1513.—This was *before Surrey was born!*]

† To the reign of Henry VI. belong Henry Lonelich, who plied the unpoetical trade of a skinner, and who translated the French romance of St. Graal; Thomas Chestre, who made a free and enlarged version of the 'Lai de Lanval' of the French poetess Marie; and Robert Thornton, who versified the 'Morte Arthur' in the alliterative measure of Langlande.

‡ [A bad imitator of Lydgate, ten times more tedious than his original.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Pr. Works*, vol. xvii. p. 13.]

important production is the 'Pastyme of Pleasure,'* an allegorical romance, the hero of which is Grandamour or Gallantry, and the heroine La Belle Pucelle, or Perfect Beauty. In this work the personified characters have all the capriciousness and vague moral meaning of the old French allegorical romance; but the puerility of the school remains, while the zest of its novelty is gone. There is also in his foolish personage of Godfrey Gobelive something of the burlesque of the worst taste of Italian poetry. It is certainly very tiresome to follow Hawes's hero, Grandamour, through all his adventures, studying grammar, rhetoric, and arithmetic in the tower of Doctrine; afterwards slaughtering giants, who have each two or three emblematic heads; sacrificing to heathen gods; then marrying according to the Catholic rites; and, finally, relating his own death and burial, to which he is so obliging as to add his epitaph. Yet, as the story seems to be of Hawes's invention, it ranks him above the mere chroniclers and translators of the age. Warton praises him for improving on the style of Lydgate. His language may be somewhat more modern, but in vigour or harmony I am at a loss to perceive in it any superiority. The indulgent historian of our poetry has, however, quoted one fine line from him, describing the fiery breath of a dragon which guarded the island of beauty:—

“The fire was great; it made the island light.”

Every romantic poem in his own language is likely to have interested Spenser; and if there were many such glimpses of magnificence in Hawes, we might suppose the author of 'The Fairy Queen' to have cherished his youthful genius by contemplating them; but his beauties are too few and faint to have afforded any inspiring example to Spenser.

Alexander Barklay was a priest of St. Mary Otterburne, in Devonshire, and died at a great age at Croydon in the year 1552. His principal work was a free translation of Sebastian Brandt's † 'Navis Stultifera,' enlarged with some satirical strictures of his

* He also wrote 'The Temple of Glass,' the substance of which is taken from Chaucer's 'House of Fame.' ['The Temple of Glass' is now, as Mr. Hallam observes, by general consent restored to Lydgate.—*Lit. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 432; and Price's *Warton*, vol. iii. p. 46-7.]

† Sebastian Brandt was a civilian of Basil.

own upon the manners of his English contemporaries. His 'Ship of Fools' has been as often quoted as most obsolete English poems; but if it were not obsolete it would not be quoted. He also wrote Eclogues, which are curious as the earliest pieces of that kind in our language. From their title we might be led to expect some interesting delineations of English rural customs at that period. But Barklay intended to be a moralist, and not a painter of nature; and the chief though insipid moral which he inculcates is, that it is better to be a clown than a courtier.* The few scenes of country life which he exhibits for that purpose are singularly ill fitted to illustrate his doctrine, and present rustic existence under a miserable aspect, more resembling the caricature of Scotland in Churchill's 'Prophecy of Famine' than anything which we can imagine to have ever been the general condition of English peasants. The speakers, in one of his eclogues, lie littered among straw, for want of a fire to keep themselves warm; and one of them expresses a wish that the milk for dinner may be curdled, to save them the consumption of bread. As the writer's object was not to make us pity but esteem the rustic lot, this picture of English poverty can only be accounted for by supposing it to have been drawn from partial observation, or the result of a bad taste, that naturally delighted in squalid subjects of description. Barklay, indeed, though he has some stanzas which might be quoted for their strength of thought and felicity of expression, is, upon the whole, the least ambitious of all writers to adorn his conceptions of familiar life with either dignity or beauty. An amusing instance of this occurs in one of his moral apologues: Adam, he tells us in verse, was one day abroad at his work—Eve was at the door of the house, with her children playing about her; some of them she was 'keming,' says the poet, prefixing another participle, not of

* Barklay gives some sketches of manners; but they are those of the town, not the country. Warton is partial to his black-letter eclogues, because they contain allusions to the customs of the age. They certainly inform us at what hour our ancestors usually dined, supped, and went to bed; that they were fond of good eating; and that it was advisable, in the poet's opinion, for any one who attempted to help himself to a favourite dish at their banquets to wear a gauntlet of mail. Quin the player, who probably never had heard of Barklay, delivered at a much later period a similar observation on city feasts, namely, that the candidate for a good dish of turtle ought never to be without a basket-hilted knife and fork.

the most delicate kind, to describe the usefulness of the comb. Her Maker having deigned to pay her a visit, she was ashamed to be found with so many ill-dressed children about her, and hastened to stow a number of them out of sight; some of them she concealed under hay and straw, others she put up the chimney, and one or two into a "tub of draff." Having produced, however, the best looking and best dressed of them, she was delighted to hear their Divine Visitor bless them, and destine some of them to be kings and emperors, some dukes and barons, and others sheriffs, mayors, and aldermen. Unwilling that any of her family should forfeit blessings whilst they were going, she immediately drew out the remainder from their concealment; but when they came forth they were so covered with dust and cobwebs, and had so many bits of chaff and straw sticking to their hair, that, instead of receiving benedictions and promotion, they were doomed to vocations of toil and poverty, suitable to their dirty appearance.

John Skelton, who was the rival and contemporary of Barklay, was laureate to the University of Oxford, and tutor to the prince, afterwards Henry VIII. Erasmus must have been a bad judge of English poetry, or must have alluded only to the learning of Skelton, when in one of his letters he pronounces him "*Britannicarum literarum lumen et decus.*" There is certainly a vehemence and vivacity in Skelton which was worthy of being guided by a better taste; and the objects of his satire bespeak some degree of public spirit.* But his eccentricity in attempts at humour is at

* He was the determined enemy of the mendicant friars and of Cardinal Wolsey. The courtiers of Henry VIII., whilst obliged to flatter a minister whom they detested, could not but be gratified with Skelton's boldness in singly daring to attack him. In his picture of Wolsey at the Council Board, he thus describes the imperious minister:—

"— in chamber of Stars
All matters there he mars:
Clapping his rod on the board,
No man dare speak a word;
For he hath all the saying,
Without any renying.

He rolleth in his Recórds;
He sayeth, How say ye, my lords,
Is not my reason good?
Good even, good Robin Hood.
Some say Yes, and some
Sit still, as they were dumb."

These lines are a remarkable anticipation^a of the very words in the fifteenth article of the charges preferred against Wolsey by the Parliament of 1529—

^a Neve's 'Cursory Remarks on the English Poets.'

once vulgar and flippant; and his style is almost a texture of slang phrases, patched with shreds of French and Latin. We are told, indeed, in a periodical work of the present day, that his manner is to be excused, because it was assumed for "the nonce," and was suited to the taste of his contemporaries. But it is surely a poor apology for the satirist of any age to say that he stooped to humour its vilest taste, and could not ridicule vice and folly without degrading himself to buffoonery.* Upon the whole, we might regard the poetical feeling and genius of England as almost extinct at the end of the fifteenth century, if the beautiful ballad of the 'Nut-brown Maid' were not to be referred to that period.† It is said to have been translated from the German; but even considered as a translation it meets us as a surprising flower amidst the winter-solstice of our poetry.

The literary character of England was not established till near the end of the sixteenth century. At the beginning of that century, immediately anterior to Lord Surrey, we find Barklay and Skelton popular candidates for the foremost honours of English poetry. They are but poor names. Yet, slowly as the improve-

"That the said Lord Cardinal, sitting among the Lords and other of your Majesty's most honourable Council, used himself so, that, if any man would show his mind according to his duty, he would so take him up with his accustomed words, that they were better to hold their peace than to speak; so that he would hear no more speak but one or two great personages, so that he would have all the words himself, and consumed much time without a fair tale." His ridicule drew down the wrath of Wolsey, who ordered him to be apprehended. But Skelton fled to the sanctuary of Westminster Abbey, where he was protected; and died in the same year in which Wolsey's prosecutors drew up the article of impeachment, so similar to the satire of the poet.

* [I know Skelton only by the modern edition of his works, dated 1736. But from this stupid publication I can easily discover that he was no ordinary man. Why Warton and the writers of his school rail at him vehemently I know not; he was perhaps the best scholar of his day, and displays on many occasions strong powers of description, and a vein of poetry that shines through all the rubbish which ignorance has spread over it. He flew at high game, and therefore occasionally called in the aid of vulgar ribaldry to mask the direct attack of his satire.—Gifford, *Jonson*, vol. viii. p. 77.]

The power, the strangeness, the volubility of his language, the intrepidity of his satire, and the perfect originality of his manner, render Skelton one of the most extraordinary poets of any age or country.—Southey, *Specimens*; and *Quar. Rev.*, vol. xi. p. 485.]

† Warton places it about the year 1500. [It was in print in 1521, if not a little earlier.]

ment of our poetry seems to proceed in the early part of the sixteenth century, the circumstances which subsequently fostered the national genius to its maturity and magnitude begin to be distinctly visible even before the year 1500. The accession of Henry VII., by fixing the monarchy and the prospect of its regular succession, forms a great era of commencing civilization. The art of printing, which had been introduced in a former period of discord, promised to diffuse its light in a steadier and calmer atmosphere. The great discoveries of navigation, by quickening the intercourse of European nations, extended their influence to England. In the short portion of the fifteenth century during which printing was known in this country, the press exhibits our literature at a lower ebb than even that of France; but before that century was concluded the tide of classical learning had fairly set in. England had received Erasmus, and had produced Sir Thomas More. The English poetry of the last of these great men is indeed of trifling consequence, in comparison with the general impulse which his other writings must have given to the age in which he lived. But everything that excites the dormant intellect of a nation must be regarded as contributing to its future poetry. It is possible that in thus adverting to the diffusion of knowledge (especially classical knowledge) which preceded our golden age of originality, we may be challenged by the question, how much the greatest of all our poets was indebted to learning. We are apt to compare such geniuses as Shakspeare to comets in the moral universe, which baffle all calculations as to the causes which accelerate or retard their appearance, or from which we can predict their return. But those phenomena of poetical inspiration are, in fact, still dependent on the laws and light of the system which they visit. Poets may be indebted to the learning and philosophy of their age, without being themselves men of erudition or philosophers. When the fine spirit of truth has gone abroad, it passes insensibly from mind to mind, independent of its direct transmission from books; and it comes home in a more welcome shape to the poet when caught from his social intercourse with his species than from solitary study. Shakspeare's genius was certainly indebted to the intelligence and moral principles which existed in his age, and to that intelligence and to those moral principles the revival

of classical literature undoubtedly contributed. So also did the revival of pulpit eloquence, and the restoration of the Scriptures to the people in their native tongue. The dethronement of scholastic philosophy, and of the supposed infallibility of Aristotle's authority—an authority at one time almost paramount to that of the Scriptures themselves—was another good connected with the Reformation; for though the logic of Aristotle long continued to be formally taught, scholastic theology was no longer sheltered beneath his name. Bible divinity superseded the glosses of the schoolmen, and the writings of Duns Scotus were consigned at Oxford to proclaimed contempt.* The reign of true philosophy was not indeed arrived, and the Reformation itself produced events tending to retard that progress of literature and intelligence which had sprung up under its first auspices. Still, with partial interruptions, the culture of classical literature proceeded in the sixteenth century; and, amidst that culture, it is difficult to conceive that a system of Greek philosophy more poetical than Aristotle's was without its influence on the English spirit—namely, that of Plato. That England possessed a distinct school of Platonic philosophy in the sixteenth century cannot, I believe, be affirmed,† but we hear of the Platonic studies of Sir Philip Sydney; and traits of Platonism are some-

* Namely, in the year 1535. The decline of Aristotle's authority, and that of scholastic divinity, though to a certain degree connected, are not, however, to be identified. What were called the doctrines of Aristotle by the schoolmen were a mass of metaphysics established in his name, first by Arabic commentators, and afterwards by Catholic doctors, among the latter of whom many expounded the philosophy of the Stagyrte without understanding a word of the original language in which his doctrines were written. Some Platonic opinions had also mixed with the metaphysics of the schoolmen. Aristotle was nevertheless their main authority; though it is probable that, if he had come to life, he would not have fathered much of the philosophy which rested on his name. Some of the reformers threw off scholastic divinity and Aristotle's authority at once; but others, while they abjured the schoolmen, adhered to the Peripatetic system. In fact, until the revival of letters, Aristotle could not be said, with regard to the modern world, to be either fully known by his own works, or fairly tried by his own merits. Though ultimately overthrown by Bacon, his writings and his name, in the age immediately preceding Bacon, had ceased to be a mere stalking-horse to the schoolmen, and he was found to contain heresies which the Catholic metaphysicians had little suspected.

† Enfield mentions no English school of Platonism before the time of Gale and Cudworth. [Hallam is equally silent.]

times beautifully visible in the poetry of Surrey and of Spenser.* The Italian Muse communicated a tinge of that spirit to our poetry, which must have been further excited in the minds of poetical scholars by the influence of Grecian literature. Hurd indeed observes that the Platonic doctrines had a deep influence on the sentiments and character of Spenser's age. They certainly form a very poetical creed of philosophy. The Aristotelian system was a vast mechanical labyrinth, which the human faculties were chilled, fatigued, and darkened by exploring. Plato, at least, expands the imagination, for he was a great poet; and if he had put in practice the law respecting poets which he prescribed to his ideal republic, he must have begun by banishing himself.

The Reformation, though ultimately beneficial to literature, like all abrupt changes in society, brought its evil with its good. Its establishment under Edward VI. made the English too fanatical and polemical to attend to the finer objects of taste. Its commencement under Henry VIII., however promising at first, was too soon rendered frightful, by bearing the stamp of a tyrant's character, who, instead of opening the temple of religious peace, established a Janus-faced persecution against both the old and new opinions. On the other hand, Henry's power, opulence, and

* In one of Spenser's hymns on Love and Beauty, he breathes this Platonic doctrine:—

“ — Every spirit, as it is most pure,
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,
So it the fairer body doth procure
To habit in, and it more fairly dight
With cheerful grace and amiable sight;
For of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form, and doth the body make.”

So, also, Surrey to his fair Geraldine:—

“ The golden gift that Nature did thee give,
To fasten friends, and feed them at thy will
With form and favour, taught me to believe
How thou art *made to show her greatest skill.*”

This last thought was probably suggested by the lines in Petrarch, which express a doctrine of the Platonic school, respecting the idea or origin of beauty:—

“ In qual parte del ciel', in quale idea
Era l'empio onde Natura tolse
Quel bel viso leggiadro, in che ella volve
Mostrar quaggiù, quantò lassì potea.”

ostentation gave some encouragement to the arts. He himself, monster as he was, affected to be a poet. His masques and pageants assembled the beauty and nobility of the land, and prompted a gallant spirit of courtesy. The cultivation of musical talents among his courtiers fostered our early lyrical poetry. Our intercourse with Italy was renewed from more enlightened motives than superstition; and under the influence of Lord Surrey Italian poetry became once more, as it had been in the days of Chaucer, a source of refinement and regeneration to our own. I am not indeed disposed to consider the influence of Lord Surrey's works upon our language in the very extensive and important light in which it is viewed by Dr. Nott. I am doubtful if that learned editor has converted many readers to his opinion, that Lord Surrey was the first who gave us metrical instead of rhythmical versification; for, with just allowance for ancient pronunciation, the heroic measure of Chaucer will be found in general not only to be metrically correct, but to possess considerable harmony.* Surrey was not the inventor of our metrical versification; nor had his genius the potent voice and the magic spell which rouse all the dormant energies of a language. In certain walks of composition, though not in the highest, viz. in the ode, elegy, and epitaph, he set a chaste and delicate example; but he

* [Our father Chaucer hath used the same liberty in feet and measures that the Latinists do use: and whosoever do peruse and well consider his works, he shall find that, although his lines are not always of one selfsame number of syllables, yet, being read by one that hath understanding, the longest verse and that which hath most syllables will fall (to the ear) correspondent unto that which hath in it fewest syllables, shall be found yet to consist of words that have such natural sound as may seem equal in length to a verse which hath many more syllables of lighter accents.—Gascoigne.

“ But if some Englishe woorde herein seem sweet,
Let Chaucer's name exalted be therefore;
Yf any verse doe passe on pleasant feet,
The praise thereof redownd to Petrark's lore.

Gascoigne, *The Grief of Joy.*

It is a disputed question whether Chaucer's verses be rhythmical or metrical. I believe them to have been written rhythmically, upon the same principle on which Coleridge composed his 'Christabel'—that the number of *beats* or accentuated syllables in every line should be the same, although the number of syllables themselves might vary. Verse so composed will often be strictly metrical; and because Chaucer's is frequently so, the argument has been raised that it is always so if it be read properly, according to the intention of the author.—Southey, *Cowper*, vol. ii. p. 117.]

was cut off too early in life, and cultivated poetry too slightly, to carry the pure stream of his style into the broad and bold channels of inventive fiction. Much undoubtedly he did, in giving sweetness to our numbers, and in substituting for the rude tautology of a former age a style of soft and brilliant ornament, of selected expression, and of verbal arrangement, which often winds into graceful novelties, though sometimes a little objectionable from its involution. Our language was also indebted to him for the introduction of blank verse. It may be noticed at the same time that blank verse, if it had continued to be written as Surrey wrote it, would have had a cadence too uniform and cautious to be a happy vehicle for the dramatic expression of the passions. Grimoald, the second poet who used it after Lord Surrey, gave it a little more variety of pauses; but it was not till it had been tried as a measure by several composers that it acquired a bold and flexible modulation.*

The genius of Sir Thomas Wyatt was refined and elevated like that of his noble friend and contemporary; but his poetry is more sententious and sombrous, and in his lyrical effusions he studied terseness rather than suavity. Besides these two interesting men, Sir Francis Bryan, the friend of Wyatt, George Viscount Rochford, the brother of Anna Boleyn, and Thomas Lord Vaux, were poetical courtiers of Henry VIII. To the second of these Ritson assigns, though but by conjecture, one of the most beautiful and plaintive strains of our elder poetry, 'O Death, rock me on sleep.' In Tottell's Collection, the earliest poetical miscellany in our language, two pieces have been ascribed to the same nobleman, the one entitled 'The Assault of Cupid,' the other beginning, 'I loath that I did love,' which have been frequently reprinted in modern times.

A poem of uncommon merit in the same collection, which is entitled 'The restless State of a Lover,' and which commences with these lines,

"The sun, when he hath spread his rays,
And show'd his face ten thousand ways,"

has been ascribed by Dr. Nott to Lord Surrey, but not on decisive evidence.

* [Surrey is not a great poet, but he was an influential one; we owe to him the introduction of the Sonnet into our language, and the first taste for the Italian poets.]

In the reign of Edward VI. the effects of the Reformation became visible in our poetry, by blending religious with poetical enthusiasm, or rather by substituting the one for the other. The national Muse became puritanical, and was not improved by the change. Then flourished Sternhold and Hopkins, who, with the best intentions and the worst taste, degraded the spirit of Hebrew psalmody by flat and homely phraseology; and, mistaking vulgarity for simplicity, turned into bathos what they found sublime. Such was the love of versifying holy writ at that period, that the Acts of the Apostles were rhymed and set to music by Christopher Tye.*

Lord Sackville's name is the next of any importance in our poetry that occurs after Lord Surrey's. The opinion of Sir Egerton Brydges, with respect to the date of the first appearance of Lord Sackville's 'Induction to the Mirror for Magistrates' would place that production, in strictness of chronology, at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. As an edition of the 'Mirror,' however, appeared in 1559, supposing Lord Sackville not to have assisted in that edition, the first shape of the work must have been cast and composed in the reign of Mary. From the date of

* To the reign of Edward VI. and Mary may be referred two or three contributors to the 'Paradise of Dainty Devices' [1576], who, though their lives extended into the reign of Elizabeth, may exemplify the state of poetical language before her accession. Among these may be placed Edwards, author of the pleasing little piece, '*Amantium iræ amoris integratio est*,' and Hunnis, author of the following song:—

“ When first mine eyes did view and mark
 Thy beauty fair for to behold,
 And when mine ears 'gan first to hark
 The pleasant words that thou me told,
 I would as then I had been free
 From ears to hear, and eyes to see.
 And when in mind I did consent
 To follow thus my fancy's will,
 And when my heart did first relent
 To taste such bait myself to spill,
 I would my heart had been as thine,
 Or else thy heart as soft as mine.
 O flatterer false! thou traitor born,
 What mischief more might thou devise,
 Than thy dear friend to have in scorn,
 And him to wound in sundry wise;
 Which still a friend pretends to be,
 And art not so by proof I see?
 Fie, fie upon such treachery.”

Lord Sackville's birth,* it is also apparent that, although he flourished under Elizabeth, and lived even to direct the councils of James, his prime of life must have been spent, and his poetical character formed, in the most disastrous period of the sixteenth century, a period when we may suppose the cloud that was passing over the public mind to have cast a gloom on the complexion of its literary taste. During five years of his life, from twenty-five to thirty, the time when sensibility and reflection meet most strongly, Lord Sackville witnessed the horrors of Queen Mary's reign; and I conceive that it is not fanciful to trace in his poetry the tone of an unhappy age. His plan for 'The Mirror of Magistrates' is a mass of darkness and despondency. He proposed to make the figure of Sorrow introduce us in Hell to every unfortunate great character of English history. The poet, like Dante, takes us to the gates of Hell; but he does not, like the Italian poet, bring us back again. It is true that those doleful legends were long continued, during a brighter period; but this was only done by an inferior order of poets, and was owing to their admiration of Sackville. Dismal as his allegories may be, his genius certainly displays in them considerable power. But better times were at hand. In the reign of Elizabeth the English mind put forth its energies in every direction, exalted by a purer religion, and enlarged by new views of truth. This was an age of loyalty, adventure, and generous emulation. The chivalrous character was softened by intellectual pursuits, while the genius of chivalry itself still lingered, as if unwilling to depart, and paid his last homage to a warlike and female reign. A degree of romantic fancy remained in the manners and superstitions of the people; and allegory might be said to parade the streets in their public pageants and festivities. Quaint and pedantic as those allegorical exhibitions might often be, they were nevertheless more expressive of erudition, ingenuity, and moral meaning, than they had been in former times. The philosophy of the highest minds still partook of a visionary character. A poetical spirit infused itself into the practical heroism of the age; and some of the worthies of that period seem less like ordinary men than like beings called forth out of fiction, and arrayed in the brightness of her dreams.

* [1536, if not a little earlier.]

They had "high thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy."* The life of Sir Philip Sydney was poetry put into action.

The result of activity and curiosity in the public mind was to complete the revival of classic literature, to increase the importation of foreign books, and to multiply translations, from which Poetry supplied herself with abundant subjects and materials, and in the use of which she showed a frank and fearless energy, that criticism and satire had not yet acquired power to overawe. Romance came back to us from the southern languages, clothed in new luxury by the warm imagination of the south. The growth of poetry under such circumstances might indeed be expected to be as irregular as it was profuse. The field was open to daring absurdity, as well as to genuine inspiration; and accordingly there is no period in which the extremes of good and bad writing are so abundant. Stanihurst, for instance, carried the violence of nonsense to a pitch of which there is no preceding example. Even late in the reign of Elizabeth, Gabriel Harvey was aided and abetted by several men of genius in his conspiracy to subvert the versification of the language; and Lyly gained over the court for a time to employ his corrupt jargon called Euphuism. Even Puttenham, a grave and candid critic, leaves an indication of crude and puerile taste, when, in a laborious treatise on poetry, he directs the composer how to make verses beautiful to the eye, by writing them "in the shapes of eggs, turbot, fuzees, and lozenges."

Among the numerous poets belonging exclusively to Elizabeth's reign, † Spenser stands without a class and without a rival. To proceed from the poets already mentioned to Spenser is certainly to pass over a considerable number of years, which are important especially from their including the dates of those early attempts in the regular drama which preceded the appearance of Shakspeare. ‡ I shall therefore turn back again to that period, after having done homage to the name of Spenser.

He brought to the subject of 'The Fairy Queen' a new and

* An expression used by Sir P. Sydney.

† Of Shakspeare's career a part only belongs to Elizabeth's reign, and of Jonson's a still smaller.

‡ The tragedy of 'Gorboduc,' by Sackville and Norton, was represented in 1561-2. Spenser's Pastorals were published in 1579, and the three first books of 'The Fairy Queen' in 1590.

enlarged structure of stanza, elaborate and intricate, but well contrived for sustaining the attention of the ear, and concluding with a majestic cadence. In the other poets of Spenser's age we chiefly admire their language when it seems casually to advance into modern polish and succinctness. But the antiquity of Spenser's style has a peculiar charm. The mistaken opinion that Ben Jonson censured the antiquity of the diction in 'The Fairy Queen' * has been corrected by Mr. Malone, who pro-

* Ben Jonson applied his remark to Spenser's Pastorals. [Malone was very rash in his correction: "Spenser, in affecting the ancients," says Jonson, "writ no language; yet I would have him read for his matter, but as Virgil read Ennius."—*Works*, ix. 215. Jonson's remark is a general censure, not confined to 'The Shepherd's Calendar' alone. "Some," he says, in another place (evidently alluding to Spenser), "some seek Chaucerisms with us which were better expunged and banished."—*Works*, ix. 22.

If Spenser's language is the language of his age, who among his contemporaries is equally obsolete in phraseology? The letters of the time have none of his words borrowed of antiquity, nor has the printed prose, the poetry contradistinguished from the drama, or the drama, which is always the language of the day. His antiquated words were his choice, not his necessity. Has Drayton, or Daniel, or Peele, Marlowe, or Shakspeare the obscure words found constantly recurring in Spenser? "Let others," says Daniel (the well-languaged Daniel as Coleridge calls him)—

"Let others sing of knights and paladines,
In aged accents and untimely words,—

I sing of Delia in the language of those who are about her and of her day." Davenant is express on the point, and speaks of Spenser's new grafts of old withered words and exploded expressions. Surely the writers of Spenser's own age are better authorities than Malone, who read verbally not spiritually, and, emptying a commonplace-book of obsolete words, called upon us to see in separate examples what collectively did not then exist. It is easy to find many of Spenser's *Chaucerisms* in his contemporaries, but they do not crowd and characterize their writings; they tincture, but they do not colour; they are there, but not for ever there.

Bolton, who wrote in 1622 of language and style, speaks to this point in his 'Hypercritica.' He is recommending authors for imitation and study—"those authors among us whose English hath in my conceit most propriety, and is nearest to the phrase of court, and to the speech used among the noble and among the better sort in London; the two sovereign seats, and as it were Parliament tribunals, to try the question in." "In verse there are," he says, "to furnish an English historian with copy and tongue, Ed. Spenser's Hymns. I cannot advise the allowance of other of his poems, as for practick English, no more than I can do Jeff. Chaucer, Lydgate, Peirce Ploughman, or Laureat Skelton. It was laid as a fault to the charge of Sallust, that he used some old outworn words, stolen out of Cato his Books de Originibus. And for an historian in our tongue to AFFECT the like out of those our poets would be accounted a foul oversight. That therefore must not be."

Gray has a letter to prove that the language of the age is never the lan-

nounces it to be exactly that of his contemporaries. His authority is weighty; still, however, without reviving the exploded error respecting Jonson's censure, one might imagine the difference of Spenser's style from that of Shakspeare's, whom he so shortly preceded, to indicate that his gothic subject and story made him lean towards words of the elder time. At all events, much of his expression is now become antiquated; though it is beautiful in its antiquity, and, like the moss and ivy on some majestic building, covers the fabric of his language with romantic and venerable associations.

His command of imagery is wide, easy, and luxuriant. He threw the soul of harmony into our verse, and made it more warmly, tenderly, and magnificently descriptive than it ever was before, or, with a few exceptions, than it has ever been since. It must certainly be owned that in description he exhibits nothing of the brief strokes and robust power which characterise the very greatest poets; but we shall nowhere find more airy and expansive images of visionary things, a sweeter tone of sentiment, or a finer flush in the colours of language, than in this Rubens of English poetry. His fancy teems exuberantly in minuteness of circumstance, like a fertile soil sending bloom and verdure through the utmost extremities of the foliage which it nourishes. On a comprehensive view of the whole work, we certainly miss the charm of strength, symmetry, and rapid or interesting progress; for, though the plan which the poet designed is not completed, it is easy to see that no additional cantos could have rendered it less perplexed.* But still there is a richness in his

guage of poetry. Was Spenser behind or Shakspeare in advance? Stage language must necessarily be the language of the time; and Shakspeare gives us words pure and neat, yet plain and customary—the style that Ben Jonson loved, the eldest of the present and the newest of the past—while Spenser fell back on Chaucer as the

“Well of English undefilde,”

as he was pleased to express it. (See Warton's *Essay on Spenser*, vol. i., and Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 328.) “The language of Spenser,” says Hallam, “like that of Shakspeare, is an instrument manufactured for the sake of the work it was to perform.”]

* [Mr. Campbell has given a character of Spenser, not so enthusiastic as that to which I have alluded, but so discriminating, and in general sound, that I shall take the liberty of extracting it from his ‘Specimens of the British Poets.’—Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 334.]

materials, even where their coherence is loose, and their disposition confused. The clouds of his allegory may seem to spread into shapeless forms, but they are still the clouds of a glowing atmosphere. Though his story grows desultory, the sweetness and grace of his manner still abide by him. He is like a speaker whose tones continue to be pleasing, though he may speak too long; or like a painter who makes us forget the defect of his design by the magic of his colouring. We always rise from perusing him with melody in the mind's ear, and with pictures of romantic beauty impressed on the imagination.* For these attractions 'The Fairy Queen' will ever continue to be resorted to by the poetical student. It is not, however, very popularly read, and seldom perhaps from beginning to end, even by those who can fully appreciate its beauties. This cannot be ascribed merely to its presenting a few words which are now obsolete; nor can it be owing, as has been sometimes alleged, to the tedium inseparable from protracted allegory. Allegorical fable *may* be made entertaining. With every disadvantage of dress and language, the humble John Bunyan has made this species of writing very amusing.

The reader may possibly smile at the names of Spenser and Bunyan being brought forward for a moment in comparison; but it is chiefly because the humbler allegorist is so poor in language that his power of interesting the curiosity is entitled to admiration. We are told by critics that the passions may be allegorised, but that Holiness, Justice, and other such thin abstractions of the mind, are too unsubstantial machinery for a poet;—yet we all know how well the author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress' (and he was a poet though he wrote in prose) has managed such abstractions as Mercy and Fortitude. In his artless hands those attributes cease to be abstractions, and become our most intimate friends. Had Spenser, with all the wealth and graces of his fancy, given his story a more implicit and animated form, I cannot believe that there was anything in the nature of his machinery to set bounds to his power of enchant-

* [Spenser's allegorical story resembles, methinks, a continuance of extraordinary dreams.—Sir W. Davenant.]

After my reading a canto of Spenser two or three days ago to an old lady between 70 and 80, she said that I had been showing her a collection of pictures. She said very right.—Pope to Spence.]

ment. Yet, delicious as his poetry is, his story considered as a romance is obscure, intricate, and monotonous. He translated entire cantos from Tasso, but adopted the wild and irregular manner of Ariosto. The difference is that Spenser appears like a civilized being, slow and sometimes half forlorn, in exploring an uninhabited country, while Ariosto traverses the regions of romance like a hardy native of its pathless wilds. Hurd and others, who forbid us to judge of 'The Fairy Queen' by the test of classical unity, and who compare it to a gothic church, or a gothic garden, tell us what is little to the purpose. They cannot persuade us that the story is not too intricate and too diffuse. The thread of the narrative is so entangled, that the poet saw the necessity for explaining the design of his poem in prose, in a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh; and the perspicuity of a poetical design which requires such an explanation may, with no great severity, be pronounced a contradiction in terms. It is degrading to poetry, we shall perhaps be told, to attach importance to the mere story which it relates. Certainly the poet is not a great one whose only charm is the management of his fable; but where there is a fable, it should be conspicuous.

There is one peculiarity in 'The Fairy Queen' which, though not a deeply pervading defect, I cannot help considering as an incidental blemish; namely, that the allegory is doubled and crossed with complimentary allusions to living or recent personages, and that the agents are partly historical and partly allegorical. In some instances the characters have a threefold allusion. Gloriana is at once an emblem of true glory, an empress of fairy land, and her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. Envy is a personified passion, and also a witch, and, with no very charitable insinuation, a type of the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots. The knight in dangerous distress is Henry IV. of France; and the knight of magnificence, Prince Arthur, the son of Uther Pendragon, an ancient British hero, is the bulwark of the Protestant cause in the Netherlands. Such distraction of allegory cannot well be said to make a fair experiment of its power. The poet may cover his moral meaning under a single and transparent veil of fiction; but he has no right to muffle it up in foldings which hide the form and symmetry of truth.

Upon the whole, if I may presume to measure the imper-

fections of so great and venerable a genius, I think we may say that, if his popularity be less than universal and complete, it is not so much owing to his obsolete language, nor to degeneracy of modern taste, nor to his choice of allegory as a subject, as to the want of that consolidating and crowning strength which alone can establish works of fiction in the favour of all readers and of all ages. This want of strength, it is but justice to say, is either solely or chiefly apparent when we examine the entire structure of his poem, or so large a portion of it as to feel that it does not impel or sustain our curiosity in proportion to its length. To the beauty of insulated passages who can be blind? The sublime description of "*Him who with the Night durst ride*," 'The House of Riches,' 'The Canto of Jealousy,' 'The Masque of Cupid,' and other parts, too many to enumerate, are so splendid, that after reading them we feel it for the moment invidious to ask if they are symmetrically united into a whole. Succeeding generations have acknowledged the pathos and richness of his strains, and the new contour and enlarged dimensions of grace which he gave to English poetry. He is the poetical father of a Milton and a Thomson. Gray habitually read him when he wished to frame his thoughts for composition; and there are few eminent poets in the language who have not been essentially indebted to him.

"Hither, as to their fountain, other stars
Repair, and in their urns drew golden light."

The publication of 'The Fairy Queen,' and the commencement of Shakspeare's dramatic career, may be noticed as contemporary events; for by no supposition can Shakspeare's appearance as a dramatist be traced higher than 1589,* and that of Spenser's great poem was in the year 1590. I turn back from that date to an earlier period, when the first lineaments of our regular drama began to show themselves.

Before Elizabeth's reign we had no dramatic authors more important than Bale and Heywood the Epigrammatist. Bale,

* [It is clear that before 1591, or even 1592, Shakspeare had no celebrity as a writer of plays; he must, therefore, have been valuable to the theatre chiefly as an actor; and if this was the case, namely, that he speedily trode the stage with some respectability, Mr. Rowe's tradition that he was at first admitted in a mean capacity must be taken with a bushel of doubt.—Campbell, *Life of Shakspeare*, 8vo. 1838, p. xxii.]

before the titles of tragedy and comedy were well distinguished, had written comedies on such subjects as the Resurrection of Lazarus, and the Passion and Sepulture of our Lord. He was, in fact, the last of the race of mystery-writers. Both Bale and Heywood died about the middle of the sixteenth century, but flourished (if such a word can be applied to them) as early as the reign of Henry VIII. Until the time of Elizabeth, the public was contented with mysteries, moralities, or interludes, too humble to deserve the name of comedy. The first of these, the mysteries, originated, almost as early as the Conquest, in shows given by the church to the people. The moralities,* which were chiefly allegorical, probably arose about the middle of the fifteenth century; and the interludes became prevalent during the reign of Henry VIII.†

Lord Sackville's 'Gorboduc,' first represented in 1561-2, and Still's 'Gammer Gurton's Needle,' about 1566, were the earliest, though faint, draughts of our regular tragedy and comedy.‡ They did not, however, immediately supersede the taste for the allegorical moralities. Sackville even introduced dumb show in his tragedy to explain the piece, and he was not the last of the old dramatists who did so. One might conceive the explanation of allegory by real personages to be a natural complaisance to an audience; but there is something peculiarly ingenious in making allegory explain reality, and the dumb interpret for those who could speak. In reviewing the rise of the drama, 'Gammer Gurton's Needle' and Sackville's 'Gorboduc' form convenient resting-places for the memory; but it may be doubted if their superiority over the mysteries and moralities be half so great as

* [Mr. J. Payne Collier observes that the *Mysteries* should be called *Miracle-Plays*, and the *Moralities*, *Morals* or *Moral-Plays*.]

† Warton also mentions Rastell, the brother-in-law of Sir Thomas More, who was a printer; but who is believed by the historian of our poetry to have been also an author, and to have made the moralities in some degree the vehicle of science and philosophy. He published [about 1519] a new interlude on The Nature of the Four Elements, in which the tracts of America lately discovered and the manners of the natives are described.— [See Collier's 'Annals,' vol. ii. p. 319.]

‡ [An earlier English comedy than 'Gammer Gurton's Needle,' viz. 'Ralph Roister Doister,' by Nicholas Udall, has been discovered since Mr. Campbell wrote this Essay. The only copy known is in the library of Eton College, and the only accurate reprint was made for the Shakspeare Society by Mr. W. D. Cooper.]

their real distance from an affecting tragedy or an exhilarating comedy. The main incident in 'Gammer Gurton's Needle' is the loss of a needle in a man's smallclothes.* 'Gorboduc' has no interesting plot or impassioned dialogue; but it dignified the stage with moral reflection and stately measure. It first introduced blank verse instead of ballad rhymes in the drama. Gascoigne gave a further popularity to blank verse by his paraphrase of 'Jocasta,' from Euripides, which appeared in 1566. The same author's 'Supposes,' translated from Ariosto, was our earliest prose comedy. Its dialogue is easy and spirited. Edwards's 'Palamon and Arcite' was acted in the same year, to the great admiration of Queen Elizabeth, who called the author into her presence, and complimented him on having justly drawn the character of a genuine lover.

Ten tragedies of Seneca were translated into English verse at different times, and by different authors, before the year 1581. One of these translators was Alexander Neyvile, afterwards secretary to Archbishop Parker, whose 'Œdipus' came out as early as 1563; and though he was but a youth of nineteen, his style has considerable beauty. The following lines, which open the first act, may serve as a specimen:—

"The night is gone, and dreadful day begins at length t' appear,
 And Phœbus, all bedimm'd with clouds, himself aloft doth rear;
 And, gliding forth, with deadly hue and doleful blaze in skies,
 Doth bear great terror and dismay to the beholder's eyes.
 Now shall the houses void be seen, with plague devoured quite,
 And slaughter which the night hath made shall day bring forth to light.
 Doth any man in princely thrones rejoice? O brittle joy!
 How many ills, how fair a face, and yet how much annoy,
 In thee doth lurk, and hidden lies—what heaps of endless strife!
 They judge amiss that deem the prince to have the happy life."

In 1568 was produced the tragedy of 'Tancred and Sigismunda,' by Robert Wilmot and four other students of the Inner

* ["It is a piece of low humour; the whole jest turning upon the loss and the recovery of the needle with which Gammer Gurton was to repair the breeches of her man Hodge; but in point of manners it is a great curiosity, as the *curta supellex* of our ancestors is scarcely anywhere so well described." . . . "The unity of time, place, and action, is observed through the play, with an accuracy of which France might be jealous." . . . "It is remarkable that the earliest English tragedy" (alluding to 'Gorboduc') "and comedy are both works of considerable merit; that each partakes of the distinct character of its class; that the tragedy is without intermixture of comedy—the comedy without any intermixture of tragedy." —Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. vi. p. 333.]

Temple. It is reprinted in Reed's plays; but that reprint is taken not from the first edition, but from one greatly polished and amended in 1592.* Considered as a piece coming within the verge of Shakspeare's age, it ceases to be wonderful. Immediately subsequent to these writers we meet with several obscure and uninteresting dramatic names, among which is that of Whetstone, the author of 'Promos and Cassandra' [1578], in which piece there is a partial anticipation of the plot of Shakspeare's 'Measure for Measure.' Another is that of Preston, whose tragedy of 'Cambyses.'† is alluded to by Shakspeare, when Falstaff calls for a cup of sack, that he may weep "in King Cambyses' vein."‡ There is, indeed, matter for weeping in this tragedy; for, in the course of it, an elderly gentleman is flayed alive. To make the skinning more pathetic, his own son is witness to it, and exclaims,—

"What child is he of Nature's mould could bide the same to see,
His father flayed in this wise? O how it grieveth me!"

It may comfort the reader to know that this theatric decortication was meant to be allegorical; and we may believe that it was performed with no degree of stage illusion that could deeply affect the spectator.§

In the last twenty years of the sixteenth century we come to a period when the increasing demand for theatrical entertainments produced play-writers by profession. The earliest of these appears to have been George Peele, who was the city poet and conductor of the civic pageants. His 'Arraignment of Paris' came out in 1584. Nash calls him an Atlas in poetry. Unless

* [Newly revived, and polished according to the decorum of these days. That is, as Mr. Collier supposes, by the removal of the rhymes to a blank-verse fashion.]

† In the title-page it is denominated "A lamentable Tragedy, mixed full of pleasant Mirth."

‡ [The Tamerlanes and Tamer-chams of the late age had nothing in them but the scenical strutting and furious vociferation to warrant them to the ignorant gapers.—Ben Jonson. (*Gifford*, vol. ix. p. 180.)

I suspect that Shakspeare confounded *King Cambyses* with *King Darius*. Falstaff's solemn fustian bears not the slightest resemblance, either in metre or in matter, to the vein of King Cambyses. *Kyng Daryus*, whose *doleful strain* is here burlesqued, was a *pithie and plesaunt enterlude*, printed about the middle of the sixteenth century.—Gifford. Note on Jonson's 'Poetaster,' *Works*, vol. ii. p. 455.]

§ [The stage direction excites a smile: *Flea him with a false skin.*]

we make allowance for his antiquity, the expression will appear hyperbolic; but, with that allowance, we may justly cherish the memory of Peele as the oldest genuine dramatic poet of our language. His 'David and Bethsabe' is the earliest fountain of pathos and harmony that can be traced in our dramatic poetry. His fancy is rich and his feeling tender, and his conceptions of dramatic character have no inconsiderable mixture of solid veracity and ideal beauty. There is no such sweetness of versification and imagery to be found in our blank verse anterior to Shakspeare.* David's character—the traits both of his guilt and sensibility—his passion for Bethsabe—his art in inflaming the military ambition of Urias—and his grief for Absalom, are delineated with no vulgar skill. The luxuriant image of Bethsabe is introduced by these lines:—

“ Come, gentle Zephyr, trick'd with those perfumes
That erst in Eden sweeten'd Adam's love,
And stroke my bosom with thy gentle fan:
This shade, sun-proof, is yet no proof for thee.
Thy body, smoother than this waveless spring,
And purer than the substance of the same,
Can creep through that his lances cannot pierce.
Thou and thy sister, soft and sacred Air,
Goddess of life, and governess of health,
Keeps every fountain fresh, and arbour sweet.
No brazen gate her passage can refuse,
Nor bushy thicket bar thy subtle breath:
Then deck thee with thy loose delightful robes,
And on thy wings bring delicate perfumes,
To play the wanton with us through the leaves.

“ *David.* What tunes, what words, what looks, what wonders
pierce

My soul, incensed with a sudden fire?
What tree, what shade, what spring, what paradise,
Enjoys the beauty of so fair a dame?
Fair Eva, placed in perfect happiness,
Lending her praise-notes to the liberal heavens,
Strook with the accents of archangels' tunes,
Wrought not more pleasure to her husband's thoughts,
Than this fair woman's words and notes to mine.
May that sweet plain, that bears her pleasant weight,

* [Mr. Dyce, in his edition of Peele, has quoted this passage from Mr. Campbell—“ a critic,” he styles him, “ who is by no means subject to the pardonable weakness of discovering beauties in every writer of the olden time.”—p. xxxviii.]

It is quoted, too, by Mr. Hallam (*Lit. Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 378), who concurs with Mr. Collier in thinking these compliments excessive.]

Be still enamell'd with discolour'd flowers ;
 That precious fount bear sand of purest gold ;
 And, for the pebble, let the silver streams
 Play upon rubies, sapphires, chrysolites ;
 The brims let be embraced with golden curls
 Of moss, that sleeps with sound the waters make ;
 For joy to feed the fount with their recourse
 Let all the grass that beautifies her bower
 Bear manna every morn instead of dew !”

* * * * *

Joab thus describes the glory of David :—

“Beauteous and bright is he among the tribes,
 As when the sun, attired in glistening robe,
 Comes dancing from his oriental gate,
 And, bridegroom-like, hurls through the gloomy air
 His radiant beams : such doth King David show,
 Crown'd with the honour of his enemies' town,
 Shining in riches like the firmament,
 The starry vault that overhangs the earth ;
 So looketh David, King of Israel.”

At the conclusion of the tragedy, when David gives way to his grief for Absalom, he is roused with great dignity and energy by the speech of Joab. When informed by Joab of the death of his son, David exclaims,—

“*David.* Thou man of blood ! thou sepulchre of death !
 Whose marble breast entombs my bowels quick,
 Did I not charge thee, nay, entreat thy hand,
 Even for my sake, to spare my Absalom ?
 And hast thou now, in spite of David's health,
 And scorn to do my heart some happiness,
 Given him the sword, and spilt his purple soul ?

“*Joab.* What ! irks it David that he victor breathes,
 That Juda, and the fields of Israel
 Should cleanse their faces from their children's blood ?
 What ! art thou weary of thy royal rule ?
 Is Israel's throne a serpent in thine eyes,
 And he that set thee there so far from thanks,
 That thou must curse his servant for his sake ?
 Hast thou not said, that, as the morning light,
 The cloudless morning, so should be thine house,
 And not as flowers, by the brightest rain,
 Which grow up quickly, and as quickly fade ?
 Hast thou not said, the wicked are as thorns,
 That cannot be preserved with the hand ;
 And that the man shall touch them must be arm'd
 With coats of iron, and garments made of steel,
 Or with the shaft of a defenced spear ?
 And art thou angry he is now cut off,
 That led the guiltless swarming to their deaths,
 And was more wicked than an host of men ?

Advance thee from thy melancholy den,
 And deck thy body with thy blissful robes,
 Or, by the Lord that sways the heaven, I swear,
 I'll lead thine armies to another king,
 Shall cheer them for their princely chivalry,
 And not sit daunted, frowning in the dark,
 When his fair looks, with oil and wine refresh'd,
 Should dart into their bosoms gladsome beams,
 And fill their stomachs with triumphant feasts ;
 That, when elsewhere stern War shall sound his trump,
 And call another battle to the field,
 Fame still may bring thy valiant soldiers home,
 And for their service happily confess
 She wanted worthy trumps to sound their prowess :
 Take thou this course, and live ;—*Refuse, and die.*'

Lyly, Peele, Greene, Kyd, Nash, Lodge, and Marlowe, were the other writers for our early stage, a part of whose career preceded that of Shakspeare.* Lyly, whose dramatic language is

* [An interesting subject of inquiry in Shakspeare's literary history is the state of our dramatic poetry when he began to alter and originate English plays. Before his time mere mysteries and miracle-plays, in which Adam and Eve appeared naked, in which the devil displayed his horns and tail, and in which Noah's wife boxed the patriarch's ears before entering the ark, had fallen comparatively into disuse, after a popularity of four centuries ; and in the course of the sixteenth century the clergy were forbidden by orders from Rome to perform in them. Meanwhile "moralities," which had made their appearance about the middle of the fifteenth century, were also hastening their retreat, as well as those pageants and masques in honour of royalty, which nevertheless aided the introduction of the drama. But we owe our first regular dramas to the universities, the inns of court, and public seminaries. The scholars of these establishments engaged in free translations of classical dramatists, though with so little taste, that Seneca was one of their favourites. They caught the coldness of that model, however, without the feeblest trace of his slender graces ; they looked at the ancients without understanding them ; and they brought to their plots neither unity, design, nor affecting interest. There is a general similarity among all the plays that preceded Shakspeare in their ill-conceived plots, in the bombast and dulness of tragedy, and in the vulgar buffoonery of comedy.]

Of our great poet's immediate predecessors, the most distinguished were Lyly, Peele, Greene, Kyd, Nash, Lodge, and Marlowe. Lyly was not entirely devoid of poetry, for we have some pleasing lyrical verses by him ; but in the drama he is cold, mythological, and conceited, and he even polluted for a time the juvenile age of our literature with his abominable Euphuism. Peele has left some melodious and fanciful passages in his 'David and Bethsabe.' Greene is not unjustly praised for his comedy 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay.' Kyd's 'Spanish Tragedy' was at first admired, but subsequently quoted only for its samples of the mock sublime. Nash wrote no poetry, except for the stage ; but he is a poor dramatic poet, though his prose satires are remarkably powerful. Lodge was not much happier on the stage than Nash ; his prose works are not very valuable ; but he wrote

prose, has traits of genius which we should not expect from his generally depraved taste, and he has several graceful interspersions of "sweet lyric song." But his manner, on the whole, is *stilted*. "Brave Marlowe, bathed in the Thespian springs,"* of whose "mighty Muse" Ben Jonson himself speaks reverentially, had powers of no ordinary class, and even ventured a few steps into the pathless sublime. But his pathos is dreary, and the terrors of his Muse remind us more of Minerva's gorgon than her countenance. The first sober and cold school of tragedy, which began with Lord Sackville's 'Gorboduc,' was succeeded by one of headlong extravagance. Kyd's bombast was proverbial in his own day. With him the genius of Tragedy might be said to have run mad; and, if we may judge of one work, the joint production of Greene and Lodge, to have hardly recovered her wits in the company of those authors. The piece to which I allude is entitled 'A Looking-glass for London' (1594). There the 'Tamburlane' of Kyd is fairly rivalled in rant and blasphemy by the hero, Rasni, King of Nineveh, who boasts

"Great Jewry's God, that foil'd stout Benhadab,
 Could not rebate the strength that Rasni brought;
 For be he God in heaven, yet viceroys know
 Rasni is God on earth, and none but he."

In the course of the play the imperial swaggerer marries his own sister, who is quite as consequential a character as himself; but, finding her struck dead by lightning, he deigns to espouse her lady-in-waiting, and is finally converted, after his wedding, by Jonah, who soon afterwards arrives at Nineveh. It would be perhaps unfair, however, to assume this tragedy as a fair test of the dramatic talents of either Greene or Lodge. Ritson recommended the dramas of Greene as well worthy of being col-

one satire in verse of considerable merit, and various graceful little lyrics. Marlowe was the only great man among Shakspeare's precursors; his conceptions were strong and original; his intellect grasped his subject as a whole: no doubt he dislocated the thews of his language by overstrained efforts at the show of strength, but he delineated character with a degree of truth unknown to his predecessors: his 'Edward the Second' is pathetic, and his 'Faustus' has real grandeur. If Marlowe had lived, Shakspeare might have had something like a competitor.—Campbell, *Life of Shakspeare*, p. xxiii.]

* [Drayton.]

lected. The taste of that antiquary was not exquisite, but his knowledge may entitle his opinion to consideration.*

Among these precursors of Shakspeare we may trace, in Peele and Marlowe, a pleasing dawn of the drama, though it was by no means a dawn corresponding to so bright a sunrise as the appearance of his mighty genius. He created our *romantic* drama, or, if the assertion is to be qualified, it requires but a small qualification.† There were, undoubtedly, prior occupants of the dramatic ground in our language; but they appear only like unprosperous settlers on the patches and skirts of a wilderness, which he converted into a garden. He is, therefore, never compared with his native predecessors. Criticism goes back, for names worthy of being put in competition with his, to the first great masters of dramatic invention; and even in the points of dissimilarity between them and him discovers some of the highest indications of his genius. Compared with the classical com-

* [His Dramas and Poems were printed together in 1831 by Mr. Dyce. "In richness of fancy, Greene," says Mr. Dyce, "is inferior to Peele; and, with the exception of his amusing comedy 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,' there is, perhaps, but little to admire in his dramatic productions."]

† ["Untaught, unpractised, in a barbarous age,
I found not, but *created* first the stage;
And if I drain'd no Greek or Latin store,
'Twas that my own abundance gave me more."]

Dryden, of *Shakspeare*.

The English stage might be considered equally without rule and without model when Shakspeare arose. The effect of the genius of an individual upon the taste of a nation is mighty; but that genius, in its turn, is formed according to the opinions prevalent at the period when it comes into existence. Such was the case with Shakspeare. Had he received an education more extensive, and possessed a taste refined by the classical models, it is probable that he also, in admiration of the ancient drama, might have mistaken the form for the essence, and subscribed to those rules which had produced such masterpieces of art. Fortunately for the full exertion of a genius, as comprehensive and versatile as intense and powerful, Shakspeare had no access to any models of which the commanding merit might have controlled and limited his own exertions. He followed the path which a nameless crowd of obscure writers had trodden before him; but he moved in it with the grace and majestic step of a being of a superior order, and vindicated for ever the British theatre from a pedantic restriction to classical rule. Nothing went before Shakspeare which in any respect was fit to fix and stamp the character of a national drama; and certainly no one will succeed him capable of establishing, by mere authority, a form more restricted than that which Shakspeare used.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Pr. Works*, vol. iii. p. 336.]

posers of antiquity, he is to our conceptions nearer the character of a universal poet; more acquainted with man in the real world, and more terrific and bewitching in the preternatural. He expanded the magic circle of the drama beyond the limits that belonged to it in antiquity; made it embrace more time and locality; filled it with larger business and action—with vicissitudes of gay and serious emotion, which classical taste had kept divided—with characters which developed humanity in stronger lights and subtler movements—and with a language more wildly, more playfully diversified by fancy and passion, than was ever spoken on any stage. Like Nature herself, he presents alternations of the gay and the tragic; and his mutability, like the suspense and precariousness of real existence, often deepens the force of our impressions. He converted imitation into illusion. To say that, magician as he was, he was not faultless, is only to recall the flat and stale truism that everything human is imperfect. But how to estimate his imperfections!* To praise him is easy—in *facili causâ cuivis licet esse disertus*—but to make a special, full, and accurate estimate of his imperfections would require a delicate and comprehensive discrimination and an authority which are almost as seldom united in one man as the powers of Shakspeare himself. He is the poet of the world. The magnitude of his genius puts it beyond all private opinion to set defined limits to the admiration which is due to it. We know, upon the whole, that the sum of blemishes to be deducted from his merits is not great,† and we should scarcely be thankful

* [He (Shakspeare) was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commendation; he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great when great occasion is presented to him; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets—

Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.

Dryden.]

† [If Shakspeare's embroideries were burnt down, there would still be silver at the bottom of the melting-pot.—Dryden, *Malone*, vol. ii. p. 295.]

to one who should be anxious to make it. No other poet triumphs so anomalously over eccentricities and peculiarities in composition which would appear blemishes in others; so that his blemishes and beauties have an affinity which we are jealous of trusting any hand with the task of separating. We dread the interference of criticism with a fascination so often inexplicable by critical laws, and justly apprehend that any man in standing between us and Shakspeare may show for pretended spots upon his disk only the shadows of his own opacity.

Still it is not a part even of that enthusiastic creed to believe that he has no excessive mixture of the tragic and comic, no blemishes of language in the elliptical throng and impatient pressure of his images, no irregularities of plot and action, which another Shakspeare would avoid, if "nature had not broken the mould in which she made him," or if he should come back into the world to blend experience with inspiration.*

† The bare name of the dramatic unities is apt to excite revolting ideas of pedantry, arts of poetry, and French criticism. With none of these do I wish to annoy the reader. I conceive that it may be said of those unities as of fire and water, that they are good servants but bad masters. In perfect rigour they were never imposed by the Greeks, and they would be still heavier shackles if they were closely riveted on our own drama. It would be worse than useless to confine dramatic action literally and immoveably to one spot, or its imaginary time to the time in which it is represented. On the other hand, dramatic time and place cannot surely admit of indefinite expansion. It would be better, for the sake of illusion and probability, † to change the

* ["There is not a doubt that he lighted up his glorious fancy at the lamp of classical mythology:—

Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury,
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill—

Who can read these lines without perceiving that Shakspeare had imbibed a deeper feeling of the beauty of Pagan mythology than a thousand pedants could have imbibed in their whole lives?"—Campbell, *Life of Shakspeare*, p. xvi.]

† Dr. Johnson has said, with regard to local unity in the drama, that we can as easily imagine ourselves in one place as another. So we can, at the beginning of a play; but having taken our imaginary station with the poet

scene from Windsor to London, than from London to Pekin; it would look more like reality if a messenger, who went and returned in the course of the play, told us of having performed a journey of ten or twenty, rather than of a thousand miles; and if the spectator had neither that, nor any other circumstance, to make him ask how so much could be performed in so short a time.

In an abstract view of dramatic art, its principles must appear to lie nearer to unity than to the opposite extreme of disunion, in our conceptions of time and place. Giving up the law of unity in its literal rigour, there is still a latitude of its application which may preserve proportion and harmony in the drama.*

The brilliant and able Schlegel has traced the principles of what he denominates the romantic, in opposition to the classical drama; and conceives that Shakspeare's theatre, when tried by those principles, will be found not to have violated any of the unities, if they are largely and liberally understood. I have no doubt that Mr. Schlegel's criticism will be found to have proved this point in a considerable number of the works of our mighty poet. There are traits, however, in Shakspeare, which, I must own, appear to my humble judgment incapable of being illustrated by any system or principles of art. I do not allude to his historical plays, which, expressly from being historical, may be called a privileged class. But in those of purer fiction, it strikes me that there are licences conceded indeed to imagination's "chartered libertine," but anomalous with regard to anything which can be recognised as principles in dramatic art. When *Perdita*, for instance, grows from the cradle to the marriage altar in the course of the play, I can perceive no unity in the design of the piece, and take refuge in the supposition of Shakspeare's genius triumphing and trampling over art. Yet Mr. Schlegel, as far as I have observed, makes no exception to this breach of

in one country, I do not believe with Dr. Johnson that we change into a different one with perfect facility to the imagination. Lay the first act in Europe, and we surely do not naturally expect to find the second in America.

* [For some admirable remarks on dramatic unities, see Scott's 'Essay on the Drama' (*Misc. Pr. Works*, vol. vi. p. 298-321). Dr. Johnson has numerous obligations to an excellent paper by Farquhar—a fact not generally enough known.]

temporal unity; nor, in proving Shakspeare a regular artist on a mighty scale, does he deign to notice this circumstance, even as the *ultima Thule* of his licence.* If a man contends that dramatic laws are all idle restrictions, I can understand him; or if he says that Perdita's growth on the stage is a trespass on art, but that Shakspeare's fascination over and over again redeems it, I can both understand and agree with him. But when I am left to infer that all this is right on romantic principles, I confess that those principles become too romantic for my conception. If Perdita may be born and married on the stage, why may not Webster's Duchess of Malfi lie-in between the acts, and produce a fine family of tragic children? Her Grace actually does so in Webster's drama, and he is a poet of some genius, though it is not quite so sufficient as Shakspeare's to give a "sweet oblivious antidote" to such "perilous stuff." It is not, however, either in favour of Shakspeare's or of Webster's genius that we shall be called on to make allowance, if we justify in the drama the lapse of such a number of years as may change the apparent identity of an individual. If romantic unity is to be so largely interpreted, the old Spanish dramas, where youths grow grey-beards upon the stage, the mysteries and moralities, and productions teeming with the wildest anachronism, might all come in with their grave or laughable claims to romantic legitimacy.

"Nam sic

Et Laberi mimos ut pulchra poemata mirer."—*Hor.*

On a general view, I conceive it may be said that Shakspeare nobly and legitimately enlarged the boundaries of time and place in the drama; but in extreme cases, I would rather agree with Cumberland, to waive all mention of his name in speaking

* [*Mitis.* How comes it that in some one play we see so many seas, countries, and kingdoms, passed over with such admirable dexterity?

Cordatus. O, that but shows how well the authors can travel in their vocation, and outrun the apprehension of their auditory.—Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of his Humour.*

This was said in 1599, and at *The Globe*, when Shakspeare, that very year, perhaps the performance before, had crossed the seas in his chorus from England to France, and from France to England, with admirable dexterity. Jonson wrote to recommend his own unities, and to instruct his audience; not, as the Shakspeare commentators would have us believe, to abuse Shakspeare, in the very theatre in which he was a large sharer, and unquestionably the main-stay.]

of dramatic laws, than accept of those licences for art which are not art, and designate irregularity by the name of order.

There were other poets who started nearly coeval with Ben Jonson in the attempt to give a classical form to our drama. Daniel, for instance, brought out his tragedy of 'Cleopatra' in 1594; but his elegant genius wanted the strength requisite for great dramatic efforts. Still more unequal to the task was the Earl of Sterline, who published his cold "*monarchic tragedies*" in 1604. The triumph of founding English classical comedy belonged exclusively to Jonson. In his tragedies it is remarkable that he freely dispenses with the unities, though in those tragedies he brings classical antiquity in the most learnedly authenticated traits before our eyes. The vindication of his great poetic memory forms an agreeable contrast in modern criticism with the bold bad things which used to be said of him in a former period; as when Young compared him to a blind Samson, who pulled down the ruins of antiquity on his head and buried his genius beneath them.* Hurd, though he inveighed against the too abstract conception of his characters, pronouncing them rather personified humours than natural beings, did him, nevertheless, the justice to quote one short and lovely passage from one of his masques, and the beauty of that passage probably turned the attention of many readers to his then neglected compositions.† It is, indeed, but one of the many beauties which justify all that has been said of Jonson's lyrical powers.

* ["If the ancients," says Headley, "were to reclaim their own, Jonson would not have a rag to cover his nakedness:" a remark that called a taunting reply from Gifford in one of his most bitter moods. Dryden has beautifully said of Jonson that you may track him everywhere in the snow of the ancients.]

† Namely, the song of Night, in the masque of 'The Vision of Delight':—

"Break, Phant'sie, from thy cave of cloud."

[His lyrical poetry forms, perhaps, the most delightful part of his poetical character. In songs, and masques, and interludes, his fancy has a wildness and a sweetness that we should not expect from the severity of his dramatic taste. It cannot be said, indeed, that he is always free from metaphysical conceit, but his language is weighty with thought, and polished with elegance. Upon the whole, his merits, after every fair deduction, leave him in possession of a high niche in our literature, and entitle him to be ranked (next to Shakspeare) as the most important benefactor of our early drama.—Campbell, article 'Jonson' in *Brewster's Encyclopædia*.]

In that fanciful region of the drama (the masque) he stands as pre-eminent as in comedy; or, if he can be said to be rivalled, it is only by Milton. And our surprise at the wildness and sweetness of his fancy in one walk of composition is increased by the stern and rigid (sometimes rugged) air of truth which he preserves in the other. In the regular drama he certainly holds up no romantic mirror to nature. His object was to exhibit human characters at once strongly comic and severely and instructively true—to nourish the understanding, while he feasted the sense of ridicule. He is more anxious for verisimilitude than even for comic effect. He understood the humours and peculiarities of his species scientifically, and brought them forward in their greatest contrasts and subtlest modifications. If Shakspeare carelessly scattered illusion, Jonson skilfully prepared it. This is speaking of Jonson in his happiest manner. There is a great deal of harsh and sour fruit in his miscellaneous poetry. It is acknowledged that in the drama he frequently overlabours his delineation of character, and wastes it tediously upon uninteresting humours and peculiarities. He is a moral painter, who delights over much to show his knowledge of moral anatomy. Beyond the pale of his three great dramas, 'The Fox,' 'The Epicene, or Silent Woman,' and 'The Alchemist,' it would not be difficult to find many striking exceptions to that love of truth and probability which, in a general view, may be regarded as one of his best characteristics. Even within that pale, namely, in his masterly character of Volpone, one is struck with what, if it be not an absolute breach, is at least a very bold stretch, of probability. It is true that Volpone is altogether a being daringly conceived; and those who think that art spoiled the originality of Jonson may well rectify their opinion by considering the force of imagination which it required to concentrate the traits of such a character as "the Fox;" not to speak of his Mosca, who is the phoenix of all parasites. Volpone himself is not like the common misers of comedy—a mere money-loving dotard—a hard shrivelled old mummy, with no other spice than his avarice to preserve him; he is a happy villain—a jolly misanthrope—a little god in his own selfishness; and Mosca is his priest and prophet. Vigorous and healthy, though past the prime of life, he hugs himself in

his arch humour, his successful knavery and imposture, his sensuality and his wealth, with an unhallowed relish of selfish existence. His passion for wealth seems not to be so great as his delight in gulling the human "vultures and gorecrows" who flock round him at the imagined approach of his dissolution—the speculators who put their gold, as they conceive, into his dying gripe, to be returned to them a thousand-fold in his will. Yet still, after this exquisite rogue has stood his trial in a sweat of agony at the *scrutineum*, and blessed his stars at having narrowly escaped being put to the torture, there is something (one would think) a little too strong for probability in that mischievous mirth and love of tormenting his own dupes, which bring him, by his own folly, a second time within the fangs of justice. 'The Fox' and 'The Alchemist' seem to have divided Jonson's admirers as to which of them may be considered his masterpiece. In confessing my partiality to the prose comedy of 'The Silent Woman,' considered merely as a comedy, I am by no means forgetful of the rich eloquence which poetry imparts to the two others. But 'The Epicene,' in my humble apprehension, exhibits Jonson's humour in the most exhilarating perfection.* With due admiration for 'The Alchemist,' I cannot help thinking the jargon of the chemical jugglers, though it displays the learning of the author, to be tediously profuse. 'The Fox' rises to something higher than comic effect. It is morally impressive. It detains us at particular points in serious terror and suspense. But 'The Epicene' is purely facetious. I know not, indeed, why we should laugh more at the sufferings of Morose than at those of the sensualist Sir Epicure Mammon, who deserves his miseries much better than the rueful and pitiable Morose. Yet so it is, that, though the feelings of pathos and ridicule seem so widely different, a certain tincture of the pitiable makes comic distress more irresistible. Poor Morose.

* [The plot of 'The Fox' is admirably conceived; and that of 'The Alchemist,' though faulty in the conclusion, is nearly equal to it. In the two comedies of 'Every Man in his Humour,' and 'Every Man out of his Humour,' the plot deserves much less praise, and is deficient at once in interest and unity of action; but in that of 'The Silent Woman,' nothing can exceed the art with which the circumstance upon which the conclusion turns is, until the very last scene, concealed from the knowledge of the reader, while he is tempted to suppose it constantly within his reach.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. vi. p. 341.]

suffers what the fancy of Dante could not have surpassed in description, if he had sketched out a ludicrous Purgatory. A lover of quiet—a man exquisitely impatient of rude sounds and loquacity—who lived in a retired street—who barricadoed his doors with mattresses to prevent disturbance to his ears—and who married a wife because he could with difficulty prevail upon her to speak to him—has hardly tied the fatal knot when his house is tempested by female eloquence, and the marriage of him who had pensioned the city-wakes to keep away from his neighbourhood is celebrated by a concert of trumpets. He repairs to a court of justice to get his marriage if possible dissolved, but is driven back in despair by the intolerable noise of the court. For this marriage how exquisitely we are prepared by the scene of courtship! When Morose questions his intended bride about her likings and habits of life, she plays her part so hypocritically, that he seems for a moment impatient of her reserve, and with the most ludicrous cross feelings wishes her to speak more loudly, that he may have a proof of her taciturnity from her own lips; but, recollecting himself, he gives way to the rapturous satisfaction of having found a silent woman, and exclaims to Cutbeard, “Go thy ways and get me a clergyman presently, with a soft low voice, to marry us, and pray him he will not be impertinent, but brief as he can.”

The art of Jonson was not confined to the cold observation of the unities of place and time, but appears in the whole adaptation of his incidents and characters to the support of each other. Beneath his learning and art he moves with an activity which may be compared to the strength of a man who can leap and bound under the heaviest armour.*

The works of Jonson bring us into the seventeenth century; and early in that century, our language, besides the great names already mentioned, contains many other poets whose works may

* [He (Jonson) was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them; there is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times whom he has not translated in ‘Sejanus’ and ‘Catiline.’ But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch, and what would be theft in other poets is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers he so represented old Rome to us in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their poets had written either of his tragedies we had seen less of it than in him.—Dryden.]

be read with a pleasure independent of the interest which we take in their antiquity.

Drayton and Daniel, though the most opposite in the cast of their genius, are pre-eminent in the second poetical class of their age for their common merit of clear and harmonious diction. Drayton is prone to Ovidian conceits, but he plays with them so gaily, that they almost seem to become him as if natural. His feeling is neither deep, nor is the happiness of his fancy of long continuance, but its short April gleams are very beautiful. His 'Legend of the Duke of Buckingham' opens with a fine description. Unfortunately, his descriptions in long poems are, like many fine mornings, succeeded by a cloudy day :—

“ The lark, that holds observance to the sun,
 Quaver'd her clear notes in the quiet air,
 And on the river's murmuring base did run,
 Whilst the pleased heavens her fairest livery wear ;
 The place such pleasure gently did prepare,
 The flowers my smell, the flood my taste to steep,
 And the much softness lulled me asleep.
 When, in a vision, as it seem'd to me,
 Triumphal music from the flood arose.”

* * * * *

Of the grand beauties of poetry he has none ; but of the sparkling lightness of his best manner an example may be given in the following stanzas, from his sketch of 'The Poet's Elysium.'

“ A Paradise on earth is found,
 Though far from vulgar sight,
 Which with those pleasures doth abound,
 That it Elysium hight.

* * * * *

The winter here a summer is,
 No waste is made by time ;
 Nor doth the autumn ever miss
 The blossoms of the prime.

* * * * *

Those cliffs whose craggy sides are clad
 With trees of sundry suits,
 Which make continual summer glad,
 E'en bending with their fruits—

Some ripening, ready some to fall,
 Some blossom'd, some to bloom,
 Like gorgeous hangings on the wall
 Of some rich princely room.

* * * * *

There, in perpetual summer shade,
 Apollo's prophets sit,
 Among the flowers that never fade,
 But flourish like their wit;

To whom the nymphs, upon their lyres,
 Tune many a curious lay,
 And, with their most melodious quires,
 Make short the longest day.

Daniel is "*somewhat a-flat*," as one of his contemporaries said of him,* but he had more sensibility than Drayton, and his moral reflection rises to higher dignity. The lyrical poetry of Elizabeth's age runs often into pastoral insipidity and fantastic carelessness, though there may be found in some of the pieces of Sir Philip Sydney, Lodge, Marlowe, and Breton, not only a sweet wild spirit but an exquisite finish of expression. Of these combined beauties Marlowe's song, 'Come live with me, and be my love,' is an example. 'The Soul's Errand,'† by whomsoever it was written, is a burst of genuine poetry. I know not how that short production has ever affected other readers, but it carries to my imagination an appeal which I cannot easily account for from a few simple rhymes. It places the last and inexpressibly awful hour of existence before my view, and sounds like a sentence of vanity on the things of this world, pronounced by a dying man, whose eye glares on eternity, and whose voice is raised by strength from another world.‡ Raleigh, also (according to Puttenham), had a "lofty and passionate" vein. It is difficult, however, to authenticate his poetical relics. Of the numerous sonnetteers of that time (keeping Shakspeare and Spenser apart), Drummond and Daniel are certainly the best. Hall was the master satirist of the age; obscure and quaint at times, but full of nerve and picturesque illustration. No contemporary satirist has given equal grace and dignity to moral censure. Very unequal to him in style, though often as original in thought, and as graphic in exhibiting manners, is Donne,

* [Bolton, in his 'Hypercritica,' 1622.]

† [Mr. Campbell means the poem properly and better known as 'The Lie.']

‡ Is not 'The Soul's Errand' the same poem with 'The Soul's Knell,' which is always ascribed to Richard Edwards?—If so, why has it been inserted in Raleigh's poems by Sir Egerton Brydges? [They are distinct poems; 'The Soul's Errand' is what is called 'The Lie.' See *post*, Sir Walter Raleigh.]

some of whose satires have been modernized by Pope.* Corbet has left some humorous pieces of raillery on the Puritans. Wither, all fierce and fanatic on the opposite side, has nothing more to recommend him in invective than the sincerity of that zeal for God's house which ate him up. Marston, better known in the drama than in satire, was characterised by his contemporaries for his ruffian style. He has more will than skill in invective. "*He puts in his blows with love,*" as the pugilists say of a hard but artless fighter; a degrading image, but on that account not the less applicable to a coarse satirist.

Donne was the "best goodnatured man, with the worst-natured Muse." A romantic and uxorious lover, he addresses the object of his real tenderness with ideas that outrage decorum. He begins his own epithalamium with a most indelicate invocation to his bride. His ruggedness and whim are almost proverbially known.† Yet there is a beauty of thought which at intervals rises from his chaotic imagination, like the form of Venus smiling on the waters. Giles and Phineas Fletcher possessed harmony and fancy. The simple Warner has left, in his 'Argentile and Curan,' perhaps the finest pastoral episode in our language. Browne was an elegant describer of rural scenes, though incompetent to fill them with life and manners. As a poetical narrator of fiction, Chalkhill‡ is rather tedious; but he atones for the slow progress of his narrative by many touches of rich and romantic description. His numbers are as musical as those of any of his contemporaries who employ the same form of versification. It was common with the writers of the heroic couplet of that age to bring the sense to a full and frequent pause in the middle of the line. This break, by relieving the

* [Would not Donne's satires, which abound with so much wit, appear more charming if he had taken care of his words and his numbers? * * * I may safely say of this present age, that if we are not so great wits as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets.—Dryden.]

† [Nothing could have made Donne a poet, unless as great a change had been worked in the internal structure of his ears as was wrought in elongating those of Midas.—Southey, *Specimens*, p. xxiv.]

‡ Chalkhill was a gentleman and a scholar, the friend of Spenser. He died before he could finish the fable of his 'Thealma and Clearchus,' which was published, long after his death, by Isaak Walton. [And has been since reprinted; one of Mr. Singer's numerous contributions to our literature. For the whole of the known particulars of Chalkhill's life, see Sir Harris Nicolas's 'Life of Walton.']

uniformity of the couplet measure, sometimes produces a graceful effect and a varied harmony which we miss in the exact and unbroken tune of our later rhyme; a beauty of which the reader will probably be sensible in perusing such lines of Chalkhill's as these:—

“And ever and anon he might well hear
A sound of music steal in at his ear,
As the wind gave it being. So sweet an air
Would strike a siren mute——.”

This relief, however, is used rather too liberally by the elder rhymists, and is, perhaps, as often the result of their carelessness as of their good taste. Nor is it at all times obtained by them without the sacrifice of one of the most important uses of rhyme, namely, the distinctness of its effect in marking the measure. The chief source of the gratification which the ear finds in rhyme is our perceiving the emphasis of sound coincide with that of sense. In other words, the rhyme is best placed on the most emphatic word in the sentence. But it is nothing unusual with the ancient couplet-writers, by laying the rhyme on unimportant words, to disappoint the ear of this pleasure, and to exhibit the restraint of rhyme without its emphasis.

In classical translation Phaer and Golding were the earliest successors of Lord Surrey. Phaer published his ‘Virgil’ in 1562, and Golding his ‘Ovid’ three years later.* Both of

* [The first seven books of Phaer’s ‘Virgil’ were first printed in 1558, the eighth, ninth, and the fragment of the tenth in 1562. Twyne’s continuation was first printed in 1573.]

In 1565 Golding published the first four books of Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses,’ and in 1567 a translation of the whole.

We have had the good fortune to fall in with a notice of Arthur Golding in a Museum MS. of orders made on petitions to the Privy Council from 1605 to 1616. “No particulars,” says Mr. Collier, “of the life of Golding have been recovered. He does not appear to have written anything after 1590, but the year of his death is uncertain.”—*Bridge. Cat.*, p. 130.

Hatfield, the xxvth of July, 1605.

*Arthur Golding
to have the sole
printing of some
books translated
by himself.*

His Ma^{tes} is graciously pleased that the lord Archbyschopp of Canterburie his Grace and his Ma^{tes} Attorney Geñall shall advisedlie consider of this sut, and for such of the books as they shall think meete for the benefitt of the church and commonweale to be solie printed by this peticoner and wherby noe enormous monopolies may ensue, his Ma^{tes} Attorney is to drawe a book ready for his Ma^{tes} signature, contayning a graunt hereof to the peticoner, leaving a blank for the number of yeires to be inserted at his Ma^{tes} pleasure.

Lans. MSS. No. 266, folio 61.]

these translators, considering the state of the language, have considerable merit. Like them, Chapman, who came later, employed in his version of the 'Iliad' the fourteen-syllable rhyme, which was then in favourite use. Of the three translators, Phaer is the most faithful and simple, Golding the most musical, and Chapman the most spirited; though Chapman is prone to the turgid, and often false to the sense of Homer. Phaer's 'Æneid' has been praised by a modern writer,* in the 'Lives of the Nephews of Milton,' with absurd exaggeration. I have no wish to disparage the fair value of the old translator; but when the biographer of Milton's nephews declares "that nothing in language or conception can exceed the style in which Phaer treats of the last day of the existence of Troy," I know of no answer to this assertion but to give the reader the very passage which is pronounced so inimitable—although, to save myself further impediment in the text, I must subjoin it in a note.†

* [William Godwin.]

† ENEAS'S NARRATIVE AFTER THE DEATH OF PRIAM.—ENEID II.

"Than first the cruel fear me caught, and sore my sprites appall'd,
 And on my father dear I thought, his face to mind I call'd,
 Whan slain with grisly wound our king, him like of age in sight,
 Lay gasping dead, and of my wife Creuse bethought the plight.
 Alone, forsake, my house despoil'd, my child what chance had take,
 I looked, and about me view'd what strength I might me make.
 All men had me forsake for paynes, and down their bodies drew,
 To ground they leapt, and some for woe themselves in fires they threw.
 And now alone was left but I whan Vesta's temple stair
 To keep and secretly to lurk all crouching close in chair,
 Dame Helen I might see to sit; bright burnings gave me light,
 Wherever I went, the ways I pass'd, all thing was set in sight.
 She fearing her the Trojans wrath, for Troy destroy'd to wreke,
 Greek's torments and her husband's force, whose wedlock she did break,
 The plague of Troy and of her country, monster most ontame,
 There sat she with her hated head, by the altars hid for shame.
 Straight in my breast I-felt a fire, deep wrath my heart did strain,
 My country's fall to wreak, and bring that cursed wretch to pain.
 What! shall she into her country soil of Sparta and high Mycene,
 All safe shall she return, and there on Troy triumph as queen?
 Her husband, children, country, kynne, her house, her parents old,
 With Trojan wives, and Trojan lords, her slaves shall she behold?
 Was Priam slain with sword for this? Troy burnt with fire so wood?
 Is it herefore that Dardan strondes so often hath sweat with blood?
 Not so; for though it be no praise on woman kind to wreak,
 And honour none there lieth in this, nor name for men to speak,

The harmony of Fairfax is justly celebrated.* Joshua Sylvester's version of the 'Divine Weeks and Works' of the French poet Dubartas was among the most popular of our early translations; and the obligations which Milton is alleged to have owed to it have revived Sylvester's name with some interest in modern criticism. Sylvester was a Puritan, and so was the publisher of his work, Humphrey Lownes, who lived in the same street with Milton's father; and from the congeniality of their opinions, it is not improbable that they might be acquainted. It is easily to be conceived that Milton often repaired to the shop of Lownes, and there first met with the pious didactic poem. Lauder was the earliest to trace Milton's particular thoughts and expressions to Sylvester; and, as might be expected, maliciously exaggerated them. Later writers took up

Yet quench I shall this poison here, and due deserts to dight,
 Men shall commend my zeal, and ease my mind I shall outright:
 This much for all my people's bones and country's flame to quite.
 These things within myself I tost, and fierce with force I ran,
 Whan to my face my mother great, so brim no time till than,
 Appearing shew'd herself in sight, all shining pure by night,
 Right goddess-like appearing, such as heavens beholds her bright.
 So great with majesty she stood, and me by right-hand take,
 She stay'd, and, red as rose, with mouth these words to me she spake:
 My son, what sore outrage so wild thy wrathful mind upstares?
 Why frettest thou, or where alway from us thy care withdrawn appears?
 Nor first unto thy father see'st, whom, feeble in all this woe,
 Thou hast forsake, nor if thy wife doth live thou know'st or no,
 Nor young Ascanius, thy child, whom throngs of Greeks about
 Doth swarming run, and, were not my relief, withouten doubt
 By this time flames had by devour'd, or swords of en'mies kill'd.
 It is not Helen's fate of Greece this town, my son, hath spill'd,
 Nor Paris is to blame for this, but Gods, with grace unkind,
 This wealth hath overthrown, a Troy from top to ground outwind.
 Behold! for now away the cloud and dim fog will I take,
 That over mortal eyes doth hang, and blind thy sight doth make;
 Thou to thy parents haste, take heed (dread not) my mind obey.
 In yonder place, where stones from stones, and buildings huge to sway
 Thou seest, and, mixt in dust and smoke, thick streams of richness rise,
 Himself the God Neptune that side doth turn in wonders wise,
 With fork three-tined the walls uproots, foundations all too shakes,
 And quite from under soil the town with ground-works all uprakes.
 On yonder side, with furies mixt, Dame Juno fiercely stands,
 The gates she keeps, and from their ships the Greeks, her friendly bands,
 In armour girt, she calls."

* [Many besides myself have heard our famous Waller own that he derived the harmony of his numbers from the 'Godfrey of Bulloigne,' which was turned into English by Mr. Fairfax.—Dryden, *Malone*, vol. iv. p. 592.]

the subject with a very different spirit. Mr. Todd, the learned editor of Spenser, noticed, in a number of 'The Gentleman's Magazine,'* the probability of Milton's early acquaintance with the translation of Dubartas's poem; and Mr. Dunster has since, in his 'Essay on Milton's early Reading,' supported the opinion that the same work contains the *prima stamina* of 'Paradise Lost,' and laid the first foundation of that "*monumentum ære perennius.*" Thoughts and expressions there certainly are in Milton which leave his acquaintance with Sylvester hardly questionable; although some of the expressions quoted by Mr. Dunster, which are common to them both, may be traced back to other poets older than Sylvester. The entire amount of his obligations, as Mr. Dunster justly admits, cannot detract from our opinion of Milton. If Sylvester ever stood high in his favour, it must have been when he was very young.† The beauties which occur so strangely intermixed with bathos and flatness in Sylvester's poem might have caught the youthful discernment, and long dwelt in the memory, of the great poet. But he must have perused it with disgust at Sylvester's general manner. Many of his epithets and happy phrases were really worthy of Milton; but by far the greater proportion of his thoughts and expressions have a quaintness and flatness more worthy of Quarles and Wither.

The following lines may serve as no unfavourable specimens of his translation of Dubartas's poem.

PROBABILITY OF THE CELESTIAL ORBS BEING INHABITED.

"I not believe that the great architect
 With all these fires the heavenly arches deck'd
 Only for show, and with these glistening shields
 T' amaze poor shepherds watching in the fields;
 I not believe that the least flower which pranks
 Our garden borders, or our common banks,

* For November, 1796.

† [I remember, when I was a boy, I thought inimitable Spenser a mean poet in comparison of Sylvester's 'Dubartas,' and was rapt into ecstasy when I read these lines:—

"Now, when the Winter's keener breath began
 To crystalize the Baltic ocean,
 To glaze the lakes, to bridle up the floods,
 And periwig with wool the bald-pate woods."

I am much deceived if this be not abominable fustian.—Dryden.]

And the least stone that in her warming lap
 Our mother earth doth covetously wrap,
 Hath some peculiar virtue of its own,
 And that the glorious stars of heaven have none."

THE SERPENT'S ADDRESS TO EVE WHEN HE TEMPTED HER IN EDEN.

"As a false lover, that thick snares hath laid
 T' entrap the honour of a fair young maid,
 If she (though little) list'ning ear affords
 To his sweet-courting, deep-affecting words,
 Feels some assuaging of his ardent flame,
 And soothes himself with hopes to win his game,
 While, wrapt with joy, he on his point persists,
 That parleying city never long resists—
 Even so the serpent. * * * * *
 Perceiving Eve his flattering gloze digest,
 He prosecutes, and jocund doth not rest.
 No, Fair (quoth he), believe not that the care
 God hath from spoiling Death mankind to spare
 Makes him forbid you, on such strict condition,
 His purest, rarest, fairest fruit's fruition.
 * * * * *

Begin thy bliss, and do not fear the threat
 Of an uncertain Godhead, only great
 Through self-awed zeal—put on the glist'ning pall
 Of immortality."

MORNING.

"Arise betimes, while th' opal-colour'd morn
 In golden pomp doth May-day's door adorn."

The "opal-colour'd morn" is a beautiful expression that I do not remember any other poet to have ever used.

The school of poets which is commonly called the metaphysical began in the reign of Elizabeth with Donne; but the term of metaphysical poetry would apply with much more justice to the quatrains of Sir John Davies, and those of Sir Fulke Greville, writers who, at a later period, found imitators in Sir Thomas Overbury and Sir William Davenant.* Davies's poem on the Immortality of the Soul, entitled 'Nosce teipsum,' will convey a much more favourable idea of metaphysical poetry than the wittiest effusions of Donne and his followers. Davies carried abstract reasoning into verse with an acuteness and felicity which have seldom been equalled. He reasons, undoubtedly,

* [Johnson has been unjustly blamed for the name applied to Donne and his followers, of metaphysical poets, but it was given to this school before Johnson wrote, by Dryden and by Pope. However, as Mr. Southey has said, "If it were easy to find a better name, so much deference is due to Johnson, that his should be still adhered to."]

with too much labour, formality, and subtlety, to afford uniform poetical pleasure. The generality of his stanzas exhibit hard arguments interwoven with the pliant materials of fancy so closely, that we may compare them to a texture of cloth and metallic threads, which is cold and stiff, while it is splendidly curious. There is this difference, however, between Davies and the commonly styled metaphysical poets, that *he* argues like a hard thinker, and *they*, for the most part, like madmen. If we conquer the drier parts of Davies's poem, and bestow a little attention on thoughts which were meant, not to gratify the indolence, but to challenge the activity of the mind, we shall find in the entire essay fresh beauties at every perusal: for in the happier parts we come to logical truths so well illustrated by ingenious similes, that we know not whether to call the thoughts more poetically or philosophically just. The judgment and fancy are reconciled, and the imagery of the poem seems to start more vividly from the surrounding shades of abstraction.

Such were some of the first and inferior luminaries of that brilliant era of our poetry, which, perhaps, in general terms, may be said to cover about the last quarter of the sixteenth, and the first quarter of the seventeenth century; and which, though commonly called the age of Elizabeth, comprehends many writers belonging to the reign of her successor. The romantic spirit, the generally unshackled style, and the fresh and fertile genius of that period, are not to be called in question. On the other hand, there are defects in the poetical character of the age, which, though they may disappear or be of little account amidst the excellences of its greatest writers, are glaringly conspicuous in the works of their minor contemporaries. In prolonged narrative and description the writers of that age are peculiarly deficient in that charm which is analogous to "*keeping*" in pictures. Their warm and cold colours are generally without the gradations which should make them harmonize. They fall precipitately from good to bad thoughts, from strength to imbecility. Certainly they are profuse in the detail of natural circumstances, and in the utterance of natural feelings. For this we love them, and we should love them still more if they knew where to stop in description and sentiment. But they give out the dregs of their mind without reserve, till their fairest

conceptions are overwhelmed by a rabble of mean associations. At no period is the mass of vulgar mediocrity in poetry marked by more formal gallantry, by grosser adulation, or by coarser satire. Our amatory strains in the time of Charles II. may be more dissolute, but those of Elizabeth's age often abound in studious and prolix licentiousness. Nor are examples of this solemn and sedate impurity to be found only in the minor poets: our reverence for Shakspeare himself need not make it necessary to disguise that he willingly adopted that style in his youth, when he wrote his 'Venus and Adonis.'

The fashion of the present day [1819] is to solicit public esteem not only for the best and better, but for the humblest and meanest writers of the age of Elizabeth. It is a bad book which has not something good in it; and even some of the worst writers of that period have their twinkling beauties. In one point of view the research among such obscure authors is undoubtedly useful. It tends to throw incidental lights on the great old poets, and on the manners, biography, and language of the country. So far all is well—but as a matter of taste, it is apt to produce illusion and disappointment. Men like to make the most of the slightest beauty which they can discover in an obsolete versifier; and they quote perhaps the solitary good thought which is to be found in such a writer, omitting any mention of the dreary passages which surround it. Of course it becomes a lamentable reflection, that so valuable an old poet should have been forgotten. When the reader, however, repairs to him, he finds that there are only one or two grains of gold in all the sands of this imaginary Pactolus. But the display of neglected authors has not been even confined to glimmering beauties; it has been extended to the reprinting of large and heavy masses of dulness. Most wretched works have been praised in this enthusiasm for the obsolete; even the dullest works of the meanest contributors to 'The Mirror for Magistrates.' It seems to be taken for granted, that the inspiration of the good old times descended to the very lowest dregs of its versifiers; whereas the bad writers of Elizabeth's age are only more stiff and artificial than those of the preceding, and more prolix than those of the succeeding period.

Yet there are men who, to all appearance, would wish to re-

vive such authors—not for the mere use of the antiquary, to whom every volume *may* be useful, but as standards of manner, and objects of general admiration. Books, it is said, take up little room. In the library this may be the case; but it is not so in the minds and time of those who peruse them. Happily, indeed, the task of pressing indifferent authors on the public attention is a fruitless one. They may be dug up from oblivion, but life cannot be put into their reputations. “Can these bones live?” Nature will have her course, and dull books will be forgotten, in spite of bibliographers.

PART III.

THE pedantic character of James I. has been frequently represented as the cause of degeneracy in English taste and genius. It must be allowed that James was an indifferent author; and that neither the manners of his court nor the measures of his reign were calculated to excite romantic virtues in his subjects. But the opinion of his character having influenced the poetical spirit of the age unfavourably is not borne out by facts. He was friendly to the stage and to its best writers: he patronized Ben Jonson, and is said to have written a complimentary letter to Shakspeare with his own hand.* We may smile at the idea of James's praise being bestowed as an honour upon Shakspeare; the importance of the compliment, however, is not to be estimated by our present opinion of the monarch, but by the excessive reverence with which royalty was at that time invested in men's opinions. James's reign was rich in poetical names, some of which have been already enumerated. We may be reminded, indeed, that those poets had been educated under Elizabeth, and that their genius bore the high impress of her heroic times; but the same observation will also oblige us to recollect that Elizabeth's age had its traits of depraved fashion

* This anecdote is given by Oldys on the authority of the Duke of Buckingham, who [is said to have] had it from Sir William Davenant. [The cause assigned, an obscure allusion in 'Macbeth,' is a very lame and unlikely one.]

(witness its Euphuism),* and that the first examples of the worst taste which ever infected our poetry were given in her days, and not in those of her successor. Donne (for instance), the patriarch of the metaphysical generation, was thirty years of age at the date of James's accession, a time at which his taste and style were sufficiently formed to acquit his learned sovereign of all blame in having corrupted them. Indeed, if we were to make the memories of our kings accountable for the poetical faults of their respective reigns, we might reproach Charles I., among whose faults bad taste is certainly not to be reckoned, with the chief disgrace of our metaphysical poetry; since that school never attained its unnatural perfection so completely as in the luxuriant ingenuity of Cowley's fancy, and the knotted deformity of Cleveland's. For a short time after the suppression of the theatres, till the time of Milton, the metaphysical poets are forced upon our attention for want of better objects. But during James's reign there is no such scarcity of good writers as to oblige us to dwell on the school of elaborate conceit. Phineas Fletcher has been sometimes named as an instance of the vitiated taste which prevailed at this period. He, however, though musical and fanciful, is not to be admitted as a representative of the poetical character of those times, which included Jonson, Beaumont and John Fletcher, Ford, Massinger, and Shirley. Shakspeare was no more; but there were dramatic authors of great and diversified ability. The romantic school of the drama continued to be more popular than the classical, though in the latter Ben Jonson lived to see imitators of his own manner, whom he was not ashamed to adopt as his poetical heirs. Of these Cartwright and Randolph were the most eminent. The originality of Cartwright's plots is always acknowledged; and Jonson used to say of him, "*My son Cartwright writes all like a man.*"

Massinger is distinguished for the harmony and dignity of his dramatic eloquence. Many of his plots, it is true, are liable to heavy exceptions. The fiends and angels of his 'Virgin Martyr' are unmanageable tragic machinery; and the incestuous passion of his 'Ancient Admiral' excites our horror. The poet

* An affected jargon of style, which was fashionable for some time at the court of Elizabeth, and so called from the work of Lyly entitled 'Euphuus.'

of love is driven to a frightful expedient, when he gives it the terrors of a maniac passion breaking down the most sacred pale of instinct and consanguinity. The ancient Admiral is in love with his own daughter. Such a being, if we fancy him to exist, strikes us as no object of moral warning, but as a man under the influence of insanity. In a general view, nevertheless, Massinger has more art and judgment in the serious drama than any of the other successors of Shakspeare. His incidents are less entangled than those of Fletcher, and the scene of his action is more clearly thrown open for the free evolution of character. Fletcher strikes the imagination with more vivacity, but more irregularly, and amidst embarrassing positions of his own choosing. Massinger puts forth his strength more collectively. Fletcher has more action and character in his drama, and leaves a greater variety of impressions upon the mind. His fancy is more volatile and surprising, but then he often blends disappointment with our surprise, and parts with the consistency of his characters even to the occasionally apparent loss of their identity. This is not the case with Massinger. It is true that Massinger excels more in description and declamation than in the forcible utterance of the heart, and in giving character the warm colouring of passion. Still, not to speak of his one distinguished hero* in comedy, he has delineated several tragic characters with strong and interesting traits. They are chiefly proud spirits. Poor himself, and struggling under the rich man's contumely, we may conceive it to have been the solace of his neglected existence to picture worth and magnanimity breaking through external disadvantages, and making their way to love and admiration. Hence his fine conceptions of Paris, the actor, exciting by the splendid endowments of his nature the jealousy of the tyrant of the world; and Don John and Pisander, habited as slaves, wooing and winning their princely mistresses. He delighted to show heroic virtue stripped of all adventitious circumstances, and tried, like a gem, by its shining through darkness. His 'Duke of Milan' is particularly admirable for the blended interest which the poet excites by the opposite weaknesses and magnanimity of the same character. Sforza, Duke of Milan, newly married and uxoriously attached to the haughty

* Sir Giles Overreach.

Marcella, a woman of exquisite attractions, makes her an object of secret but deadly enmity at his court, by the extravagant homage which he requires to be paid to her, and the precedence which he enjoins even his own mother and sisters to yield her. As chief of Milan he is attached to the fortunes of Francis I. The sudden tidings of the approach of Charles V., in the campaign which terminated with the battle of Pavia, soon afterwards spread dismay through his court and capital. Sforza, though valiant and self-collected in all that regards the warrior or politician, is hurried away by his immoderate passion for Marcella; and being obliged to leave her behind, but unable to bear the thoughts of her surviving him, obtains the promise of a confidant to destroy her, should his own death appear inevitable. He returns to his capital in safety. Marcella, having discovered the secret order, receives him with coldness. His jealousy is inflamed; and her perception of that jealousy alienates the haughty object of his affection, when she is on the point of reconciliation. The fever of Sforza's diseased heart is powerfully described, passing from the extreme of dotage to revenge, and returning again from thence to the bitterest repentance and prostration, when he has struck at the life which he most loved, and has made, when it is too late, the discovery of her innocence. Massinger always enforces this moral in love;—he punishes distrust, and attaches our esteem to the unbounded confidence of the passion. But while Sforza thus exhibits a warning against morbidly-selfish sensibility, he is made to appear, without violating probability, in all other respects a firm, frank, and prepossessing character. When his misfortunes are rendered desperate by the battle of Pavia, and when he is brought into the presence of Charles V., the intrepidity with which he pleads his cause disarms the resentment of his conqueror; and the eloquence of the poet makes us expect that it should do so. Instead of palliating his zeal for the lost cause of Francis, he thus pleads:—

“ I come not, Emperor, to invade thy mercy
 By fawning on thy fortune, nor bring with me
 Excuses or denials; I profess,
 And with a good man's confidence, even this instant
 That I am in thy power, I was thine enemy,
 Thy deadly and vow'd enemy; one that wish'd
 Confusion to thy person and estates,
 And with my utmost power, and deepest counsels,

Had they been truly follow'd, further'd it.
 Nor will I now, although my neck were under
 The hangman's axe, with one poor syllable
 Confess but that I honour'd the French king
 More than thyself and all men."

After describing his obligations to Francis, he says—

" He was indeed to me as my good angel,
 To guard me from all danger. I dare speak,
 Nay *must* and *will*, his praise now in as high
 And loud a key as when he was thy equal.
 The benefits he sow'd in me met not
 Unthankful ground. * * * * *
 * * * * * If then to be grateful
 For benefits received, or not to leave
 A friend in his necessities, be a crime
 Amongst you Spaniards, Sforza brings his head
 To pay the forfeit. Nor come I as a slave,
 Pinion'd and fetter'd, in a squalid weed,
 Falling before thy feet, kneeling and howling
 For a forestall'd remission—that were poor,
 And would but shame thy victory, for conquest
 Over base foes is a captivity,
 And not a triumph. I ne'er fear'd to die
 More than I wish'd to live. When I had reach'd
 My ends in being a duke, I wore these robes,
 This crown upon my head, and to my side
 This sword was girt; and, witness truth, that now
 'Tis in another's power, when I shall part
 With life and them together, I'm the same—
 My veins *then* did not swell with pride, nor *now*
 Shrink they for fear."

If the vehement passions were not Massinger's happiest element, he expresses fixed principle with an air of authority. To make us feel the elevation of genuine pride was the master-key which he knew how to touch in human sympathy; and his skill in it must have been derived from deep experience in his own bosom.*

The theatre of Beaumont and Fletcher contains all manner of good and evil. Fletcher's share in the works collectively pub-

* [Although incalculably superior to his contemporaries, Shakspeare had successful imitators; and the art of Jonson was not unrivalled. Massinger appears to have studied the works of both, with the intention of uniting their excellences. He knew the strength of plot; and although his plays are altogether irregular, yet he well understood the advantage of a strong and defined interest; and in unravelling the intricacy of his intrigues he often displays the management of a master.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. vi. p. 342.]

lished with their names is by far the largest ; and he is chargeable with the greatest number of faults, although at the same time his genius was more airy, prolific, and fanciful. There are such extremes of grossness and magnificence in their drama, so much sweetness and beauty interspersed with views of nature either falsely romantic or vulgar beyond reality ; there is so much to animate and amuse us, and yet so much that we would willingly overlook, that I cannot help comparing the contrasted impressions which they make to those which we receive from visiting some great and ancient city, picturesquely but irregularly built, glittering with spires and surrounded with gardens, but exhibiting in many quarters the lanes and hovels of wretchedness. They have scenes of wealthy and high life which remind us of courts and palaces frequented by elegant females and high-spirited gallants, whilst their noble old martial characters, with Caractacus in the midst of them, may inspire us with the same sort of regard which we pay to the rough-hewn magnificence of an ancient fortress.

Unhappily, the same simile, without being hunted down, will apply but too faithfully to the *nuisances* of their drama. Their language is often basely profligate. Shakspeare's and Jonson's indelicacies are but casual blots, whilst theirs are sometimes essential colours of their painting, and extend, in one or two instances, to entire and offensive scenes. This fault has deservedly injured their reputation ; and, saving a very slight allowance for the fashion and taste of their age, admits of no sort of apology.* Their drama, nevertheless, is a very wide one, and "*has ample room and verge enough*"† to permit the attention to wander from these and to fix on more inviting peculiarities—as on the great variety of their fables and personages, their spirited dialogue, their wit, pathos, and humour. Thickly sown as their blemishes are, their merit will bear great deductions, and still remain great. We never can forget such beautiful characters as their Cellide, their Aspatia, and Bellario, or such humorous ones as their La

* [Ravenscroft, the filthiest writer for the stage in the reign of the second Charles, is not more obscene than Beaumont and Fletcher. Yet Earle, who was in the church and a bishop withal, praises their plays for their purity ; and Lovelace likens the nakedness of their language to Cupid dressed in Diana's linen.]

† [Dryden.]

Writ and Cacafoغو. Awake they will always keep us, whether to quarrel or to be pleased with them. Their invention is fruitful; its beings are on the whole an active and sanguine generation; and their scenes are crowded to fulness with the warmth, agitation, and interest of life.

In thus speaking of them together, it may be necessary to allude to the general and traditionary understanding that Beaumont was the graver and more judicious genius of the two. Yet the plays in which he may be supposed to have assisted Fletcher are by no means remarkable either for harmonious adjustment of parts or scrupulous adherence to probability. In their 'Laws of Candy,' the winding up of the plot is accomplished by a young girl commanding a whole bench of senators to descend from their judgment-seats, in virtue of an ancient law of the state which she discovers; and they obey her with the most polite alacrity. 'Cupid's Revenge' is assigned to them conjointly, and is one of the very weakest of their worst class of pieces. On the other hand Fletcher produced his 'Rule a Wife and have a Wife' after Beaumont's death, so that he was able, when he chose, to write with skill as well as spirit.

Of that skill, however, he is often so sparing as to leave his characters subject to the most whimsical metamorphoses. Sometimes they repent, like Methodists, by instantaneous conversion. At other times they shift from good to bad, so as to leave us in doubt what they were meant for. In the tragedy of 'Valentinian' we have a fine old soldier, Maximus, who sustains our affection through four acts, but in the fifth we are suddenly called upon to hate him, on being informed by his own confession that he is very wicked, and that all his past virtue has been but a trick on our credulity. The imagination in this case is disposed to take part with the creature of the poet's brain against the poet himself, and to think that he maltreats and calumniates his own offspring unnaturally.* But for these faults Fletcher

* The most amusingly absurd perhaps of all Fletcher's bad plays is 'The Island Princess.' One might absolutely take it for a burlesque on the heroic drama, if its religious conclusion did not show the author to be in earnest. Quisara, Princess of the island of Tidore, where the Portuguese have a fort, offers her hand in marriage to any champion who shall deliver her brother, a captive of the governor of Ternata. Ruy Dias, her Portuguese lover, is shy of the adventure; but another lover, Armusia, hires a

makes good atonement, and has many affecting scenes. We must still indeed say scenes; for, except in 'The Faithful Shepherdess,' which, unlike his usual manner, is very lulling, where shall we find him uniform? If 'The Double Marriage' could be cleared of some revolting passages, the part of Juliana would not be unworthy of the powers of the finest tragic actress. Juliana is a high attempt to portray the saint and heroine blended in female character. When her husband Violet's conspiracy against Ferrand of Naples is discovered, she endures and braves for his sake the most dreadful cruelties of the tyrant. Violet flies from his country, obliged to leave her behind him, and, falling at sea into the hands of the pirate Duke of Sesse, saves himself and his associates from death, by consenting to marry the daughter of the pirate (Martia), who falls in love and

boat, with a few followers, which he hides, on landing at Tidore, among the reeds of the invaded island. He then disguises himself as a merchant, hires a cellar, like the Popish conspirators, and in the most credible manner blows up a considerable portion of a large town, rescues the king, slaughters all opposers, and re-embarks in his yawl from among the reeds. On his return he finds the lovely Quisara loth to fulfil her promise, from her being still somewhat attached to Ruy Dias. The base Ruy Dias sends his nephew, Piniero, to the Island Princess, with a project of assassinating Armusia; but Piniero, who is a merry fellow, thinks it better to prevent his uncle's crime and to make love for himself. Before his introduction to the Princess, however, he meets with her aunt Quisana, to whom he talks abundance of ribaldry and *double entendre*, and so captivates the aged woman, that she exclaims to her attendaut, "Pray thee let him talk still, for methinks he talks handsomely!"—With the young lady he is equally successful, offers to murder anybody she pleases, and gains her affections so far that she kisses him. The poor virtuous Armusia, in the mean time, determines to see his false Princess, makes his way to her chamber, and, in spite of her reproaches and her late kiss to Piniero, at last makes a new impression on her heart. The dear Island Princess is in love a third time, in the third act. In the fourth act the King of Tidore, lately delivered by Armusia, plots against the Christians; he is accompanied by a Moorish priest, who is no other than the governor of Ternata, disguised in a false wig and beard; but his Tidorian Majesty recollects his old enemy so imperfectly as to be completely deceived. This conspiracy alarms the Portuguese; the cowardly Ruy Dias all at once grows brave and generous; Quisara joins the Christians, and, for the sake of Armusia and her new faith, offers to be burnt alive. Nothing remains but to open the eyes of her brother, the King of Tidore. This is accomplished by the merry Piniero laying hold of the masqued governor's beard, which comes away without the assistance of a barber. The monarch exclaims that he cannot speak for astonishment, and everything concludes agreeably. 'The Island Princess' is not unlike some of the romantic dramas of Dryden's time; but the later play-writers super-added a style of outrageous rant and turgid imagery.

elopes with him from her father's ship. As they carry off with them the son of Ferrand, who had been a prisoner of the Duke of Sesse, Virolet secures his peace being made at Naples; but when he has again to meet Juliana he finds that he has purchased life too dearly. When the ferocious Martia, seeing his repentance, revenges herself by plotting his destruction, and when his divorced Juliana, forgetting her injuries, flies to warn and to save him, their interview has no common degree of interest. Juliana is perhaps rather a fine idol of the imagination than a probable type of nature; but poetry, which "conforms the shows of things to the desires of the soul,"* has a right to the highest possible virtues of human character. And there have been women who have prized a husband's life above their own, and his honour above his life, and who have united the tenderness of their sex to heroic intrepidity. Such is Juliana, who thus exhorts the wavering fortitude of Virolet on the eve of his conspiracy:—

"Virolet. * * Unless our hands were cannon
To batter down his walls, our weak breath mines
To blow his forts up, or our curses lightning,
Our power is like to yours, and we, like you,
Weep our misfortunes." * * * *

She replies—

* * * "Walls of brass resist not
A noble undertaking—nor can vice
Raise any bulwark to make good a place
Where virtue seeks to enter."

The joint dramas of Beaumont and Fletcher, entitled 'Philaster' and 'The Maid's Tragedy,' exhibit other captivating female portraits. The difficulty of giving at once truth, strength, and delicacy to female repentance for the loss of honour, is finely accomplished in Evadne. The stage has perhaps few scenes more affecting than that in which she obtains forgiveness of Amintor on terms which interest us in his compassion without compromising his honour. In the same tragedy,† the plaintive image of the forsaken Aspatia has an indescribably sweet spirit and romantic expression. Her fancy takes part with her heart, and gives its sorrow a visionary gracefulness. When she finds

* Expression of Lord Bacon's.

† The Maid's Tragedy.

her maid Antiphila working a picture of Ariadne, she tells her to copy the likeness from herself, from "the lost Aspatia :"—

"*Asp.* But where's the lady ?

Ant. There, Madam.

Asp. Fie, you have miss'd it here, Antiphila ;
 These colours are not dull and pale enough
 To show a soul so full of misery
 As this sad lady's was. Do it by me—
 Do it again by me, the lost Aspatia,
 And you shall find all true. Put me on the wild island.
 I stand upon the sea-beach now, and think
 Mine arms thus, and my hair blown by the wind
 Wild as that desert, and let all about me
 Be teachers of my story. * * *
 * * * * Strive to make me look
 Like Sorrow's monument ; and the trees about me,
 Let them be dry and leafless ; let the rocks
 Groan with continual surges ; and behind me
 Make all a desolation. See, see, wenches,
A miserable life of this poor picture."

The resemblance of this poetical picture to Guido's Bacchus and Ariadne has been noticed by Mr. Seward in the preface to his edition of Beaumont and Fletcher. "In both representations the extended arms of the mourner, her hair blown by the wind, the barren roughness of the rocks around her, and the broken trunks of leafless trees, make her figure appear like Sorrow's monument."

Their masculine characters in tragedy are generally much less interesting than their females. Some exceptions may be found to this remark ; particularly in the British chief Caractacus, and his interesting nephew the boy Hengo. With all the faults of the tragedy of 'Bonduca,' its British subject and its native heroes attach our hearts. We follow Caractacus to battle and captivity with a proud satisfaction in his virtue. The stubbornness of the old soldier is finely tempered by his wise, just, and candid respect for his enemies the Romans, and by his tender affection for his princely ward. He never gives way to sorrow till he looks on the dead body of his nephew, Hengo, when he thus exclaims :—

* * * "Farewell the hopes of Britain !
 Farewell thou royal graft for ever ! Time and Death,
 Ye have done your worst. Fortune, now see, now proudly
 Pluck off thy veil, and view thy triumph.

* * * * * O fair flower,
 How lovely yet thy ruins show—how sweetly
 Ev'n Death embraces thee! The peace of Heaven,
 The fellowship of all great souls, go with thee!"

The character must be well supported which yields a sensation of triumph in the act of surrendering to victorious enemies. Caractacus does not need to tell us that when a brave man has done his duty he cannot be humbled by fortune—but he makes us feel it in his behaviour. The few brief and simple sentences which he utters in submitting to the Romans, together with their respectful behaviour to him, give a sublime composure to his appearance in the closing scene.

Dryden praises the gentlemen of Beaumont and Fletcher in comedy as the true men of fashion of "the times." It was necessary that Dryden should call them the men of fashion of the times, for they are not in the highest sense of the word gentlemen. Shirley's comic characters have much more of the conversation and polite manners which we should suppose to belong to superior life in all ages and countries. The genteel characters of Fletcher form a narrower class, and exhibit a more particular image of their times and country. But their comic personages, after all, are a spirited race. In one province of the facetious drama they set the earliest example; witness their humorous mock-heroic comedy, 'The Knight of the Burning Pestle.'*

The memory of Ford has been deservedly revived as one of the ornaments of our ancient drama, though he has no great body of poetry, and has interested in us no other passion except that of love; but in that he displays a peculiar depth and delicacy

* [Beaumont and Fletcher seemed to have followed Shakspeare's mode of composition, rather than Jonson's. They may, indeed, be rather said to have taken for their model the boundless licence of the Spanish stage, from which many of their pieces are expressly and avowedly derived. The acts of their plays are so detached from each other in substance and consistency, that the plot can scarce be said to hang together at all, or to have, in any sense of the word, a beginning, progress, and conclusion. It seems as if the play began because the curtain rose, and ended because it fell.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. vi. p. 343.

Beaumont and Fletcher's plots are wholly inartificial; they only care to pitch a character into a position to make him or her talk; you must swallow all their gross improbabilities, and, taking it all for granted, attend only to the dialogue.—Coleridge, *Table Talk*, p. 200.]

of romantic feeling.* Webster has a gloomy force of imagination, not unmixed with the beautiful and pathetic. But it is "beauty in the lap of horror:" he caricatures the shapes of terror, and his Pegasus is like a nightmare. Middleton,† Marston, Thomas Heywood, Decker, and Chapman, also present subordinate claims to remembrance in that fertile period of the drama.

Shirley was the last of our good old dramatists. When his works shall be given to the public they will undoubtedly enrich our popular literature.‡ His language sparkles with the most exquisite images. Keeping some occasional pruriencies apart, the fault of his age rather than of himself, he speaks the most polished and refined dialect of the stage; and even some of his over-heightened scenes of voluptuousness are meant, though with a very mistaken judgment, to inculcate morality.§ I consider his genius, indeed, as rather brilliant and elegant than strong or lofty. His tragedies are defective in fire, grandeur, and passion; and we must *select* his comedies to have any favourable idea of his humour. His finest poetry comes forth in situations rather more familiar than tragedy and more grave than comedy, which I should call sentimental comedy, if the name were not associated with ideas of modern insipidity. That he was capable, however, of pure and excellent comedy will be felt by those who have yet in reserve the amusement of reading his 'Gamester,' 'Hyde Park,' and 'Lady of Pleasure.'

* [Mr. Campbell observes that Ford interests us in no other passion than that of *love*; "in which he displays a peculiar depth and delicacy of romantic feeling." Comparatively speaking, this may be admitted; but in justice to the poet, it should be added that he was not insensible to the power of *friendship*, and in more than one of his dramas has delineated it with a master-hand. Had the critic forgotten the noble Dalyell?—the generous and devoted Malfato? Mr. Campbell, however, terms him "one of the ornaments of our ancient drama."—Gifford, *Ford*, p. xl.]

† Middleton's hags, in the tragi-comedy of 'The Witch,' were conjectured by Mr. Steevens to have given the hint to Shakspeare of his witches in 'Macbeth.' It has been repeatedly remarked, however, that the resemblance scarcely extends beyond a few forms of incantation. The hags of Middleton are merely mischievous old women, those of Shakspeare influence the elements of nature and the destinies of man.

‡ [They have been since published in six volumes octavo—the plays with notes by Gifford, the poems with notes by Mr. Dyce.]

§ The scene in Shirley's 'Love's Cruelty,' for example, between Hippolito and the object of his admiration, act iv., scene i., and another in 'The Grateful Servant,' between Belinda and Lodwick. Several more might be mentioned.

In the first and last of these there is a subtle ingenuity in producing comic effect and surprise, which might be termed Attic, if it did not surpass anything that is left us in Athenian comedy.

I shall leave to others the more special enumeration of his faults, only observing, that the airy touches of his expression, the delicacy of his sentiments, and the beauty of his similes, are often found where the poet survives the dramatist, and where he has not power to transfuse life and strong individuality through the numerous characters of his voluminous drama. His style, to use a line of his own, is "studded like a frosty night with stars;" and a severe critic might say that the stars often shine when the atmosphere is rather too frosty. In other words, there is more beauty of fancy than strength of feeling in his works. From this remark, however, a defender of his fame might justly appeal to exceptions in many of his pieces. From a general impression of his works I should not paint his Muse with the haughty form and features of inspiration, but with a countenance, in its happy moments, arch, lovely, and interesting, both in smiles and in tears; crowned with flowers, and not unindebted to ornament, but wearing the drapery and chaplet with a claim to them from natural beauty.

The contempt which Dryden expresses for Shirley* might surprise us, if it were not recollected that he lived in a degenerate age of dramatic taste, and that his critical sentences were neither infallible nor immutable. He at one time undervalued Otway, though he lived to alter his opinion.†

The civil wars put an end to this dynasty of our dramatic poets. Their immediate successors or contemporaries, belonging to the reign of Charles I., many of whom resumed their lyres after the interregnum, may, in a general view, be divided into the classical and metaphysical schools. The former class, containing Denham, Waller, and Carew, upon the whole cultivated

* [In Mac Flecknoe.]

† [That Dryden at any time undervalued Otway we have no other proof than a coffee-house criticism, retailed, though the retailer was Otway himself, at secondhand. The play that Dryden is said to have spoken petulantly and disparagingly about was 'Don Carlos.' 'The Orphan' and 'Venice Preserved' were of a later date, and justified Dryden's firm conviction that Otway possessed the art of expressing the passions and emotions of the mind as thoroughly as any of the ancients or moderns. 'Don Carlos' gives no promise of 'The Orphan,' or of 'Venice Preserved.']

smooth and distinct melody of numbers, correctness of imagery, and polished elegance of expression. The latter, in which Herrick and Cowley stood at the head of Donne's metaphysical followers, were generally loose or rugged in their versification, and preposterous in their metaphors. But this distinction can only be drawn in very general terms; for Cowley, the prince of the metaphysicians, has bursts of natural feeling and just thoughts in the midst of his absurdities. And Herrick, who is equally whimsical, has left some little gems of highly-finished composition. On the other hand, the correct Waller is sometimes metaphysical; and ridiculous hyperboles are to be found in the elegant style of Carew.

The characters of Denham, Waller, and Cowley have been often described. Had Cowley written nothing but his prose it would have stamped him a man of genius and an improver of our language. Of his poetry Rochester indecorously said, that, "not being of God, it could not stand."* Had the word *nature* been substituted, it would have equally conveyed the intended meaning, but still that meaning would not have been strictly just.† There is much in Cowley that will stand. He teems, in many places, with the imagery, the feeling, the grace, and gaiety of a poet. Nothing but a severer judgment was wanting to collect the scattered lights of his fancy. His unnatural flights arose less from affectation than self-deception. He cherished false thoughts as men often associate with false friends, not from insensibility to the difference between truth and falsehood, but from being too indolent to examine the difference. Herrick, if we were to fix our eyes on a small portion of his works, might be pronounced a writer of delightful Anacreontic spirit. He has passages where the thoughts seem to dance into numbers from his very heart, and where he frolics like a being made up of melody and pleasure; as when he sings—

"Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that blooms to-day,
To-morrow will be dying."

* [Told on the authority of Dryden. (*Malone*, vol. iv. p. 612.) Yet Burnet, Joseph Warton, and Johnson speak of Cowley as Rochester's favourite author.]

† [Nature is but a name for an effect
Whose cause is God.—Cowper, *The Task*, b. vi.]

In the same spirit are his verses to Anthea, concluding—

“Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very eyes of me;
And hast command of every part,
To live and die for thee.”

But his beauties are so deeply involved in surrounding coarseness and extravagance, as to constitute not a tenth part of his poetry; or rather it may be safely affirmed, that, of 1400 pages of verse which he has left, not a hundred are worth reading.

In Milton there may be traced obligations to several minor English poets; but his genius had too great a supremacy to belong to any school. Though he acknowledged a filial reverence for Spenser as a poet, he left no Gothic irregular tracery in the design of his own great work, but gave a classical harmony of parts to its stupendous pile. It thus resembles a dome, the vastness of which is at first sight concealed by its symmetry, but which expands more and more to the eye while it is contemplated. His early poetry seems to have neither disturbed nor corrected the bad taste of his age. ‘Comus’ came into the world unacknowledged by its author, and ‘Lycidas’ appeared at first only with his initials.* These, and other exquisite pieces, composed in the happiest years of his life, at his father’s country-house at Horton, were collectively published, with his name affixed to them, in 1645; but that precious volume, which included ‘L’Allegro’ and ‘Il Penseroso,’ did not come to a second edition till it was republished by himself at the distance of eight-and-twenty years.† Almost a century elapsed before his minor works obtained their proper fame. Handel’s music is said, by Dr. Warton, to have drawn the first attention to them; but they must have been admired before Handel set them to music, for he was assuredly not the first to discover their beauty. But of Milton’s poetry being above the comprehension of his age we should have a sufficient proof, if we had no other, in the grave remark of Lord Clarendon, that Cowley had in his time “*taken a flight above all men in poetry.*” Even when ‘Paradise Lost’ appeared, though it was not neglected, it attracted no crowd of imitators, and made no visible change in the poetical practice of the age. He stood alone and aloof above his times, the bard

* [Comus, 1637—Lycidas, 1638.]

† [1673.]

of immortal subjects, and, as far as there is perpetuity in language, of immortal fame. The very choice of those subjects bespoke a contempt for any species of excellence that was attainable by other men. There is something that overawes the mind in conceiving his long-deliberated selection of that theme—his attempting it when his eyes were shut upon the face of nature—his dependence, we might almost say, on supernatural inspiration, and in the calm air of strength with which he opens ‘Paradise Lost,’ beginning a mighty performance without the appearance of an effort.* Taking the subject all in all, his powers could nowhere else have enjoyed the same scope. It was only from the height of this great argument that he could look back upon eternity past, and forward upon eternity to come; that he could survey the abyss of infernal darkness, open visions of Paradise, or ascend to heaven and breathe empyreal air. Still the subject had precipitous difficulties. It obliged him to relinquish the warm, multifarious interests of human life. For these indeed he could substitute holier things; but a more insuperable objection to the theme was, that it involved the representation of a war between the Almighty and his created beings. To the vicissitudes of such a warfare it was impossible to make us attach the same fluctuations of hope and fear, the same curiosity, suspense, and sympathy, which we feel amidst the battles of the ‘Iliad,’ and which make every brave young spirit long to be in the midst of them.

Milton has certainly triumphed over one difficulty of his subject—the paucity and the loneliness of its human agents; for no one in contemplating the garden of Eden would wish to exchange it for a more populous world. His earthly pair could only be represented, during their innocence, as beings of simple

* [There is a solemnity of sentiment, as well as majesty of numbers, in the exordium of this noble poem, which in the works of the ancients has no example. . . . We cannot read this exordium without perceiving that the author possesses more fire than he shows. There is a suppressed force in it, the effect of judgment. His judgment controls his genius, and his genius reminds us (to use his own beautiful similitude) of

“A proud steed rein’d,
Champing his iron curb.”

He addresses himself to the performance of great things, but makes no great exertion in doing it, a sure symptom of uncommon vigour.—Cowper, *Commentary.*]

enjoyment and negative virtue, with no other passions than the fear of Heaven and the love of each other. Yet, from these materials, what a picture has he drawn of their homage to the Deity, their mutual affection, and the horrors of their alienation! By concentrating all exquisite ideas of external nature in the representation of their abode—by conveying an inspired impression of their spirits and forms, whilst they first shone under the fresh light of creative Heaven—by these powers of description, he links our first parents, in harmonious subordination, to the angelic natures—he supports them in the balance of poetical importance with their divine coadjutors and enemies, and makes them appear at once worthy of the friendship and envy of gods.

In the angelic warfare of the poem, Milton has done whatever human genius could accomplish. But, although Satan speaks of having “put to proof his [Maker’s] high supremacy, in dubious battle, on the plains of heaven,” the expression, though finely characteristic of his blasphemous pride, does not prevent us from feeling that the battle cannot for a moment be dubious. Whilst the powers of description and language are taxed and exhausted to portray the combat, it is impossible not to feel, with regard to the blessed spirits, a profound and reposing security that they have neither great dangers to fear, nor reverses to suffer. At the same time it must be said that, although in the actual contact of the armies the inequality of the strife becomes strongly visible to the imagination, and makes it a contest more of noise than terror, yet, while positive action is suspended, there is a warlike grandeur in the poem which is nowhere to be paralleled. When Milton’s genius dares to invest the Almighty himself with arms, “his bow and thunder,” the astonished mind admits the image with a momentary credence.* It is otherwise when we are involved in the circumstantial details of the campaign. We have then leisure to anticipate its only possible issue, and can feel no alarm for any temporary check that may be given to those who fight under the banners of Omnipotence. The warlike part of ‘Paradise Lost’ was inseparable from its subject. Whether it could have been differently managed, is a problem which our reverence for Milton will scarcely permit us to state. I feel that

* [Book vi. l. 712. The *bow* and *sword* of the Almighty are copied from Psalms vii. and xlv.]

reverence too strongly to suggest even the possibility that Milton could have improved his poem by having thrown his angelic warfare into more remote perspective; but it seems to me to be most sublime when it is least distinctly brought home to the imagination. What an awful effect has the dim and undefined conception of the conflict which we gather from the opening of the first book! There the veil of mystery is left undrawn between us and a subject which the powers of description were inadequate to exhibit. The ministers of divine vengeance and pursuit had been recalled—the thunders had ceased

“To bellow through the vast and boundless deep”—

Book i. v. 177—

(in that line what an image of sound and space is conveyed!) * —and our terrific conception of the past is deepened by its indistinctness.† In optics there are some phenomena which are beautifully deceptive at a certain distance, but which lose their illusive charm on the slightest approach to them that changes the light and position in which they are viewed. Something like this takes place in the phenomena of fancy. The array of the fallen angels in hell—the unfurling of the standard of Satan—and the march of his troops

“In perfect phalanx, to the Dorian mood

Of flutes and soft recorders”—Book i. l. 550—

all this human pomp and circumstance of war is magic and overwhelming illusion. The imagination is taken by surprise. But the noblest efforts of language are tried with very unequal effect to interest us in the immediate and close view of the battle itself in the sixth book; and the martial demons, who charmed us in the shades of hell, lose some portion of their sublimity when their artillery is discharged in the daylight of heaven.

* [In this line we seem to hear a thunder suited both to the scene and the occasion, incomparably more awful than any ever heard on earth. The thunder of Milton is not hurled from the hand like Homer's, but discharged like an arrow; as if jealous for the honour of a true God, the poet disdained to arm him like the God of the heathen.—*Cowper.*]

† [Of all the articles of which the dreadful scenery of Milton's hell consists, Scripture furnished him only with a lake of fire and brimstone. Yet thus slenderly assisted, what a world of woe has he constructed, proved, in this single instance, the most creative that ever poet owned!—*Cowper.*

The slender materials for 'Comus' and 'Paradise Regained' are alike wonderful, and attest the truth of Cowper's remark.]

If we call diction the garb of thought, Milton, in his style, may be said to wear the costume of sovereignty. The idioms even of foreign languages contributed to adorn it. He was the most learned of poets; yet his learning interferes not with his substantial English purity.* His simplicity is unimpaired by glowing ornament, like the bush in the sacred flame, which burnt but "was not consumed."

In delineating the blessed spirits, Milton has exhausted all the conceivable variety that could be given to pictures of unshaded sanctity; but it is chiefly in those of the fallen angels that his excellence is conspicuous above everything ancient or modern. Tasso had, indeed, portrayed an infernal council, and had given the hint to our poet of ascribing the origin of pagan worship to those reprobate spirits. But how poor and squalid, in comparison of the Miltonic Pandæmonium, are the Scyllas, the Cyclopes, and the Chimeras of the Infernal Council of the 'Jerusalem'! Tasso's conclave of fiends is a den of ugly incongruous monsters:—

"O come strane, o come orribil forme!
 Quant è negli occhi lor terror, e morte!
 Stampano alcuni il suol di ferine orme
 E'n fronte umana han chiome d' angui attorte
 E lor s'aggira dietro immensa loda
 Che quasi sferza si ripiega, e snoda.
 Qui mille immonde Arpie vedestri, e mille
 Centauri, e Sfingi, e pallide Gorgoni,
 Molte e molte latrar voraci Scille
 E fischiar Idre, e sibilar Pitoni,
 E vomitar Chimere atre faville
 E Polifemi orrendi, e Gerioni.
 * * * * *

La Gerusalemme, canto iv.

The powers of Milton's hell are godlike shapes and forms. Their appearance dwarfs every other poetical conception, when we turn our dilated eyes from contemplating them. It is not their external attributes alone which expand the imagination, but their souls, which are as colossal as their stature—their "*thoughts that wander through eternity*"—the pride that burns amidst

* [Our most learned poets were classed by Joseph Warton, a very competent judge, in the following order:—1. Milton. 2. Jonson. 3. Gray. 4. Akenside. Milton and Gray were of Cambridge; Ben Jonson was a very short time there, not long enough however to catch much of the learning of the place; but Akenside was of no college—it is believed self-taught.]

the ruins of their divine natures—and their genius, that feels with the ardour and debates with the eloquence of heaven.

The subject of 'Paradise Lost' was the origin of evil—an era in existence—an event more than all others dividing past from future time—an isthmus in the ocean of eternity. The theme was in its nature connected with everything important in the circumstances of human history; and amidst these circumstances Milton saw that the fables of Paganism were too important and poetical to be omitted. As a Christian, he was entitled wholly to neglect them; but as a poet, he chose to treat them, not as dreams of the human mind, but as the delusions of infernal existences. Thus anticipating a beautiful propriety for all classical allusions, thus connecting and reconciling the co-existence of fable and of truth, and thus identifying the fallen angels with the deities of "gay religions, full of pomp and gold," he yoked the heathen mythology in triumph to his subject, and clothed himself in the spoils of superstition.

One eminent production of wit, namely, 'Hudibras,' may be said to have sprung out of the Restoration, or at least out of the contempt of fanaticism, which had its triumph in that event; otherwise, the return of royalty contributed as little to improve the taste as the morality of the public. The drama degenerated, owing, as we are generally told, to the influence of French literature, although some infection from the Spanish stage might also be taken into the account. Sir William Davenant, who presided over the first revival of the theatre, was a man of cold and didactic spirit; he created an era in the machinery, costume, and ornaments of the stage, but he was only fitted to be its mechanical benefactor. Dryden, who could do even bad things with a good grace, confirmed the taste for rhyming and ranting tragedy. Two beautiful plays of Otway formed an exception to this degeneracy; but Otway was cut off in the spring-tide of his genius, and his early death was, according to every appearance, a heavy loss to our drama. It has been alleged, indeed, in the present day, that Otway's imagination showed no prognostics of great future achievements; but when I remember 'Venice Preserved' and 'The Orphan,' as the works of a man of thirty, I can

treat this opinion no otherwise than to dismiss it as an idle assertion.*

Βάσκ' ἴθι, οἴλε ὄνειρε.

During the last thirty years of the seventeenth century, Dryden was seldom long absent from the view of the public, and he alternately swayed and humoured its predilections. Whatever may be said of his accommodating and fluctuating theories of criticism, his perseverance in training and disciplining his own faculties is entitled to much admiration. He strengthened his mind by action, and fertilized it by production. In his old age he renewed his youth, like the eagle; or rather his genius acquired stronger wings than it had ever spread. He rose and fell, it is true, in the course of his poetical career; but upon the whole it was a career of improvement to the very last.† Even in the drama, which was not his natural province, his good sense came at last so far in aid of his deficient sensibility, that he gave up his system of rhyming tragedy, and adopted Shakspeare (in theory at least) for his model. In poetry not belonging to the drama, he was at first an admirer of Cowley, then of Davenant; and ultimately he acquired a manner above the peculiarities of either.‡ The Odes and Fables of his latest volume surpass whatever he had formerly written.§ He was satirized and abused

* [The talents of Otway, in his scenes of passionate affection, rival at least, and sometimes excel, those of Shakspeare. More tears have been shed, probably, for the sorrows of Belvidera and Monimia, than for those of Juliet and Desdemona.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. vi. p. 356.]

† [Shakspeare died at fifty-two. The average probability of life is twenty years beyond that age, and the probable endurance of the human faculties in their vigour is not a great deal shorter. Chaucer wrote his best poetry after he was sixty; Dryden when he was seventy. Cowper was also late in his poetical maturity; and Young never wrote anything that could be called poetry till he was a sexagenarian. Sophocles wrote his 'Œdipus Coloneus' certainly beyond the age of eighty. But the pride of England, it may be said, died in the prime of life.—Campbell, *Shakspeare*, 8vo. 1838, p. lxx.]

‡ [Dryden tells us that Cowley and Sylvester were the darling writers of his youth; and that Davenant introduced him to the folio of Shakspeare's plays. He lived long enough to dethrone Sylvester, to lessen his esteem for Cowley, and increase his predilection for Shakspeare; his taste was bettering to the last—but it was long in arriving to maturity. Like Sir Walter Scott, he was nearer forty than thirty before he had distinguished himself—an age at which both Burns and Byron were in their graves.]

§ [I think Dryden's translations from Boccace are the best, at least the most poetical, of his poems. But as a poet he is no great favourite of mine. I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius. The

as well as extolled by his contemporaries; but his genius was neither to be discouraged by the severity, nor spoiled by the favour of criticism. It flourished alike in the sunshine and the storm, and its fruits improved as they multiplied in profusion. When we view him out of the walk of purely original composition, it is not a paradox to say, that, though he is one of the greatest artists in language, and perhaps the greatest of English translators, he nevertheless attempted one task in which his failure is at least as conspicuous as his success. But that task was the translation of Virgil; and it is not lenity, but absolute justice, that requires us to make a very large and liberal allowance for whatever deficiencies he may show in transfusing into a language less harmonious and flexible than the Latin, the sense of that poet who, in the history of the world, has had no rival in beauty of expression. Dryden renovates Chaucer's thoughts, and fills up Boccaccio's narrative outline with many improving touches: and though paraphrase suited his free spirit better than translation, yet even in versions of Horace and Juvenal he seizes the classical character of Latin poetry with a boldness and dexterity which are all his own. But it was easier for him to emulate the strength of Juvenal than the serene majesty of Virgil. His translation of Virgil is certainly* an inadequate representation of the Roman poet. It is often bold and graceful, and generally idiomatic and easy; but, though the spirit of the original is not lost, it is sadly

only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language; *that* he certainly has, and of such language too as it is desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little I think as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of 'Palamon and Arcite,' as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination must have necessarily followed from this—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage. His love is nothing but sensuality and appetite; he had no other notion of the passion.—Wordsworth, *Lockhart's Life of Scott*, vol. ii. p. 287, sec. ed.]

and unequally diffused. Nor is it only in the magic of words, in the exquisite structure and rich economy of expression, that Dryden (as we might expect) falls beneath Virgil, but we too often feel the inequality of his vital sensibility as a poet. Too frequently, when the Roman classic touches the heart, or embodies to our fancy those noble images to which nothing could be added, and from which nothing can be taken away, we are sensible of the distance between Dryden's talent and Virgil's inspiration. One passage out of many—the representation of Jupiter, in the first book of the ‘Georgics’—may show this difference:—

GEORGICS, lib. i. l. 328.

“Ipse Pater, mediâ nimborum in nocte, corusca
Fulmina molitur dextrâ: quo maxima motu
Terra tremit, fugere feræ, et mortalia corda
Per gentes humilis stravit pavor——”

“The father of the gods his glory shrouds,
Involved in tempests and a night of clouds,
And from the middle darkness flashing out,
By fits he deals his fiery bolts about.
Earth feels the motion of her angry god,
Her entrails tremble, and her mountains nod,
And flying beasts in forests seek abode:
Deep horror seizes every human breast,
Their pride is humbled, and their fear confess'd.”

Virgil's three lines and a half might challenge the most sublime pencil of Italy to the same subject. His words are no sooner read than, with the rapidity of light, they collect a picture before the mind which stands confessed in all its parts. There is no interval between the objects as they are presented to our perception. At one and the same moment we behold the form, the uplifted arm, and dazzling thunderbolts of Jove, amidst a night of clouds;—the earth trembling, and the wild beasts scudding for shelter—*fugere*—they have vanished while the poet describes them, and we feel that mortal hearts are laid prostrate with fear throughout the nations. Dryden, in the translation, has done his best, and some of his lines roll on with spirit and dignity; but the whole description is a process rather than a picture—the instantaneous effect, the electric unity of the original, is lost. Jupiter has leisure to deal out his fiery bolts by fits, while the entrails of the earth shake and her mountains nod, and the flying beasts have time to look out very quietly for lodgings in the forest. The weakness of the two last lines, which stand for the

weighty words "*Mortalia corda per gentes humilis stravit pavor,*" need not be pointed out.

I cannot quote this passage without recurring to the recollection, already suggested, that it was Virgil with whom the English translator had to contend. Dryden's admirers might undoubtedly quote many passages much more in his favour; and one passage occurs to me as a striking example of his felicity. In the following lines (with the exception of one) we recognise a great poet, and can scarcely acknowledge that he is translating a greater:—*

ÆNEID, lib. xii. l. 331.

"Qualis apud gelidi cum flumina concitus Hebri
Sanguineus Mavors clipeo intonat† atque furentes
Bella movens immittit equos, illi æquore aperto
Ante Notos Zephyrumpue volant, gemit ultima pulsu
Thraca pedum, circumque atræ Formidinis ora,
Ira, insidiæque, Dei comitatus aguntur——"

"Thus, on the banks of Hebrus' freezing flood,
The god of battles, in his angry mood,
Clashing his sword against his brazen shield,
Lets loose the reins, and scours along the field:
Before the wind his fiery coursers fly,
Groans the sad earth, resounds the rattling sky;
Wrath, terror, treason, tumult, and despair,
Dire faces and deform'd, surround the car,
Friends of the god, and followers of the war."

If it were asked how far Dryden can strictly be called an inventive poet, his drama certainly would not furnish many instances of characters strongly designed; though his Spanish Friar is by no means an insipid personage in comedy. The con-

* [He who sits down to Dryden's translation of Virgil, with the original text spread before him, will be at no loss to point out many passages that are faulty, many indifferently understood, many imperfectly translated, some in which dignity is lost, others in which bombast is substituted in its stead. But the unabated vigour and spirit of the version more than overbalance these and all its other deficiencies. A sedulous scholar might often approach more nearly to the dead letter of Virgil, and give an exact, distinct, sober-minded idea of the meaning and scope of particular passages. Trapp, Pitt, and others have done so. But the essential spirit of poetry is so volatile, that it escapes during such an operation, like the life of the poor criminal, whom the ancient anatomist is said to have dissected alive, in order to ascertain the seat of the soul. The carcass, indeed, is presented to the English reader, but the animating vigour is no more.—Sir Walter Scott, *Life of Dryden.*]

† *Intonat.* I follow Wakefield's edition of Virgil in preference to others, which have "*increpat.*"

trivance, in 'The Hind and Panther,' of beasts disputing about religion, if it were his own, would do little honour to his ingenuity. The idea, in 'Absalom and Achitophel,' of couching modern characters under Scripture names, was adopted from one of the Puritan writers; yet there is so much ingenuity evinced in supporting the parallel, and so admirable a gallery of portraits displayed in the work, as to render that circumstance insignificant with regard to its originality.* Nor, though his Fables are borrowed, can we regard him with much less esteem than if he had been their inventor. He is a writer of manly and elastic character. His strong judgment gave force as well as direction to a flexible fancy; and his harmony is generally the echo of solid thoughts.† But he was not gifted with intense or lofty sensibility; on the contrary, the grosser any idea is, the happier

* [The plan of 'Absalom and Achitophel' was not new to the public. A Catholic poet had, in 1679, paraphrased the Scriptural story of Naboth's Vineyard, and applied it to the condemnation of Lord Stafford on account of the Popish plot. This poem is written in the style of a Scriptural allusion; the names and situations of personages in the holy text being applied to those contemporaries to whom the author assigned a place in his piece. Neither was the obvious application of the story of 'Absalom and Achitophel' to the persons of Monmouth and Shaftesbury first made by our poet. A prose paraphrase, published in 1680, had already been composed upon this allusion. But the vigour of the satire, the happy adaptation, not only of the incidents but of the very names, to the individuals characterised, gave Dryden's poem the full effect of novelty.—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. i. p. 208.]

† [The distinguishing characteristic of Dryden's genius seems to have been the power of reasoning, and of expressing the result in appropriate language. The best of Dryden's performances in the more pure and chaste style of tragedy are unquestionably 'Don Sebastian,' and 'All for Love.' Of these, the former is in the poet's very best manner; exhibiting dramatic persons, consisting of such bold and impetuous characters as he delighted to draw, well-contrasted, forcibly marked, and engaged in an interesting succession of events. To many tempers, the scene between Sebastian and Dorax must appear one of the most moving that ever adorned the British stage. The satirical powers of Dryden were of the highest order. He draws his arrow to the head, and dismisses it straight upon his object of aim. The occasional poetry of Dryden is marked strongly by masculine character. The epistles vary with the subject; and are light, humorous, and satirical, or grave, argumentative, and philosophical, as the case required. Few of his elegiac effusions seem prompted by sincere sorrow. That to Oldham may be an exception; but even there he rather strives to do honour to the talents of his departed friend, than to pour out lamentations for his loss. No author, excepting Pope, has done so much to endenizen the eminent poets of antiquity.—Sir Walter Scott, *Life of Dryden*.]

he seems to expatiate upon it. The transports of the heart, and the deep and varied delineations of the passions, are strangers to his poetry. He could describe character in the abstract, but could not embody it in the drama, for he entered into character more from clear perception than fervid sympathy. This great High Priest of all the Nine was not a confessor to the finer secrets of the human breast. Had the subject of *Eloisa* fallen into his hands, he would have left but a coarse draught of her passion.*

Dryden died in the last year of the seventeenth century. In the intervening period between his death and the meridian of Pope's reputation, we may be kept in good humour with the archness of Prior and the wit of Swift. Parnell was the most elegant rhymist of Pope's early contemporaries; and Rowe, if he did not bring back the full fire of the drama, at least preserved its vestal spark from being wholly extinguished. There are exclusionists in taste, who think that they cannot speak with sufficient disparagement of the English poets of the first part of

* [Writing of Pope's '*Eloisa*,' Lord Byron says, "The licentiousness of the story was *not* Pope's—it was a fact. All that it had of gross he has softened; all that it had of indelicate he has purified; all that it had of passionate he has beautified; all that it had of holy he has hallowed. Mr. Campbell has admirably marked this, in a few words (I quote from memory), in drawing the distinction between Pope and Dryden, and pointing out where Dryden was wanting. 'I fear,' says he, 'that had the subject of *Eloisa* fallen into his (Dryden's) hands, that he would have given us but a *coarse* draft of her passion.'"]

This is very generally admitted. "The love of the senses," writes Sir Walter Scott, "he (Dryden) has in many places expressed in as forcible and dignified colouring as the subject could admit; but of a more moral and sentimental passion he seems to have had little idea, since he frequently substitutes in its place the absurd, unnatural, and fictitious refinements of romance. In short, his love is always indecorous nakedness, or sheathed in the stiff panoply of chivalry. The most pathetic verses which Dryden has composed are unquestionably contained in his '*Epistle to Congreve*,' where he recommends his laurels, in such moving terms, to the care of his surviving friend. The quarrel and reconciliation of Sebastian and Dorax is also full of the noblest emotion. In both cases, however, the interest is excited by means of masculine and exalted passion, not of those which arise from the more delicate sensibilities of our nature."

It is upon this passage that Mr. Lockhart remarks,—“The reader who wishes to see the most remarkable instances of Dryden's deficiency in *the pathetic* is requested to compare him with Chaucer in the death-bed scene of '*Palamon and Arcite*.'”—Scott's *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. i. p. 409.

“Remember Dryden,” Gray writes to Beattie, “and be blind to all his faults.”]

the eighteenth century; and they are armed with a noble provocative to English contempt, when they have it to say that those poets belong to a French school. Indeed Dryden himself is generally included in that school, though more genuine English is to be found in no man's pages. But in poetry "there are many mansions." I am free to confess that I can pass from the elder writers, and still find a charm in the correct and equable sweetness of Parnell. Conscious that his diction has not the freedom and volubility of the better strains of the elder time, I cannot but remark his exemption from the quaintness and false metaphor which so often disfigure the style of the preceding age; nor deny my respect to the select choice of his expression, the clearness and keeping of his imagery, and the pensive dignity of his moral feeling.

Pope gave our heroic couplet its strictest melody and tersest expression.

"D'un mot mis en sa place il enseigne le pouvoir."

If his contemporaries forgot other poets in admiring him, let him not be robbed of his just fame on pretence that a part of it was superfluous. The public ear was long fatigued with repetitions of his manner; but if we place ourselves in the situation of those to whom his brilliancy, succinctness, and animation were wholly new, we cannot wonder at their being captivated to the fondest admiration. In order to do justice to Pope, we should forget his imitators, if that were possible; but it is easier to remember than to forget by an effort—to acquire associations than to shake them off. Every one may recollect how often the most beautiful air has palled upon his ear, and grown insipid, from being played or sung by vulgar musicians. It is the same thing with regard to Pope's versification.* That his peculiar rhythm and manner are the very best in the whole range of our poetry

* [No two great writers ever wrote blank verse with pauses and cadences the same. Shakspeare, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, and Ford, had a dramatic blank verse of their own. Milton's manner of verse is his own, so is Thomson's, Akenside's, Cowper's, Southey's, Wordsworth's. With our couplet verse it is the same. Denham and Waller are unlike Dryden. Prior is different again. Pope's strictness and terseness are his own. Who is Goldsmith like, or Falconer, or Rogers, or Campbell himself? Inferior writers imitate—men of genius strike out a path for themselves; their numbers are all their own, like their thoughts.]

need not be asserted. He has a gracefully peculiar manner, though it is not calculated to be an universal one; and where, indeed, shall we find the style of poetry that could be pronounced an exclusive model for every composer? His pauses have little variety, and his phrases are too much weighed in the balance of antithesis. But let us look to the spirit that points his antithesis, and to the rapid precision of his thoughts, and we shall forgive him for being too antithetic and sententious.

Pope's works have been twice given to the world by editors who cannot be taxed with the slightest editorial partiality towards his fame. The last of these is the Rev. Mr. Bowles,* in speaking of whom I beg leave most distinctly to disclaim the slightest intention of undervaluing his acknowledged merit as a poet, however freely and fully I may dissent from his critical estimate of the genius of Pope. Mr. Bowles, in forming this estimate, lays great stress upon the argument that Pope's images are drawn from art more than from nature. That Pope was neither so insensible to the beauties of nature, nor so indistinct in describing them, as to forfeit the character of a genuine poet, is what I mean to urge, without exaggerating his picturesqueness. But before speaking of that quality in his writings, I would beg leave to observe, in the first place, that the faculty by which a poet luminously describes objects of art is essentially the same faculty which enables him to be a faithful describer of simple nature; in the second place, that nature and art are to a greater degree relative terms in poetical description than is generally recollected; and, thirdly, that artificial objects and manners are of so much importance in fiction, as to make the exquisite description of them no less characteristic of genius than the description of simple physical appearances. The poet is "creation's heir." He deepens our social interest in existence. It is surely by the liveliness of the interest which he excites in existence, and not by the class of subjects which he chooses, that we most fairly appreciate the genius or the life of life which is in him.

* [Mr. Campbell wrote this in 1819; and in 1824 the late Mr. Roscoe gave another edition of Pope, but not the edition that is wanted. Mr. Bowles was one of Joseph Warton's Winchester wonders; and the taste he imbibed there for the romantic school of poetry was strengthened and confirmed by his removal to Trinity College, Oxford, when Tom Warton was residing there.]

It is no irreverence to the external charms of nature to say, that they are not more important to a poet's study than the manners and affections of his species. Nature is the poet's goddess; but by nature no one rightly understands her mere inanimate face—however charming it may be—or the simple landscape painting of trees, clouds, precipices, and flowers. Why then try Pope, or any other poet, exclusively by his powers of describing inanimate phenomena? Nature, in the wide and proper sense of the word, means life in all its circumstances—nature moral as well as external. As the subject of inspired fiction, nature includes artificial forms and manners. Richardson is no less a painter of nature than Homer. Homer himself is a minute describer of works of art;* and Milton is full of imagery derived from it. Satan's spear is compared to the pine that makes "the mast of some great ammiral," and his shield is like the moon, but like the moon artificially seen through the glass of the Tuscan artist.†

* [But are his descriptions of works of art more poetical than his descriptions of the great feelings of nature?—Bowles's *Invariable Principles*, p. 15.]

† [—————"His ponderous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders, like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening, from the top of Fesolé,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers, or mountains, on her spotty globe.
His spear, to equal which the tallest pines,
Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast
Of some great ammiral, were but a wand."

Par. Lost, b. 1.

It is evident that Satan's spear is not compared to the mast of some great ammiral, though his shield is to the moon as seen through the glass of Galileo. Milton's original (Cowley), whose images from art are of constant occurrence, draws his description of Goliath's spear from Norwegian hills:—

"His spear the trunk was of a lofty tree
Which Nature meant some tall ship's mast should be."

The poetry of the whole passage in Milton is in the images and names from nature, not from art—"It is Fesolé and Valdarno that are poetical," says Mr. Bowles, "not the telescope." There is a spell, let us add, in the very names of Fesolé and Valdarno.

Milton's object in likening the shield of Satan to the moon, as seen through the glass of the Tuscan artist, was to give the clearest possible impression of the thing alluded to. "It is by no means necessary," says Cowper, "that a simile should be more magnificent than the subject; it is

The "spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife, the royal banner, and all quality, pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war,"* are all artificial images. When Shakspeare groups into one view the most sublime objects of the universe, he fixes first on "the cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples."† Those who have ever witnessed the spectacle of the launching of a ship of the line will perhaps forgive me for adding this to the examples of the sublime objects of artificial life. Of that spectacle I can never forget the impression, and of having witnessed it reflected from the faces of ten thousand spectators. They seem yet before me—I sympathise with their deep and silent expectation, and with their final burst of enthusiasm. It was not a vulgar joy, but an affecting national solemnity. When the vast bulwark sprang from her cradle, the calm water on which she swung majestically round gave the imagination a contrast of the stormy element on which she was soon to ride. All the days of battle and the nights of danger which she had to encounter, all the ends of the earth which she had to visit, and all that she had to do and to suffer for her country, rose in awful presentiment before the mind; and when the heart

enough that it gives us a clearer and more distinct perception of it than we could have had without it. Were it the indispensable duty of a simile to elevate as well as to illustrate, what must be done with many of Homer's? When he compares the Grecian troops, pouring themselves forth from camp and fleet in the plain of Troy, to bees issuing from a hollow rock—or the body of Patroclus in dispute between the two armies to an ox-hide larded and stretched by the currier—we must condemn him utterly as guilty of degrading his subject when he should exalt it. But the exaltation of his subject was no part of Homer's concern on these occasions; he intended nothing more than the clearest possible impression of it on the minds of his hearers."—Cowper's *Works, by Southey*, vol. xv. p. 321.

When Johnson, in his 'Life of Gray,' laid it down as a rule that an epithet or metaphor drawn from Nature ennobles Art, an epithet or metaphor drawn from Art degrades Nature, he had forgotten Homer, and the custom of all our poets.]

* [*Othello*, act iii. scene iii.]

† [*The Tempest*, act iv. scene i. One of the finest passages in Shakspeare is where he describes Fortune as a wheelwright would:—

“Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the *spokes* and *fellies* from her *wheel*,
And bowl the round *nave* down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends.”—*Hamlet*, act ii. scene ii.]”

gave her a benediction, it was like one pronounced on a living being.*

Pope, while he is a great moral writer, though not elaborately picturesque, is by no means deficient as a painter of interesting external objects. No one will say that he peruses *Eloisa's* Epistle without a solemn impression of the pomp of Catholic superstition. In familiar description nothing can be more dis-

* [In the controversy which Mr. Campbell's 'Specimens' gave rise to, Mr. Bowles contended for this—"Whether poetry be more immediately indebted to what is sublime or beautiful in the works of Nature or the works of Art?" and taking Nature to himself, he argued that Mr. Campbell's ship had greater obligations to nature than to art for its poetic excellences. "It was indebted to nature," he writes, "for the winds that filled the sails; for the sunshine that touched them with light; for the waves on which it so triumphantly rode; for the associated ideas of the distant regions of the earth it was to visit, the tempests it was to encounter; and for being, as it were, endued with existence—a *thing of life*."

"Mr. Bowles asserts," says Lord Byron, "that Campbell's ship of the line derives all its poetry, not from *art*, but from *nature*. 'Take away the waves, the winds, the sun, &c. &c., one will become a stripe of blue bunting, and the other a piece of coarse canvas on three tall poles.' Very true: take away *the waves, the winds*, and there will be no ship at all, not only for poetical, but for any other purpose: and take away *the sun*, and we must read Mr. Bowles's pamphlet by candle-light. But the poetry of the ship does *not* depend on *the waves*, &c.; on the contrary, the ship of the line confers its own poetry upon the waters, and heightens *theirs*. What was it attracted the thousands to the launch? They might have seen the poetical calm water at Wapping, or in the London Dock, or in the Paddington Canal, or in a horse-pond, or in a slop-basin, or in any other vase! Mr. Bowles contends," Lord Byron goes on to say, "that the pyramids of Egypt are poetical because of the 'association with boundless deserts,' and that a 'pyramid of the same dimensions' would not be sublime in Lincoln's Inn Fields: not *so* poetical, certainly; but take away the 'pyramids,' and what is the 'desert'? Take away Stonehenge from Salisbury Plain, and it is nothing more than Hounslow Heath, or any other unenclosed down.

"There can be nothing more poetical in its aspect," he continues, "than the city of Venice. Does this depend upon the sea or the canal?—

'The dirt and seaweed whence proud Venice rose.'

Is it the canal which runs between the palace and the prison, or the *Bridge of Sighs*, which connects them, that renders it poetical? There would be nothing to make the canal of Venice more poetical than that of Paddington, were it not for its artificial adjuncts."

But why should Nature and Art be made divisible by these controversialists? In poetry they are not so:—*Ὅτε φύσις ἰκανῆ γίνεται τέχνης ἄτερ, ὅτε πᾶν τέχνη μὴ φύσιν κεκτημένη*—*Without Art Nature can never be perfect, and without Nature Art can claim no being*. In a poet no kind of knowledge is to be overlooked; to a poet nothing can be useless.]

tinct and agreeable than his lines on the Man of Ross, when he asks,—

“ Whose causeway parts the vale with shady rows?
 Whose seats the weary traveller repose?
 Who taught that heaven-directed spire to rise?
 The Man of Ross, each lisp'ing babe replies.
 Behold the market-place with poor o'erspread—
 The Man of Ross divides the weekly bread:
 He feeds yon almshouse, neat, but void of state,
 Where Age and Want sit smiling at the gate:
 Him portion'd maids, apprenticed orphans bless'd,
 The young who labour, and the old who rest.”

Nor is he without observations of animal nature, in which every epithet is a decisive touch, as—

“ From the green myriads in the peopled grass,
 What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
 The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam;
 Of smell, the *headlong* lioness between
 And hound sagacious, on the tainted green;
 Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,
 To that which warbles through the vernal wood;
 The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine,
 Feels at each thread, and lives along the line.”

His picture of the dying pheasant is in every one's memory,* and possibly the lines of his 'Winter Piece' may by this time [1819] have crossed the recollection of some of our brave adventurers in the polar enterprise.

“ So Zembla's rocks, the beauteous work of frost,
 Rise white in air, and glitter o'er the coast;
 Pale suns, unfelt at distance, roll away,
 And on the impassive ice the lightnings play;
 Eternal snows the growing mass supply,
 Till the bright mountains prop th' incumbent sky;
 As Atlas fix'd each hoary pile appears,
 The gather'd winter of a thousand years.”

I am well aware that neither these nor similar instances will

* [“Ah! what avail his glossy varying dyes,
 His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
 The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
 His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?”

Windsor Forest.

This is like Whitbread's *phœnix*, which Sheridan averred that he had described “like a poulterer; it was green and yellow, and red and blue: he did not let us off for a single feather.”—*Byron's Works*, vol. vi. p. 372.

When Pope *epithetises* the Kennet, the Loddon, the Mole, and the Wey, he is very happy; and he is equally so when he poetises the fish.]

come up to Mr. Bowles's idea of that talent for the picturesque which he deems essential to poetry.* "The true poet," says

* [It is remarkable that, excepting the 'Nocturnal Reverie of Lady Winchelsea,' and a passage or two in the 'Windsor Forest' of Pope, the poetry of the period between the publication of 'Paradise Lost' and 'The Seasons' does not contain a single new image of external nature, and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination. To what a low state knowledge of the most obvious and important phenomena had sunk, is evident from the style in which Dryden has executed a description of Night in one of his tragedies, and Pope his translation of the celebrated moonlight scene in the 'Iliad.' A blind man, in the habit of attending accurately to descriptions casually dropped from the lips of those around him, might easily depict these appearances with more truth. Dryden's lines are vague, bombastic, and senseless; those of Pope, though he had Homer to guide him, are throughout false and contradictory. The verses of Dryden, once highly celebrated, are forgotten; those of Pope still retain "their hold upon public estimation;" nay, there is not a passage of descriptive poetry which at this day finds so many and such ardent admirers.—Wordsworth, *Supp. to the Pref.*

Here is the passage in Dryden to which Mr. Wordsworth alludes:—

"All things are hush'd as Nature's self lay dead;
The mountains seem to nod their drowsy head;
The little birds in dreams their songs repeat,
And sleeping flowers beneath the night-dew sweat:
Even lust and envy sleep; yet love denies
Rest to my soul, and slumber to my eyes."

The Indian Emperor.

And here the moonlight scene in Homer as rendered by Pope and by Cowper:—

"As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night!
O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed
And tip with silver every mountain's head;
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light."—Pope.

"As when around the clear bright moon, the stars
Shine in full splendour, and the winds are hush'd,
The groves, the mountain-tops, the headland heights
Stand all apparent, not a vapour streaks
The boundless blue, but ether, open'd wide,
All glitters, and the shepherd's heart is cheer'd."—Cowper.

The scraps of external nature in Lee, Otway, and Garth are no whit better than Dryden's. Swift gave some true touches of artificial nature in

that writer, "should have an eye attentive to and familiar with every change of season, every variation of light and shade of nature, every rock, every tree, and every leaf in her secret places. He who has not an eye to observe these, and who cannot with a glance distinguish every hue in her variety, must be so far deficient in one of the essential qualities of a poet." Every rock, every leaf, every diversity of hue in nature's variety! Assuredly this botanising perspicacity might be essential to a Dutch flower-painter; but Sophocles displays no such skill, and yet he is a genuine, a great, and affecting poet. Even in describing the desert island of Philoctetes, there is no minute observation of nature's hues in secret places. Throughout the Greek tragedians there is nothing to show them more attentive observers of inanimate objects than other men. Pope's discrimination lay in the lights and shades of human manners, which are at least as interesting as those of rocks and leaves. In moral eloquence he is for ever *densus et instans sibi*. The mind of a poet employed in concentrating such lines as these descriptive of creative power, which

"Builds life on earth, on change duration founds,
And bids th' eternal wheels to know their rounds,"

might well be excused for not descending to the minutely picturesque. The vindictive personality of his satire is a fault of the man, and not of the poet. But his wit is not all his charm. He glows with passion in the Epistle of Eloisa, and displays a lofty feeling, much above that of the satirist and the man of the world, in his Prologue to 'Cato,' and his 'Epistle to Lord Oxford.'*

his 'City Shower' and 'Morning in Town,' but it was left to Thomson and Dyer to recall us to country life.

Mr. Southey has given no bad comment on the passage from Pope quoted above:—"Here," says Southey, "are the planets rolling round the moon; here is the pole gilt and glowing with stars; here are trees made yellow, and mountains tipped with silver by the moonlight; and here is the whole sky in a flood of glory—appearances not to be found either in Homer or in nature: finally, these gilt and glowing skies, at the very time when they are thus pouring forth a flood of glory, are represented as a blue vault! The astronomy in these lines would not appear more extraordinary to Dr. Herschel than the imagery to every person who has observed a moonlight scene."—*Quar. Rev.*, vol. xii. p. 87.]

* [Mr. Campbell might have added his noble conclusion to 'The Dunciad,' which is written in the highest vein of poetry, and exhibits a genius that wanted direction, opportunity, or inclination, rather than cultivation or increase of strength.]

I know not how to designate the possessor of such gifts but by the name of a genuine poet—*

————— “*qualem vix reperit unum*
Millibus in multis hominum consultus Apollo.”
 Ausonius.

Of the poets in succession to Pope I have spoken in their respective biographies.

* [Mr. Bowles's position is this: that Pope saw rural or field nature through what Dryden expressively calls *the spectacles of books*—that he did not see it for himself, as Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, Shakspeare, and Milton saw it, as it was seen by Thomson and Cowper—that his country nature is by reflection, cold, unwarmed, and dead-coloured—that he did not make what Addison calls *additions to nature*, as every great poet has done—that Dr. Blacklock's descriptive nature is as good, who was blind from his birth—that *flocks that graze the tender green*, in Pope, *graze audibly* in true descriptive writers—and that his Paradise had been a succession of alleys, platforms, and quincunxes—a Hagley or a Stowe, not an Eden, as Milton has made it. All this is true enough, but its importance has been overrated. Pope is still a great poet, though he did not dwell long in the mazes of fancy, but stooped, as he expresses it, to truth, and moralised his song—that he made sense, or wit, or intellectuality, hold the place of mere description, and gave us peopled pictures rather than landscapes with people. Mr. Campbell has properly extended the offices of poetry, and written a defence of Pope, which will exist as long as ‘*Eloisa's Letter*,’ or any poem of its great writer.

Gray, whose scattered touches of external nature are exquisitely true, has laid it down as a rule that description, the most graceful ornament of poetry, as he calls it, should never form the bulk or subject of a poem; Pope—who was not very happy in his strokes from landscape nature—that where it forms the body of a poem it is as absurd as a feast made up of sauces; while Swift, who knew nothing of trees and streams, and lawns and meads, objected to Thomson's philosophical poem that it was all description and nothing was doing, whereas Milton engaged men in actions of the highest importance.

Thomson was not insensible of this, and to diversify and animate his poem had recourse to episodes of human interest. The first ‘*Shipwreck*’ was devoid of story, it was all description; as Falconer left it, there is an action to heighten and relieve the nature, making description the secondary object of the poem.

“As a poet,” says Mr. Bowles, “I sought not to *depreciate*, but *discriminate*, and assign to him his proper rank and station in his art among English poets;—below Shakspeare, Spenser, and Milton, in the highest order of imagination or impassioned poetry; but above Dryden, Lucretius, and Horace, in moral and satirical: inferior to Dryden in lyric sublimity; equal to him in painting characters from real life (such as are so powerfully delineated in ‘*Absalom and Achitophel*’); but superior to him in *passion*—for what ever equalled, or ever will approach, in its kind, the Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard? In consequence of the exquisite pathos of this epistle, I have assigned Pope a poetical rank far above Ovid. I have placed him above Horace, in consequence of the perfect finish of his satires and moral poems; but in descriptive poetry, such as ‘*Windsor Forest*,’ beneath Cowper or Thomson.”—*Final Appeal*, 1825, p. 55.]

SCOTTISH POETRY.

THE origin of the Lowland Scottish language has been a fruitful subject of controversy. Like the English it is of Gothic materials, and, at a certain distance of time from the Norman Conquest, is found to contain, as well as its sister dialect of the south, a considerable mixture of French. According to one theory, those Gothic elements of Scotch existed in the Lowlands anterior to the Anglo-Saxon settlements in England, among the Picts, a Scandinavian race: the subsequent mixture of French words arose from the French connexions of Scotland; and the settlement of Normans among her people; and thus by the Pictish and Saxon dialects meeting, and an infusion of French being afterwards superadded, the Scottish language arose, independent of modern English, though necessarily similar, from the similarity of its materials. According to another theory the Picts were not Goths, but Cambro-British, a Celtic race, like the Western Scots who subdued and blended with the Picts under Kenneth MacAlpine. Of the same Celtic race were also the Britons of Strathclyde, and the ancient people of Galloway. In Galloway, though the Saxons overran that peninsula, they are affirmed to have left but little of their blood and little of their language. In the ninth century Galloway was new peopled by the Irish Cruithne, and at the end of the eleventh century was universally inhabited by a Gaelic people. At this latter period the common language of all Scotland, with the exception of Lothian and a corner of Caithness, was the Gaelic, and in the twelfth century commenced the progress of the English language into Scotland Proper;* so that Scotch is only migrated English.

* Lothian, now containing the Scottish metropolis, was, after several fluctuations of possession, annexed to the territory of Scotland in 1020; but even in the time of David I. is spoken of as not a part of Scotland. David addresses his "faithful subjects of all Scotland and of Lothian."

In support of the opposite system, an assertor better known than trusted, namely Pinkerton, has maintained that "there is not a shadow of proof that the Gaelic language was ever at all spoken in the Lowlands of Scotland." Yet the author of 'Caledonia' has given not mere shadows of proof, but very strong grounds for concluding that, in the first place, to the north of the Forth and Clyde, with the exception of Scandinavian settlements admitted to have been made in Orkney, Caithness, a strip of Sutherland, and partially in the Hebrides, a Gothic dialect was unknown in ancient Scotland. Amidst the arguments to this effect deduced from the topography of (the supposed Gothic) Pictland, in which Mr. Chalmers affirms that not a Saxon name is to be found older than the twelfth century—and amidst the evidences accumulated from the laws, religion, antiquities, and manners of North Britain—one recorded fact appears sufficiently striking. When the assembled clergy of Scotland met Malcolm Caenmore and Queen Margaret, the Saxon princess was unable to understand their language. Her husband, who had learnt English, was obliged to be their interpreter. All the clergy of Pictland we are told were at that time Irish; but, among a people with a Gaelic king and a Gaelic clergy, is it conceivable that the Gaelic language should not have been commonly spoken?

With regard to Galloway, or South-Western Scotland, the paucity of Saxon names in that peninsula (keeping apart pure or modern English ones) is pronounced by Mr. G. Chalmers to show the establishments of the Saxons to have been few and temporary, and their language to have been thinly scattered in comparison with the Celtic. As we turn to the south-east of Scotland, it is inferred from topography that the Saxons of Lothian never permanently settled to the westward of the Avon; while the numerous Celtic names which reach as far as the Tweed evince that the Gaelic language not only prevailed in proper Scotland, but overflowed her boundaries, and, like her arms, made inroads on the Saxon soil.

Mr. Ellis in discussing this subject seems to have been startled by the difficulty of supposing the language of England to have superseded the native Gaelic in Scotland, solely in consequence of Saxon migrations to the north in the reign of Malcolm Caen-

more. Malcolm undoubtedly married a Saxon princess, who brought to Scotland her relations and domestics. Many Saxons also fled into Scotland from the violences of the Norman Conquest. Malcolm gave them an asylum, and during his incursions into Cumberland and Northumberland carried off so many young captives that English persons were to be seen in every house and village of his dominions in the reign of David I. But on the death of Malcolm the Saxon followers both of Edgar Atheling and Margaret were driven away by the enmity of the Gaelic people. Those expelled Saxons must have been the gentry, while the captives, since they were seen in a subsequent age, must have been retained as being servile or vileyns. The fact of the expulsion of Margaret and Edgar Atheling's followers is recorded in the 'Saxon Chronicle.' It speaks pretty clearly for the general Gaelicism of the Scotch at that period; and it also prepares us for what is afterwards so fully illustrated by the author of 'Caledonia,' viz. that it was the new dynasty of Scottish kings after Malcolm Caenmore that gave a more diffusive course to the peopling of proper Scotland by Saxon, by Anglo-Norman, and by Flemish colonists. In the successive charters of Edgar, Alexander, and David I., we scarcely see any other witnesses than Saxons, who enjoyed under those monarchs all power, and acquired vast possessions in every district of Scotland, settling with their followers in entire hamlets.

If this English origin of Scotch be correct, it sufficiently accounts for the Scottish poets in the fifteenth century speaking of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate as their masters and models of style, and extolling them as the improvers of a language to which they prefix the word "our," as if it belonged in common to Scots and English, and even sometimes denominating their own language English.

Yet in whatever light we are to regard Lowland Scotch, whether merely as northern English, or as having a mingled Gothic origin from the Pictish and Anglo-Saxon, its claims to poetical antiquity are respectable. The extreme antiquity of the *Elegy on Alexander III.*, on which Mr. Ellis rests so much importance, is indeed disputed; but '*Sir Tristrem*' exhibits an original romance, composed on the north of the Tweed, at a time when there is no proof that southern English contained any

work of that species of fiction that was not translated from the French. In the fourteenth century Barbour celebrated the greatest royal hero of his country (Bruce) in a versified romance that is not uninteresting. The next age is prolific in the names of distinguished Scottish "*makers*." Henry the Minstrel, said to have been blind from his birth, rehearsed the exploits of Wallace in strains of fierce though vulgar fire. James I. of Scotland; Henryson, the author of '*Robene and Makyne*,' the first known pastoral, and one of the best in a dialect rich with the favours of the pastoral Muse; Douglas, the translator of Virgil; Dunbar, Mersar, and others, gave a poetical lustre to Scotland in the fifteenth century, and fill up a space in the annals of British poetry, after the date of Chaucer and Lydgate, that is otherwise nearly barren. James I. had an elegant and tender vein, and the ludicrous pieces ascribed to him possess considerable comic humour. Douglas's descriptions of natural scenery are extolled by T. Warton, who has given ample and interpreted specimens of them in his '*History of English Poetry*.' He was certainly a fond painter of nature, but his imagery is redundant and tediously profuse. His chief original work is the elaborate and quaint allegory of '*King Hart*.*' It is full of alliteration, a trick which the Scottish poets might have learnt to avoid from the "*rose of rhetours*" (as they call him) Chaucer, but in which they rival the anapæstics of Langlande.

Dunbar is a poet of a higher order. His tale of '*The Friars of Berwick*' is quite in the spirit of Chaucer. His '*Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins through Hell*,' though it would be absurd to compare it with the beauty and refinement of the celebrated '*Ode on the Passions*,' has yet an animated picturesqueness not unlike that of Collins. The effect of both pieces shows how much more potent allegorical figures become by being made to pass suddenly before the imagination, than by being detained in its view by prolonged description. Dunbar conjures up the personified Sins as Collins does the Passions, to rise, to strike, and disappear. They "*come like shadows, so depart*."

* In which the human heart is personified as a sovereign in his castle, guarded by the five Senses, made captive by Dame Pleasance, a neighbouring potentate, but finally brought back from thralldom by Age and Experience.

In the works of those northern makers of the fifteenth century there is a gay spirit, and an indication of jovial manners which forms a contrast to the covenanting national character of subsequent times. The frequent coarseness of this poetical gaiety it would indeed be more easy than agreeable to prove by quotations; and if we could forget how very gross the humour of Chaucer sometimes is, we might, on a general comparison of the Scotch with the English poets, extol the comparative delicacy of English taste; for Skelton himself, though more burlesque than Sir David Lyndsay in style, is less outrageously indecorous in matter. At a period when James IV. was breaking lances in the lists of chivalry, and when the court and court poets of Scotland might be supposed to have possessed ideas of decency, if not of refinement, Dunbar at that period addresses the Queen, on the occasion of having danced in her Majesty's chamber, with jokes which a beggar-wench of the present day would probably consider as an offence to her delicacy.

Sir David Lyndsay was a courtier, a foreign ambassador, and the intimate companion of a prince, for he attended James V. from the first to the last day of that monarch's life. From his rank in society we might suppose that he had purposely laid aside the style of a gentleman, and clothed the satirical moralities which he levelled against Popery in language suited to the taste of the vulgar, if it were easy to conceive the taste of the vulgar to have been at that period grosser than that of their superiors. Yet while Lyndsay's satire, in tearing up the depravities of a corrupted church, seems to be polluted with the scandal on which it preys, it is impossible to peruse his writings without confessing the importance of his character to the country in which he lived, and to the cause which he was born to serve. In his tale of 'Squyre Meldrum' we lose sight of the reformer. It is a little romance, very amusing as a draught of Scottish chivalrous manners, apparently drawn from the life, and blending a sportive and familiar with an heroic and amatory interest. Nor is its broad careless diction perhaps an unfavourable relief to the romantic spirit of the adventures which it portrays.

LIVES OF THE POETS.

CHAUCER.

[Born, 1328. Died, October 25th, 1400.]

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, according to his own account, was born in London, and the year 1328 is generally assigned as the date of his birth. The name is Norman, and, according to Francis Thynne, the antiquarian, is one of those, on the roll of Battle Abbey, which came in with William the Conqueror.* It is uncertain at which of the universities he studied. Warton and others, who allege that it was at Oxford, adduce no proof of their assertion; and the signature of "Philogenet of Cambridge," which the poet himself assumes in one of his early pieces, as it was fictitious in the name, might be equally so in the place; although it leaves it rather to be conjectured that the latter university had the honour of his education.

The precise time at which he first attracted the notice of his

* Vide Thynne's animadversions on Speght's edition of Chaucer, in the Rev. J. H. Todd's 'Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer,' p. 18. Thynne calls in question Speght's supposition of Chaucer being the son of a vintner, which Mr. Godwin, in his 'Life of Chaucer,' has adopted. Respecting the arms of the poet, Thynne (who was a herald) further remarks to Speght, "You set down that some heralds are of opinion that he did not descend from any great house, whiche they gather by his armes: it is a slender conjecture; for as honourable howses and of as great antiquyte have borne as mean armes as Chaucer, and yet Chaucer's armes are not so mean eyther for colour, chardge, or particion, as some will make them." If, indeed, the fact of Chaucer's residence in the Temple could be proved, instead of resting on mere rumour, it would be tolerable evidence of his high birth and fortune; for only young men of that description were anciently admitted to the inns of court. But, unfortunately for the claims of the Inner Temple to the honour of Chaucer's residence, Mr. Thynne declares "it most certaine to be gathered by circumsstances of recordes, that the lawyers were not of the Temple till the latter parte of the reygne of Edw. III., at which tyme Chaucer was a grave manne, holden in greate credyt, and employed in embassye."

munificent patrons, Edward III. and John of Gaunt, cannot be ascertained; but if his poem, entitled 'The Dreme,' be rightly supposed to be an epithalamium on the nuptials of the latter prince with Blanche heiress of Lancaster, he must have enjoyed the court patronage in his thirty-first year. The same poem contains an allusion to the poet's own attachment to a lady at court, whom he afterwards married. She was maid of honour to Philippa, queen of Edward III., and a younger sister of Catherine Swinford,* who was first the mistress, and ultimately the wife, of John of Gaunt.

By this connexion Chaucer acquired the powerful support of the Lancastrian family; and during his life his fortune fluctuated with theirs. Tradition has assigned to him a lodge, near the royal abode of Woodstock, by the park gate, where it is probable that he composed some of his early works; and there are passages in these which strikingly coincide with the scenery of his supposed habitation. There is also reason to presume that he accompanied his warlike monarch to France in the year 1359; and from the record of his evidence in a military court, which has been lately discovered, we find that he gave testimony to a fact which he witnessed in that kingdom in the capacity of a soldier.† But the expedition of that year, which ended in the peace of Bretigné, gave little opportunity of seeing military service; and he certainly never resumed the profession of arms.

In the year 1367 he received from Edward III. a pension of twenty marks per annum, a sum which in those times might probably be equivalent to two or three hundred pounds at the present day. In the patent for this annuity he is styled by the

* Catherine was the widow of Sir John Swinford, and daughter of Payne de Rouet, king-at-arms to the province of Guienne. It appears from other evidence, however, that Chaucer's wife's name was Philippa Pykard. Mr. Tyrwhitt explains the circumstance of the sisters having different names, by supposing that the father and his eldest daughter Catherine might bear the name of De Rouet, from some estate in their possession; while the family name, Pykard, was retained by the younger daughter Philippa, who was Chaucer's wife.

† [Chaucer was made prisoner at the siege of Retters, in France, in 1359, as appears from his depositions in the famous controversy between Lord Serpe and Sir Robert Grosvenor upon the right to bear the shield "azure a bend or," which had been assumed by Grosvenor, and which, after a long suit, he was obliged to discontinue. The roll of the depositions is in the Tower, and was printed in 1832 by Sir N. Harris Nicolas (2 vols. folio).]

king *valettus noster*. The name *valettus* was given to young men of the highest quality before they were knighted, though not as a badge of service. Chaucer, however, at the date of this pension, was not a young man, being then in his thirty-ninth year. He did not acquire the title of *scutifer*, or *esquire*, till five years after, when he was appointed joint envoy to Genoa with Sir James Pronan and Sir John de Mari. It has been conjectured that, after finishing the business of this mission, he paid a reverential visit to Petrarch, who was that year at Padua.* The fact, however, of an interview, so pleasing to the imagination, rests upon no certain evidence; nor are there even satisfactory proofs that he ever went on his Italian embassy.

His genius and connexions seem to have kept him in prosperity during the whole of Edward III.'s reign, and during the period of John of Gaunt's influence in the succeeding one. From Edward he had a grant of a pitcher of wine a-day in 1374, and was made comptroller of the small customs of wool and of the small customs of wine in the port of London. In the next year the king granted him the wardship of Sir Simon Staplegate's heir, for which he received 10*l.* The following year he received some forfeited wool to the value of 71*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*, sums probably equal

* Mr. Tyrwhitt is upon the whole inclined to doubt of this poetical meeting; and De Sade, who, in his 'Mémoires pour la Vie de Pétrarque,' conceived he should be able to prove that it took place, did not live to fulfil his promise. The circumstance which, taken collaterally with the fact of Chaucer's appointment to go to Italy, has been considered as giving the strongest probability to the English poet's having visited Petrarch, is that Chaucer makes one of the pilgrims in the 'Canterbury Tales' declare that he learned his story from the worthy clerk of Padua. The story is that of 'Patient Grisilde;' which, in fact, originally belonged to Boccaccio, and was only translated into Latin by Petrarch. It is not easy to explain, as Mr. Tyrwhitt remarks, why Chaucer should have proclaimed his obligation to Petrarch, while he really owed it to Boccaccio. According to Mr. Godwin, it was to have an occasion of boasting of his friendship with the Italian laureat. But why does he not boast of it in his own person? He makes the clerk of Oxford declare that he had his story from the clerk of Padua; but he does not say that he had it himself from that quarter. Mr. Godwin, however, believes that he shadows forth himself under the character of the lean scholar. This is surely improbable, when the poet in another place describes himself as round and jolly, while the poor Oxford scholar is lauk and meagre. If Chaucer really was corpulent, it was indeed giving but a shadow of himself to paint his figure as very lean: but why should he give himself a double existence, and describe both the jolly substance and the meagre shadow?

in effective value to twenty times their modern denomination. In the last year of Edward he was appointed joint envoy to France with Sir Guichard Dangle and Sir Richard Stan, or Sturrey, to treat of a marriage between Richard Prince of Wales and the daughter of the French king. His circumstances during this middle part of his life must have been honourable and opulent; and they enabled him, as he tells us in his 'Testament of Love,' to maintain a plentiful hospitality; but the picture of his fortunes was sadly reversed by the decline of John of Gaunt's influence at the court of Richard II., but more immediately by the poet's connexion with an obnoxious political party in the city. This party, whose resistance to an arbitrary court was dignified with the name of a rebellion, was headed by John of Northampton, or Comberton, who in religious tenets was connected with the followers of Wickliffe, and in political interests with the Duke of Lancaster; a connexion which accounts for Chaucer having been implicated in the business. His pension, it is true, was renewed under Richard; and an additional allowance of twenty marks per annum was made to him in lieu of his daily pitcher of wine. He was also continued in his office of comptroller, and allowed to execute it by deputy, at a time when there is every reason to believe that he must have been in exile. It is certain, however, that he was compelled to fly from the kingdom on account of his political connexions; and retired first to Hainault, then to France, and finally to Zealand. He returned to England, but was arrested and committed to prison. The coincidence of the time of his severest usage with that of the Duke of Gloucester's power has led to a fair supposition that that usurper was personally a greater enemy to the poet than King Richard himself, whose disposition towards him might have been softened by the good offices of Anne of Bohemia, a princess never mentioned by Chaucer but in terms of the warmest panegyric.

While he was abroad his circumstances had been impoverished by his liberality to some of his fellow-fugitives; and his effects at home had been cruelly embezzled by those intrusted with their management, who endeavoured, as he tells us, to make him perish for absolute want.

In 1388, while yet a prisoner, he was obliged to dispose of his two pensions, which were all the resources now left to him by his

persecutors. As the price of his release from imprisonment, he was obliged to make a confession respecting the late conspiracy. It is not known what he revealed ; certainly nothing to the prejudice of John of Gaunt, since that prince continued to be his friend.

To his acknowledged partisans, who had betrayed and tried to starve him during his banishment, he owed no fidelity. It is true that extorted evidence is one of the last ransoms which a noble mind would wish to pay for liberty ; but before we blame Chaucer for making any confession, we should consider how fair and easy the lessons of uncapitulating fortitude may appear on the outside of a prison, and yet how hard it may be to read them by the light of a dungeon. As far as dates can be guessed at in so obscure a transaction, his liberation took place after Richard had shaken off the domineering party of Gloucester, and had begun to act for himself. Chaucer's political errors—and he considered his share in the late conspiracy as errors of judgment, though not of intention—had been committed while Richard was a minor, and the acknowledgment of them might seem less humiliating when made to the monarch himself, than to an usurping faction ruling in his name. He was charged too, by his loyalty, to make certain disclosures important to the peace of the kingdom ; and his duty as a subject, independent of personal considerations, might well be put in competition with ties to associates already broken by their treachery.*

While in prison he began a prose work entitled 'The Testament of Love,' in order to beguile the tedium of a confinement which made every hour, he says, appear to him a hundred winters ; and he seems to have published it to allay the obloquy attendant on his misfortunes, as an explanation of his past conduct. It is an allegory, in imitation of Boethius's 'Consolations of Philosophy ;' an universal favourite in the early literature of Europe. Never was an obscure affair conveyed in a more obscure apology ; yet, amidst the gloom of allegory and lamentation, the vanity of the poet sufficiently breaks out. It is the goddess of Love who visits him in his confinement, and accosts him as her own immortal

* "For my trothe and my conscience," he says in his 'Testament of Love,' "bene witnesse to me bothe, that this knowing sothe have I saide for troathe of my leigiance, by which I was charged on my kinges behalfe."

bard. He descants to her on his own misfortunes, on the politics of London, and on his devotion to the Lady Marguerite, or Pearl, whom he found in a mussel-shell, and who turns out at last to mean the spiritual comfort of the church.*

In 1389 the Duke of Lancaster returned from Spain, and he had once more a steady protector. In that year he was appointed clerk of the works at Westminster, and in the following year clerk of those at Windsor, with a salary of 36*l.* per annum. His resignation of those offices, which it does not appear he held for more than twenty months, brings us to the sixty-fourth year of his age, when he retired to the country, most probably to Woodstock, and there composed his immortal 'Canterbury Tales,' amidst the scenes which had inspired his youthful genius.

In 1394 a pension of 20*l.* a-year was granted to him; and in the last year of Richard's reign he had a grant of a yearly tun of wine,—we may suppose in lieu of the daily pitcher, which had been stopped during his misfortunes.

Tradition assigns to our poet a residence in his old age at Donnington Castle, near Newbury, in Berkshire; to which he must have moved in 1397, if he ever possessed that mansion: but Mr. Grose, who affirms that he purchased Donnington Castle in that year, has neglected to show the documents of such a purchase. One of the most curious particulars in the latter part of his life is the patent of protection granted to Chaucer in the year 1398, which his former inaccurate biographers had placed in the second year of Richard, till Mr. Tyrwhitt corrected the mistaken date. The deed has been generally supposed to refer to the poet's creditors; as it purports, however, to protect him *contra æmulos suos*, the expression has led Mr. Godwin to question its having any relation to his debtors and creditors. It is true that rivals or competitors are not the most obvious designation for the creditors of a great poet; but still, as the law delights in fictions, and as the writ for securing a debtor exhibits at this day such figurative personages as John Doe and Richard Roe, the form of protection might in those times have been equally metaphorical;

* Mr. Todd has given, in his 'Illustrations,' some poems supposed to be written by Chaucer during his imprisonment; in which, in the same allegorical manner, under the praises of Spring, he appears to implore the assistance of Vere, Earl of Oxford, the principal favourite of Richard II.

nor, as a legal metonymy, are the terms rival and competitor by any means inexpressive of that interesting relation which subsists between the dun and the fugitive—a relation which in all ages has excited the warmest emulation, and the promptest ingenuity of the human mind. Within a year and a half from the date of this protection, Bolingbroke, the son of John of Gaunt, ascended the throne of England by the title of Henry IV.

It is creditable to the memory of that prince that, however basely he abandoned so many of his father's friends, he did not suffer the poetical ornament of the age to be depressed by the revolution. Chaucer's annuity and pipe of wine were continued under the new reign, and an additional pension of forty marks a-year was conferred upon him. But the poet did not long enjoy this accession to his fortune. He died in London, on the 25th of October, 1400, and was interred in the south cross aisle of Westminster Abbey. The monument to his memory was erected a century and a half after his decease, by a warm admirer of his genius, Nicholas Brigham, a gentleman of Oxford. It stands at the north end of a recess formed by four obtuse foliated arches, and is a plain altar with three quatrefoils and the same number of shields. Chaucer, in his 'Treatise of the Astrolabe,' mentions his son Lewis, for whom it was composed in 1391, and who was at that time ten years of age. Whether Sir Thomas Chaucer, who was Speaker of the House of Commons in the reign of Henry IV., was another and elder son of the poet, as many of his biographers have supposed, is a point which has not been distinctly ascertained.

Mr. Tyrwhitt has successfully vindicated Chaucer from the charge brought against him by Verstegan and Skinner, of having adulterated English by vast importations of French words and phrases. If Chaucer had indeed naturalised a multitude of French words by his authority, he might be regarded as a bold innovator, yet the language would have still been indebted to him for enriching it. But such revolutions in languages are not wrought by individuals; and the style of Chaucer will bear a fair comparison with that of his contemporaries, Gower, Wickliffe, and Mandeville. That the polite English of that period should have been highly impregnated with French is little to be wondered at, considering that English was a new language at court, where

French had of late been exclusively used, and must have still been habitual.* English must, indeed, have been known at court when Chaucer began his poetical career, for he would not have addressed his patrons in a language entirely plebeian; but that it had not been long esteemed of sufficient dignity for a courtly muse appears from Gower's continuing to write French verses, till the example of his great contemporary taught him to polish his native tongue.†

The same intelligent writer, Mr. Tyrwhitt, while he vindicates Chaucer from the imputation of leaving English more full of French than he found it, considers it impossible to ascertain, with any degree of certainty, the exact changes which he produced upon the national style, as we have neither a regular series of authors preceding him, nor authentic copies of their works, nor assurance that they were held as standards by their contemporaries. In spite of this difficulty, Mr. Ellis ventures to consider Chaucer as distinguished from his predecessors by his fondness for an Italian inflexion of words, and by his imitating the characteristics of the poetry of that nation.

He has a double claim to rank as the founder of English poetry, from having been the first to make it the vehicle of spirited representations of life and native manners, and from having been the first great architect of our versification, in giving our language the ten syllable or heroic measure, which, though it may sometimes be found among the lines of more ancient versifiers, evidently comes in only by accident. This measure occurs in the

* [Dryden has accused Chaucer of introducing Gallicisms into the English language; not aware that French was the language of the court of England long before Chaucer's time, and that, far from introducing French phrases into the English tongue, the ancient bard was successfully active in introducing the English as a fashionable dialect, instead of the French, which had, before his time, been the only language of polite literature in England.—Sir Walter Scott's *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. i. p. 426.]

† Mr. Todd, in his 'Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer,' p. 26, observes, that authors, both historical and poetical, in the century after the decease of these poets, in usually coupling their names, place Gower before Chaucer merely as a tribute to his seniority. But though Gower might be an older man than Chaucer, and possibly earlier known as a writer, yet, unless it can be proved that he published English poetry before his 'Confessio Amantis,' of which there appears to be no evidence, Chaucer must still claim precedence as the earlier English poet. The 'Confessio Amantis' was published in the sixteenth year of Richard II.'s reign, at which time Chaucer had written all his poems, except 'The Canterbury Tales.'

earliest poem that is attributed to him,* 'The Court of Love,' a title borrowed from the fantastic institutions of that name, where points of casuistry in the tender passion were debated and decided by persons of both sexes. It is a dream, in which the poet fancies himself taken to the Temple of Love, introduced to a mistress, and sworn to observe the statutes of the amatory god. As the earliest work of Chaucer, it interestingly exhibits the successful effort of his youthful hand in erecting a new and stately fabric of English numbers. As a piece of fancy, it is grotesque and meagre; but the lines often flow with great harmony.

His story of 'Troilus and Cresseide' was the delight of Sir Philip Sydney; and perhaps, excepting the 'Canterbury Tales,' was, down to the time of Queen Elizabeth, the most popular poem in the English language. It is a story of vast length and almost desolate simplicity, and abounds in all those glorious anachronisms which were then, and so long after, permitted to romantic poetry; such as making the son of King Priam read the 'Thebais' of Statius, and the gentlemen of Troy converse about the devil, jousts and tournaments, bishops, parliaments, and scholastic divinity.

The languor of the story is, however, relieved by many touches of pathetic beauty. The confession of Cresseide in the scene of felicity, when the poet compares her to the "new abashed nightingale, that stinteth first ere she beginneth sing," is a fine passage, deservedly noticed by Warton. The grief of Troilus after the departure of Cresseide is strongly portrayed in Troilus's soliloquy in his bed:—

"Where is mine owne ladie, lief, and dere?
Where is her whitè brest—where is it—where?
Where been her armès, and her iyen clere,
That yesterday this timè with me were?
Now may I wepe alone with many a teare,
And graspe about I may; but in this place,
Save a pillòwe, I find nought to embrace."

The sensations of Troilus, on coming to the house of his faithless Cresseide, when, instead of finding her returned, he beholds the barred doors and shut windows, giving tokens of her absence,

* Written, as some lines in the piece import, at the age of nineteen.

as well as his precipitate departure from the distracting scene, are equally well described :—

“ Therwith whan he was ware, and gan behold
 How shet * was every window of the place,
 As frost him thought his hertè gan to cold,
 For which, with changed deedly pale face,
 Withouten worde, he for by gan to pace,
 And, as God would, he gan so fastè ride,
 That no man his continuance espied.
 Than said he thus : O paleis desolate,
 O house of houses, whilom best yight,
 O paleis empty and disconsolate,
 O thou lanterne of which queint † is the light,
 O paleis whilom day, that now art night ;
 Wel oughtest thou to fall, and I to die,
 Sens ‡ she is went, that wont was us to gie !” §

The two best of Chaucer's allegories, 'The Flower and the Leaf,' and 'The House of Fame,' have been fortunately perpetuated in our language—the former by Dryden, the latter by Pope. 'The Flower and the Leaf' is an exquisite piece of fairy fancy. With a moral that is just sufficient to apologise for a dream, and yet which sits so lightly on the story as not to abridge its most visionary parts, there is in the whole scenery and objects of the poem an air of wonder and sweetness, an easy and surprising transition, that is truly magical. Pope had not so enchanting a subject in 'The House of Fame;' yet, with deference to Warton, that critic has done Pope injustice in assimilating his imitations of Chaucer to the modern ornaments in Westminster Abbey, which impair the solemn effect of the ancient building. The many absurd and fantastic particulars in Chaucer's 'House of Fame' will not suffer us to compare it, as a structure in poetry, with so noble a pile as Westminster Abbey in architecture. Much of Chaucer's fantastic matter has been judiciously omitted by Pope, who at the same time has clothed the best ideas of the old poem in spirited numbers and expression. Chaucer supposes himself to be snatched up to heaven by a large eagle, who addresses him in the name of St. James and the Virgin Mary, and, in order to quiet the poet's fears of being carried up to Jupiter, like another Ganymede, or turned into a star, like Orion, tells him that Jove wishes him to sing of other subjects than love and "blind Cupido," and has therefore ordered that Dan Chaucer

* Shut.

† Extinguished.

‡ Since.

§ To make joyous.

should be brought to behold the House of Fame. In Pope, the philosophy of fame comes with much more propriety from the poet himself than from the beak of a talkative eagle.

It was not until his green old age that Chaucer put forth, in the 'Canterbury Tales,' the full variety of his genius, and the pathos and romance, as well as the playfulness, of fiction. In the serious part of those tales he is, in general, more deeply indebted to preceding materials than in the comic stories, which he raised upon slight hints to the air and spirit of originals. The design of the whole work is after Boccaccio's 'Decamerone,' but exceedingly improved. The Italian novelist's ladies and gentlemen, who have retired from the city of Florence on account of the plague, and who agree to pass their time in telling stories, have neither interest nor variety in their individual characters; the time assigned to their congress is arbitrary, and it evidently breaks up because the author's stores are exhausted. Chaucer's design, on the other hand, though it is left unfinished, has definite boundaries and incidents to keep alive our curiosity, independent of the tales themselves. At the same time, while the action of the poem is an event too simple to divert the attention altogether from the pilgrims' stories, the pilgrimage itself is an occasion sufficiently important to draw together almost all the varieties of existing society, from the knight to the artisan, who, agreeably to the old simple manners, assemble in the same room of the hostellerie. The enumeration of those characters in the Prologue forms a scene, full, without confusion; and the object of their journey gives a fortuitous air to the grouping of individuals who collectively represent the age and state of society in which they live. It may be added, that, if any age or state of society be more favourable than another to the uses of the poet, that in which Chaucer lived must have been peculiarly picturesque; an age in which the differences of rank and profession were so strongly distinguished, and in which the broken masses of society gave out their deepest shadows and strongest colouring by the morning light of civilization. An unobtrusive but sufficient contrast is supported between the characters, as between the demure Prioress and the genial Wife of Bath, the rude and boisterous Miller and the polished Knight, &c. &c. Although the object of the journey is religious, it casts no gloom over the

meeting ; and we know that our Catholic ancestors are justly represented in a state of high good-humour on the road to such solemnities.

The sociality of the pilgrims is, on the whole, agreeably sustained ; but in a journey of thirty persons, it would not have been adhering to probability to have made the harmony quite uninterrupted. Accordingly, the bad humour which breaks out between the lean Friar and the cherub-faced Sompnour, while it accords with the hostility known to have subsisted between those two professions, gives a diverting zest to the satirical stories which the hypocrite and the libertine level at each other.

Chaucer's forte is description ; much of his moral reflection is superfluous—none of his characteristic painting. His men and women are not mere ladies and gentlemen, like those who furnish apologies for Boccaccio's stories. They rise before us minutely traced, profusely varied, and strongly discriminated. Their features and casual manners seem to have an amusing congruity with their moral characters. He notices minute circumstances as if by chance ; but every touch has its effect to our conception so distinctly, that we seem to live and travel with his personages throughout the journey.

What an intimate scene of English life in the fourteenth century do we enjoy in those tales, beyond what history displays by glimpses through the stormy atmosphere of her scenes, or the antiquary can discover by the cold light of his researches ! Our ancestors are restored to us, not as phantoms from the field of battle or the scaffold, but in the full enjoyment of their social existence. After four hundred years have closed over the mirthful features which formed the living originals of the poet's descriptions, his pages impress the fancy with the momentary credence that they are still alive ; as if Time had rebuilt his ruins, and were reacting the lost scenes of existence.

JOHN GOWER.

[Born about 1325. Died about 1409.]

LITTLE is known of Gower's personal history. "The proud tradition in the Marquis of Stafford's family," says Mr. Todd,* "has been, and still is, that he was of Stitenham; and who would not consider the dignity of his genealogy augmented by enrolling among its worthies the moral Gower?"

His effigies in the church of St. Mary Overies is often inaccurately described as having a garland of ivy and roses on the head. It is, in fact, a chaplet of roses, such as, Thynne says, was anciently worn by knights; a circumstance which is favourable to the suspicion that has been suggested, of his having been of the rank of knighthood. If Thynne's assertion, respecting the time of the lawyers first entering the Temple, be correct, it will be difficult to reconcile it with the tradition of Gower's having been a student there in his youth.

By Chaucer's manner of addressing Gower, the latter appears to have been the elder. He was attached to Thomas of Woodstock, as Chaucer was to John of Gaunt. The two poets appear to have been at one time cordial friends, but ultimately to have quarrelled. Gower tells us himself that he was blind in his old age. From his will it appears that he was living in 1408. His bequests to several churches and hospitals, and his legacy to his wife of 100*l.*, of all his valuable goods, and of the rents arising from his manors of Southwell in the county of Nottingham, and of Multon in the county of Suffolk, undeniably prove that he was rich.

One of his three great works, the '*Speculum Meditantis*,' a poem in French, is erroneously described by Mr. Godwin and others as treating of conjugal fidelity. In an account of its contents in a MS. in Trinity College, Cambridge, we are told that its principal subject is the repentance of a sinner. The '*Vox Clamantis*,' in Latin, relates to the insurrection of the commons in the reign of Richard II. The '*Confessio Amantis*,' in Eng-

* In '*Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer*,' by the Rev. H. J. Todd.

lish, is a dialogue between a lover and his confessor, who is a priest of Venus, and who explains, by apposite stories and philosophical illustrations, all the evil affections of the heart which impede or counteract the progress and success of the tender passion.

His writings exhibit all the crude erudition and science of his age; a knowledge sufficient to have been the fuel of genius if Gower had possessed its fire.

JOHN LYDGATE

[Born, 1379. Died, 1461.]

WAS born at a place of that name in Suffolk, about the year 1379. His translation (taken through the medium of Laurence's version) of Boccaccio's 'Fall of Princes' was begun while Henry VI. was in France, where that king never was but when he went to be crowned at Paris, in 1432. Lydgate was then above threescore. He was a monk of the Benedictine order at St. Edmund's Bury, and in 1423 was elected prior of Hatfield Brodhook, but the following year had licence to return to his convent again. His condition, one would imagine, should have supplied him with the necessaries of life, yet he more than once complains to his patron, Humphry, Duke of Gloucester, of his wants; and he shows distinctly in one passage that he did not dislike a little more wine than his convent allowed him. He was full thirty years of age when Chaucer died, whom he calls his master, and who probably was so in a literal sense. His 'Fall of Princes' is rather a paraphrase than a translation of his original. He disclaims the idea of writing "a stile briefe and compendious." A great story he compares to a great oak, which is not to be attacked with a single stroke, but by "*a long processe.*"

Gray has pointed out beauties in this writer which had eluded the research or the taste of former critics. "I pretend not," says Gray, "to set him on a level with Chaucer, but he certainly comes the nearest to him of any contemporary writer I am acquainted with. His choice of expression and the smoothness

of his verse far surpass both Gower and Occleve. He wanted not art in raising the more tender emotions of the mind." Of these he gives several examples. The finest of these, perhaps, is a passage descriptive of maternal agony and tenderness.*

JAMES I. OF SCOTLAND.

[Born, 1394. Died, Feb. 1436-7.]

JAMES I. of Scotland was born in the year 1394, and became heir apparent to the Scottish crown by the death of his brother, prince David. Taken prisoner at sea by the English at ten years of age, he received some compensation for his cruel detention by an excellent education. It appears that he accompanied Henry V. into France, and there distinguished himself by his skill and bravery. On his return to his native country he endeavoured during too short a reign to strengthen the rights of the crown and people against a tyrannical aristocracy. He was the first who convoked commissioners from the shires in place of the numerous lesser barons, and he endeavoured to create a house of commons in Scotland by separating the representatives of the people from the peers; but his nobility foresaw the effects of his scheme, and too successfully resisted it. After clearing the lowlands of Scotland from feudal oppression, he visited the highlands, and crushed several refractory chieftains. Some instances of his justice are recorded which rather resemble the cruelty of the times in which he lived than his own personal character; but in such times Justice herself wears a horrible aspect. One Macdonald, a petty chieftain of the north, displeased with a widow on his estate for threatening to appeal to the king, had ordered her feet to be shod with iron plates nailed to the soles, and then insultingly told her that she was thus armed against the rough roads. The widow, however, found means to send her story to James, who seized the savage, with twelve of his associates, whom he shod with iron in a similar manner, and, having exposed

* [Canace, condemned to death by her father Æolus, sends to her guilty brother Macareus the last testimony of her unhappy passion.—Book i. folio 39.]

them for several days in Edinburgh, gave them over to the executioner.

While a prisoner in Windsor Castle James had seen and admired the beautiful Lady Jane Beaufort, daughter of the Duke of Somerset. Few royal attachments have been so romantic and so happy. His poem entitled 'The Quair,'* in which he pathetically laments his captivity, was devoted to the celebration of this lady, whom he obtained at last in marriage, together with his liberty, as Henry conceived that his union with the granddaughter of the Duke of Lancaster might bind the Scottish monarch to the interests of England.

James perished by assassination in the 42nd year of his age, leaving behind him the example of a patriot king, and of a man of genius universally accomplished.

ROBERT HENRYSONE.

[Born, 1425. Died, 1495.]

NOTHING is known of the life of Henrysone but that he was a schoolmaster at Dunfermline. Lord Hailes supposes his office to have been preceptor of youth in the Benedictine convent of that place. Besides a continuation of Chaucer's 'Troilus and Cresseide,' he wrote a number of fables, of which MS. copies are preserved in the Scotch Advocates' Library.

WILLIAM DUNBAR.

[Born, 1460? Died, 1520?]

THE little that is known of Dunbar has been gleaned from the complaints in his own poetry, and from the abuse of his contemporary Kennedy, which is chiefly directed against his poverty. From the colophon of one of his poems, dated at Oxford, it has been suggested, as a conjecture, that he studied at that university.†

* Quair is the old Scotch word for a book.

† [Dunbar in 1477 was entered among the Determinantes, or Bachelors of Arts, at Salvator's College, St. Andrew's, and in 1479 he took his degree there of Master of Arts. (See Laing's 'Dunbar,' vol. i. p. 9.) ... That he studied at Oxford at any time is highly improbable.]

By his own account, he travelled through France and England as a novice of the Franciscan order; and, in that capacity, confesses that he was guilty of sins, probably professional frauds, from the stain of which the holy water could not cleanse him. On his return to Scotland he commemorated the nuptials of James IV. with Margaret Tudor, in his poem of 'The Thistle and Rose;' but we find that James turned a deaf ear to his remonstrances for a benefice, and that the queen exerted her influence in his behalf ineffectually.* Yet, from the verses on his dancing in the queen's chamber, it appears that he was received at court on familiar terms.

SIR DAVID LYNDSAY.

[Born, 1490? Died, 1557.]

DAVID LYNDSAY, according to the conjecture of his latest editor, † was born in 1490. He was educated at St. Andrew's, and, leaving that university, probably about the age of nineteen, became the page and companion of James V. during the prince's childhood, not his tutor, as has been sometimes inaccurately stated. When the young king burst from the faction which had oppressed himself and his people, Lyndsay published his 'Dream,' a poem on the miseries which Scotland had suffered during the minority. In 1530 the king appointed him Lyon King at Arms, and a grant of knighthood, as usual, accompanied the office. In that capacity he went several times abroad, and was one of those who were sent to demand a princess of the Imperial line for the Scottish sovereign. James having, however, changed his mind to a connexion with France, and having at length fixed his choice on the Princess Magdalene, Lyndsay was sent to attend upon her to Scotland; but her death, happening six weeks after her arrival, occasioned another poem from our author, entitled 'The Deploration.' On the arrival of Mary of Guise, to supply her

* [In 1500 he received a yearly pension of ten pounds from King James, "to be paid to him for al the dais of his life, or quhil he be promovit be our Souerane Lord to a benefice of xl li. or aboue." The pension was raised to xx li. in 1507, and to lxxx li. in 1510, the latter to be paid till such time as he should receive a benefice of one hundred pounds or upwards.]

† Mr. G. Chalmers.

place, he superintended the ceremony of her triumphant entry into Edinburgh; and, blending the fancy of a poet with the godliness of a reformer, he so constructed the pageant, that a lady like an angel, who came out of an artificial cloud, exhorted her Majesty to serve God, obey her husband, and keep her body pure, according to God's commandments.

On the 14th of December, 1542, Lyndsay witnessed the decease of James V., at his palace of Falkland, after a connexion between them which had subsisted since the earliest days of the prince. If the death of James (as some of his biographers have asserted) occasioned our poet's banishment from court, it is certain that his retirement was not of long continuance; since he was sent, in 1543, by the Regent of Scotland, as Lyon King, to the Emperor of Germany. Before this period the principles of the reformed religion had begun to take a general root in the minds of his countrymen; and Lyndsay, who had already written a drama in the style of the old moralities, with a view to ridicule the corruptions of the Popish clergy, returned from the Continent to devote his pen and his personal influence to the cause of the new faith. In the parliaments which met at Edinburgh and Linlithgow, in 1544, 45, and 46, he represented the county of Cupar in Fife; and in 1547 he is recorded among the champions of the Reformation who counselled the ordination of John Knox.

The death of Cardinal Beaton drew from him a poem on the subject, entitled 'A Tragedy,' (the term tragedy was not then confined to the drama,) in which he has been charged with drawing together all the worst things that could be said of the murdered prelate. It is incumbent, however, on those who blame him for so doing, to prove that those worst things were not atrocious. Beaton's principal failing was a disposition to burn with fire those who opposed his ambition, or who differed from his creed; and if Lyndsay was malignant in exposing one tyrant, what a libeller must Tacitus be accounted!

His last embassy was to Denmark, in order to negotiate for a free trade with Scotland, and to solicit ships to protect the Scottish coasts against the English. It was not till after returning from this business that he published 'Squyre Meldrum,' the last and the liveliest of his works.

SIR THOMAS WYAT,

[Born, 1503. Died, Oct. 1542.]

CALLED the Elder, to distinguish him from his son, who suffered in the reign of Queen Mary, was born at Allington Castle, in Kent, in 1503, and was educated at Cambridge. He married early in life, and was still earlier distinguished at the court of Henry VIII., with whom his interest and favour were so great as to be proverbial. His person was majestic and beautiful, his visage (according to Surrey's interesting description) was "stern and mild:" he sang and played the lute with remarkable sweetness, spoke foreign languages with grace and fluency, and possessed an inexhaustible fund of wit. At the death of Wolsey he could not be more than 19; yet he is said to have contributed to that minister's downfall by a humorous story, and to have promoted the Reformation by a seasonable jest. At the coronation of Anne Boleyn he officiated for his father as ewerer, and possibly witnessed the ceremony not with the most festive emotions, as there is reason to suspect that he was secretly attached to the royal bride. When the tragic end of that princess was approaching, one of the calumnies circulated against her was, that Sir Thomas Wyatt had confessed having had an illicit intimacy with her. The scandal was certainly false; but that it arose from a tender partiality really believed to exist between them, seems to be no overstrained conjecture. His poetical mistress's name is Anna; and in one of his sonnets he complains of being obliged to desist from the pursuit of a beloved object on account of its being the king's. The perusal of his poetry was one of the unfortunate queen's last consolations in prison. A tradition of Wyatt's attachment to her was long preserved in his family. She retained his sister to the last about her person; and, as she was about to lay her head on the block, gave her weeping attendant a small prayer-book, as a token of remembrance, with a smile of which the sweetness was not effaced by the horrors of approaching death. Wyatt's favour at court, however, continued undiminished; and notwithstanding a quarrel with the Duke of Suffolk, which

occasioned his being committed to the Tower, he was, immediately on his liberation, appointed to a command under the Duke of Norfolk, in the army that was to act against the rebels. He was also knighted, and, in the following year, made high sheriff of Kent.

When the Emperor Charles V., after the death of Anne Boleyn, apparently forgetting the disgrace of his aunt in the sacrifice of her successor, showed a more conciliatory disposition towards England, Wyat was, in 1537, selected to go as ambassador to the Spanish court. His situation there was rendered exceedingly difficult, by the mutual insincerity of the negotiating powers, and by his religion, which exposed him to prejudice, and even at one time to danger from the Inquisition. He had to invest Henry's bullying remonstrances with the graces of moderate diplomacy, and to keep terms with a bigoted court while he questioned the Pope's supremacy. In spite of those obstacles, the dignity and discernment of Wyat gave him such weight in negotiation, that he succeeded in expelling from Spain his master's most dreaded enemy, Cardinal Pole, who was so ill received at Madrid that the haughty legate quitted it with indignation. The records of his different embassies exhibit not only personal activity in following the Emperor Charles to his most important interviews with Francis, but sagacity in foreseeing consequences and in giving advice to his own sovereign. Neither the dark policy nor the immoveable countenance of Charles eluded his penetration. When the Emperor, on the death of Lady Jane Seymour, offered the King of England the Duchess of Milan in marriage, Henry's avidity caught at the offer of her duchy, and Heynes and Bonner were sent out to Spain as special commissioners on the business; but it fell off, as Wyat had predicted, from the Spanish monarch's insincerity.

Bonner, who had done no good to the English mission, and who had felt himself lowered at the Spanish court by the superior ascendancy of Wyat, on his return home sought to indemnify himself for the mortification by calumniating his late colleague. In order to answer those calumnies, Wyat was obliged to obtain his recall from Spain; and Bonner's charges, on being investigated, fell to the ground. But the Emperor's journey through France having raised another crisis of expectation, Wyat was

sent out once more to watch the motions of Charles, and to fathom his designs. At Blois he had an interview with Francis, and another with the Emperor, whose friendship for the King of France he pronounced, from all that he observed, to be insincere. "He is constrained," said the English ambassador, "to come to a show of friendship, meaning to make him a mockery when he has done." When events are made familiar to us by history, we are perhaps disposed to undervalue the wisdom that foretold them; but this much is clear, that, if Charles's rival had been as wise as Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Emperor would not have made a mockery of Francis. Wyatt's advice to his own sovereign at this period was to support the Duke of Cleves, and to ingratiate himself with the German Protestant princes. His zeal was praised; but the advice, though sanctioned by Cromwell, was not followed by Henry. Warned probably, at last, of the approaching downfall of Cromwell, he obtained his final recall from Spain. On his return, Bonner had sufficient interest to get him committed to the Tower, where he was harshly treated and unfairly tried, but was nevertheless most honourably acquitted; and Henry, satisfied of his innocence, made him considerable donations of land. Leland informs us that about this time he had the command of a ship of war. The sea service was not then, as it is now, a distinct profession.

Much of his time, however, after his return to England, must be supposed, from his writings, to have been spent at his paternal seat of Allington, in study and rural amusements. From that pleasant retreat he was summoned, in the autumn of 1542, by order of the king, to meet the Spanish ambassador, who had landed at Falmouth, and to conduct him from thence to London. In his zeal to perform this duty he accidentally overheated himself with riding, and was seized, at Sherborne, with a malignant fever, which carried him off, after a few days' illness, in his thirty-ninth year.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

[Born, 1516. Died, 1547.]

WALPOLE, Ellis, and Warton gravely inform us that Lord Surrey contributed to the victory of Flodden, a victory which was gained before Lord Surrey was born. The mistakes of such writers may teach charity to criticism. Dr. Nott, who has cleared away much fable and anachronism from the noble poet's biography, supposes that he was born in or about the year 1516, and that he was educated at Cambridge, of which university he was afterwards elected high steward. At the early age of sixteen he was contracted in marriage to the Lady Frances Vere, daughter to John Earl of Oxford. The Duke of Richmond was afterwards affianced to Surrey's sister. It was customary, in those times, to delay, frequently for years, the consummations of such juvenile matches; and the writer of Lord Surrey's 'Life,' already mentioned, gives reasons for supposing that the poet's residence at Windsor, and his intimate friendship with Richmond, so tenderly recorded in his verses, took place, not in their absolute childhood, as has been generally imagined, but immediately after their being contracted to their respective brides. If this was the case, the poet's allusion to

"The secret groves which oft we made resound
Of pleasant plaint, and of our ladies' praise,"

may be charitably understood as only recording the aspirations of their conjugal impatience.

Surrey's marriage was consummated in 1535. In the subsequent year he sat with his father, as Earl Marshal, on the trial of his kinswoman Anne Boleyn. Of the impression which that event made upon his mind there is no trace to be found either in his poetry or in tradition. His grief for the amiable Richmond, whom he lost soon after, is more satisfactorily testified. It is about this period that the fiction of Nash, unfaithfully misapplied as reality by Anthony Wood,* and from him copied, by

* Nash's 'History of Jack Wilton.'

mistake, by Walpole and Warton, sends the poet on his romantic tour to Italy, as the knight errant of the fair Geraldine. There is no proof, however, that Surrey was ever in Italy. At the period of his imagined errantry his repeated appearance at the court of England can be ascertained; and Geraldine, if she was a daughter of the Earl of Kildare, was then only a child of seven years old.*

That Surrey entertained romantic sentiments for the fair Geraldine seems, however, to admit of little doubt; and that, too, at a period of her youth which makes his homage rather surprising. The fashion of the age sanctioned such courtships, under the liberal interpretation of their being platonic. Both Sir Philip Sydney and the Chevalier Bayard avowed attachments of this exalted nature to married ladies, whose reputations were never sullied, even when the mistress wept openly at parting from her admirer. Of the nature of Surrey's attachment we may conjecture what we please, but can have no certain test even in his verses, which might convey either much more or much less than he felt; and how shall we search in the graves of men for the shades and limits of passions that elude our living observation?

Towards the close of 1540, Surrey embarked in public business. A rupture with France being anticipated, he was sent over to that kingdom, with Lord Russell and the Earl of Southampton, to see that everything was in a proper state of defence within the English pale. He had previously been knighted; and had jousted in honour of Anne of Cleves, upon her marriage with Henry. The commission did not detain him long in France. He returned to England before Christmas, having acquitted himself entirely to the king's satisfaction. In the next

* If concurring proofs did not so strongly point out his poetical mistress Geraldine to be the daughter of the Earl of Kildare, we might well suspect, from the date of Surrey's attachment, that the object of his praises must have been some other person. Geraldine, when he declared his devotion to her, was only thirteen years of age. She was taken, in her childhood, under the protection of the court, and attended the Princess Mary. At the age of fifteen she married Sir Anthony Wood, a man of sixty, and after his death accepted the Earl of Lincoln. From Surrey's verses we find that she slighted his addresses, after having for some time encouraged them; and from his conduct it appears that he hurried into war and public business in order to forget her indifference.

year, 1541, we may suppose him to have been occupied in his literary pursuits—perhaps in his translation of Virgil. England was then at peace both at home and abroad, and in no other subsequent year of Surrey's life could his active service have allowed him leisure. In 1542 he received the order of the Garter, and followed his father in the expedition of that year into Scotland, where he acquired his first military experience. Amidst these early distinctions, it is somewhat mortifying to find him, about this period, twice committed to the Fleet prison; on one occasion on account of a private quarrel, on another for eating meat in Lent, and for breaking the windows of the citizens of London with stones from his cross-bow. This was a strange misdemeanour indeed for a hero and a man of letters. His apology, perhaps, as curious as the fact itself, turns the action only into quixotic absurdity. His motive, he said, was religious. He saw the citizens sunk in papal corruption of manners, and he wished to break in upon their guilty secrecy by a sudden chastisement that should remind them of Divine retribution!

The war with France called him into more honourable activity. In the first campaign he joined the army under Sir John Wallop, at the siege of Landrecy; and in the second and larger expedition he went as marshal of the army of which his father commanded the vanguard. The siege of Montreuil was allotted to the Duke of Norfolk and his gallant son; but their operations were impeded by the want of money, ammunition, and artillery—supplies most probably detained from reaching them by the influence of the Earl of Hertford, who had long regarded both Surrey and his father with a jealous eye. In these disastrous circumstances, Surrey seconded the duke's efforts with zeal and ability. On one expedition he was out two days and two nights, spread destruction among the resources of the enemy, and returned to the camp with a load of supplies, and without the loss of a single man. In a bold attempt to storm the town, he succeeded so far as to make a lodgment in one of the gates; but was dangerously wounded, and owed his life to the devoted bravery of his attendant Clere, who received a hurt in rescuing him, of which he died a month after. On the report of the Dauphin of France's approach with 60,000 men, the English

made an able retreat, of which Surrey conducted the movements as marshal of the camp.

He returned with his father to England, but must have made only a short stay at home, as we find him soon after fighting a spirited action in the neighbourhood of Boulogne, in which he chased back the French as far as Montreuil. The following year he commanded the vanguard of the army of Boulogne, and finally solicited and obtained the government of that place. It was then nearly defenceless; the breaches unrepaired, the fortifications in decay, and the enemy, with superior numbers, established so near as to be able to command the harbour, and to fire upon the lower town. Under such disadvantages Surrey entered on his command, and drew up and sent home a plan of alterations in the works, which was approved of by the king, and ordered to be acted upon. Nor were his efforts merely defensive. On one occasion he led his men into the enemy's country as far as Samer-au-Bois, which he destroyed, and returned in safety with considerable booty. Afterwards, hearing that the French intended to revictual their camp at Outreau, he compelled them to abandon their object, pursued them as far as Hardilot, and was only prevented from gaining a complete victory through the want of cavalry. But his plan for the defence of Boulogne, which, by his own extant memorial, is said to evince great military skill, was marred by the issue of one unfortunate sally. In order to prevent the French from revictualling a fortress that menaced the safety of Boulogne, he found it necessary, with his slender forces, to risk another attack at St. Etienne. His cavalry first charged and routed those of the French: the foot, which he commanded in person, next advanced, and the first line, consisting chiefly of gentlemen armed with corselets, behaved gallantly; but the second line, in coming to the push of the pike, were seized with a sudden panic, and fled back to Boulogne, in spite of all the efforts of their commander to rally them. Within a few months after this affair he was recalled to England, and Hertford went out to France as the king's lieutenant-general.

It does not appear, however, that the loss of this action was the pretext for his recall, or the direct cause of the king's vengeance, by which he was subsequently destined to fall. If the faction of Hertford, that was intriguing against him at home,

ever succeeded in fretting the king's humour against him, by turning his misfortune into a topic of blame, Henry's irritation must have passed away, as we find Surrey recalled, with promises of being replaced in his command (a promise, however, which was basely falsified), and again appearing at court in an honourable station. But the event of his recall (though it does not seem to have been marked by tokens of royal displeasure) certainly contributed indirectly to his ruin, by goading his proud temper to further hostilities with Hertford. Surrey, on his return to England, spoke of his enemy with indignation and menaces, and imprudently expressed his hopes of being revenged in a succeeding reign. His words were reported, probably with exaggeration, to the king, and occasioned his being sent for some time as a prisoner to Windsor. He was liberated, however, from thence, and again made his appearance at court, unsuspecting of his impending ruin.

It is difficult to trace any personal motives that could impel Henry to wish for his destruction. He could not be jealous of his intentions to marry the Princess Mary—that fable is disproved by the discovery of Surrey's widow having survived him. Nor is it likely that the king dreaded him as an enemy to the Reformation, as there is every reason to believe that he was a Protestant. The natural cruelty of Henry seems to have been but an instrument in the designing hands of Hertford, whose ambition, fear, and jealousy prompted him to seek the destruction of Norfolk and his son. His measures were unhappily aided by the vindictive resentment of the Duchess of Norfolk against her husband, from whom she had been long separated, and by the still more unaccountable and unnatural hatred of the Duchess of Richmond against her own brother. Surrey was arrested on the 12th of December, 1546, and committed to the Tower. The depositions of witnesses against him, whose collective testimony did not substantiate even a legal offence, were transmitted to the king's judges at Norwich, and a verdict was returned, in consequence of which he was indicted for high treason. We are not told the full particulars of his defence, but are only generally informed that it was acute and spirited. With respect to the main accusation, of his bearing the arms of the Confessor, he proved that he had the authority of the heralds in so doing,

and that he had worn them himself in the king's presence, as his ancestors had worn them in the presence of former kings. Notwithstanding his manifest innocence, the jury was base enough to find him guilty: the chancellor pronounced sentence of death upon him; and in the flower of his age, in his 31st year, this noble soldier and accomplished poet was beheaded on Tower-hill.

LORD VAUX.

[Died, 1560?]

IT is now universally admitted that Lord Vaux, the poet, was not Nicholas, the first peer, but Thomas, the second baron of that name. He was one of those who attended Cardinal Wolsey on his embassy to Francis I. He received the order of the Bath at the coronation of Anne Boleyn, and was for some time Captain of the island of Jersey. A considerable number of his pieces are found in 'The Paradise of Dainty Devices.' Mr. Park* has noticed a passage in the prose prologue to Sackville's Induction to 'The Mirror for Magistrates,' that Lord Vaux had undertaken to complete the history of King Edward's two sons who were murdered in the Tower, but that it does not appear he ever executed his intention.

RICHARD EDWARDS

[Born, 1523. Died, 1566.]

WAS a principal contributor to 'The Paradise of Dainty Devices,' and one of our earliest dramatic authors. He wrote two comedies, one entitled 'Damon and Pythias,' the other 'Palamon and Arcite,' both of which were acted before Queen Elizabeth. Besides his regular dramas, he appears to have contrived masques, and to have written verses for pageants; and is described as having been the first fiddle, the most fashionable sonneteer, and the most facetious mimic of the court. In the beginning of

* In his edition of Walpole's 'Royal and Noble Authors.'

Elizabeth's reign he was one of the gentlemen of her chapel, and master of the children there, having the character of an excellent musician.

WILLIAM HUNNIS

WAS a gentleman of Edward VI.'s Chapel, and afterwards master of the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel. He translated the Psalms, and was author of 'A Hive of Honey,' 'A Handful of Honeysuckle,' and other godly works. He died in 1568.*

THOMAS SACKVILLE,

BARON BUCKHURST, AND EARL OF DORSET,

[Born, 1536. Died, April 19, 1608.]

WAS the son of Sir Richard Sackville, and was born at Withyam, in Sussex, in 1536. He was educated at both universities, and enjoyed an early reputation in Latin as well as in English poetry. While a student of the Inner Temple he wrote his tragedy of 'Gorboduc,' which was played by the young students, as a part of a Christmas entertainment, and afterwards before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall, in 1561. In a subsequent edition of this piece it was entitled 'The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex.' He is said to have been assisted in the composition of it by Thomas Norton, but to what extent does not appear. T. War-ton disputes the fact of his being at all indebted to Norton. The merit of the piece does not render the question of much importance. This tragedy, and his contribution of the Induction and Legend of the Duke of Buckingham to 'The Mirror for Magistrates,' † compose the poetical history of Sackville's life.

* [Hunnis was also a writer of interludes.—See Collier's *Annals of the Stage*, vol. i. p. 235.]

† 'The Mirror for Magistrates' was intended to celebrate the chief unfortunate personages in English history, in a series of poetical legends spoken by the characters themselves, with epilogues interspersed to connect the stories, in imitation of Boccaccio's 'Fall of Princes,' which had been translated by Lydgate. The historian of English poetry ascribes the plan

The rest of it was political. He had been elected to parliament at the age of thirty. Six years afterwards, in the same year that his *Induction and Legend of Buckingham* were published, he went abroad on his travels, and was, for some reason that is not mentioned, confined, for a time, as a prisoner at Rome; but he returned home, on the death of his father, in 1566, and was soon after promoted to the title of Baron Buckhurst. Having entered at first with rather too much prodigality on the enjoyment of his patrimony, he is said to have been reclaimed by the indignity of being kept in waiting by an alderman, from whom he was borrowing money, and to have made a resolution of economy, from which he never departed. The Queen employed him, in the fourteenth year of her reign, in an embassy to Charles IX. of France. In 1587 he went as ambassador to the United Provinces, upon their complaint against the Earl of Leicester; but, though he performed his trust with integrity, the favourite had sufficient influence to get him recalled, and on his return he was ordered to confinement in his own house for nine or ten months. On Leicester's death, however, he was immediately reinstated in royal favour, and was made Knight of the Garter and Chancellor of Oxford. On the death of Burleigh he became Lord High Treasurer of England. At Queen Elizabeth's demise he was one of the privy councillors on whom the administration of the kingdom devolved, and he concurred in proclaiming King James. The new sovereign confirmed him in the office of High Treasurer by a patent for life, and on all occa-

of this work to Sackville, and seems to have supposed that his *Induction and Legend of Henry Duke of Buckingham* appeared in the first edition; but Sir E. Brydges has shown that it was not until the second edition of 'The Mirror for Magistrates' that Sackville's contribution was published, viz. in 1563. Baldwin and Ferrers were the authors of the first edition, in 1559. Higgins, Phayer, Churchyard, and a crowd of inferior versifiers, contributed successive legends, not confining themselves to English history, but treating the reader with the lamentations of Geta and Caracalla, Brennus, &c. &c., till the improvement of the drama superseded those dreary monologues, by giving heroic history a more engaging air. Sackville's contribution to 'The Mirror for Magistrates' is the only part of it that is tolerable. It is observable that his plan differs materially from that of the other contributors. He lays the scene, like Dante, in Hell, and makes his characters relate their history at the gates of Elysium, under the guidance of Sorrow; while the authors of the other legends are generally contented with simply dreaming of the unfortunate personages, and, by going to sleep, offer a powerful inducement to follow their example.

sions consulted him with confidence. In March, 1604, he was created Earl of Dorset. He died suddenly [1608] at the council-table, in consequence of a dropsy on the brain. Few ministers, as Lord Orford remarks, have left behind them so unblemished a character. His family considered his memory so invulnerable, that, when some partial aspersions were thrown upon it after his death, they disdained to answer them. He carried taste and elegance even into his formal political functions, and for his eloquence was styled the bell of the Star Chamber. As a poet, his attempt to unite allegory with heroic narrative, and his giving our language its earliest regular tragedy, evince the views and enterprise of no ordinary mind; but, though the Induction to 'The Mirror for Magistrates' displays some potent sketches, it bears the complexion of a saturnine genius, and resembles a bold and gloomy landscape on which the sun never shines. As to 'Gorboduc,' it is a piece of monotonous recitals, and cold and heavy accumulation of incidents. As an imitation of classical tragedy it is peculiarly unfortunate, in being without even the unities of place and time to circumscribe its dulness.

GEORGE GASCOIGNE

[Born, 1536. Died, 1577.]

WAS born in 1536,* of an ancient family in Essex, was bred at Cambridge, and entered at Gray's-Inn; but being disinherited by his father for extravagance, he repaired to Holland, and obtained a commission under the Prince of Orange. A quarrel with his colonel retarded his promotion in that service; and a circumstance occurred which had nearly cost him his life. A lady at the Hague (the town being then in the enemy's possession) sent him a letter, which was intercepted in the camp, and a report against his loyalty was made by those who had seized it. Gascoigne immediately laid the affair before the Prince, who saw through the design of his accusers, and gave him a passport for visiting his female friend. At the siege of Middleburgh he displayed so much bravery that the Prince rewarded

* Mr. Ellis conjectures that he was born much earlier.

him with 300 guilders above his pay; but he was soon after made prisoner by the Spaniards, and, having spent four months in captivity, returned to England, and resided generally at Walthamstow. In 1575 he accompanied Queen Elizabeth in one of her stately progresses, and wrote for her amusement a masque, entitled 'The Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth Castle.' He is generally said to have died at Stamford in 1578; but the registers of that place have been searched in vain for his name by the writer of an article in the 'Censura Literaria,'* who has corrected some mistakes in former accounts of him. It is not probable, however, that he lived long after 1576, as, from a manuscript in the British Museum, it appears that in that year he complains of his infirmities, and nothing afterwards came from his pen.

Gascoigne was one of the earliest contributors to our drama. He wrote 'The Supposes,' a comedy, translated from Ariosto, and 'Jocasta,' a tragedy from Euripides, with some other pieces.

JOHN HARRINGTON.

[Born, 1534. Died, 1582.]

JOHN HARRINGTON, the father of the translator of Ariosto, was imprisoned by Queen Mary for his suspected attachment to Queen Elizabeth, by whom he was afterwards rewarded with a grant of lands. Nothing that the younger Harrington has written seems to be worth preserving; but the few specimens of his father's poetry which are found in the 'Nugæ Antiquæ' may excite a regret that he did not write more. His love-verses have an elegance and terseness, more modern, by a hundred years, than those of his contemporaries.

* 'Cens. Lit.,' vol. i. p. 100. [Gascoigne died at Stamford on the 7th of October, 1577.—See Collier's *Annals*, vol. i. p. 192.]

SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

[Born, 1554. Died, 1586.]

WITHOUT enduring Lord Orford's cold-blooded depreciation of this hero, it must be owned that his writings fall short of his traditional glory; nor were his actions of the very highest importance to his country. Still there is no necessity for supposing the impression which he made upon his contemporaries to have been either illusive or exaggerated. Traits of character will distinguish great men, independently of their pens or their swords. The contemporaries of Sydney knew the man; and foreigners, no less than his own countrymen, seem to have felt, from his personal influence and conversation, an homage for him that could only be paid to a commanding intellect guiding the principles of a noble heart. The variety of his ambition, perhaps, unfavourably divided the force of his genius; feeling that he could take different paths to reputation, he did not confine himself to one, but was successively occupied in the punctilious duties of a courtier, the studies and pursuits of a scholar and traveller, and in the life of a soldier, of which the chivalrous accomplishments could not be learnt without diligence and fatigue. All his excellence in those pursuits, and all the celebrity that would have placed him among the competitors for a crown, was gained in a life of thirty-two years. His sagacity and independence are recorded in the advice which he gave to his own sovereign. In the quarrel with Lord Oxford* he opposed the rights of an English commoner to the prejudices of aristocracy and of royalty itself. At home he was the patron of literature. All England wore mourning for his death. Perhaps the well-known anecdote of his generosity to the dying soldier speaks more powerfully to the heart than the whole volumes of elegies, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, that were published at his death by the universities.

* Vide the biographical notice of Lord Oxford.

ROBERT GREENE.

[Born, 1560. Died, 1592.]

WAS born at Norwich about 1560, was educated at Cambridge, travelled in Spain and Italy, and on his return held, for about a year, the vicarage of Tollesbury in Essex. The rest of his life seems to have been spent in London, with no other support than his pen, and in the society of men of more wit than worldly prudence. He is said to have died about 1592,* from a surfeit occasioned by pickled herrings and Rhenish wine. Greene has acknowledged, with great contrition, some of the follies of his life; but the charge of profligacy which has been so mercilessly laid on his memory must be taken with great abatement, as it was chiefly dictated by his bitterest enemy, Gabriel Harvey, who is said to have trampled on his dead body when laid in the grave. The story, it may be hoped, for the credit of human nature, is untrue; but it shows to what a pitch the malignity of Harvey was supposed to be capable of being excited. Greene is accused of having deserted an amiable wife; but his traducers rather inconsistently reproach him also with the necessity of writing for her maintenance.

A list of his writings, amounting to forty-five separate productions, is given in the 'Censura Literaria,' including five plays, several amatory romances, and other pamphlets, of quaint titles and rambling contents. The writer of that article has vindicated the personal memory of Greene with proper feeling, but he seems to overrate the importance that could have ever been attached to him as a writer. In proof of the once great popularity of Greene's writings, a passage is quoted from Ben Jonson's 'Every Man out of his Humour,' where it is said that Saviolina uses as choice figures as any in the 'Arcadia,' and Carlo subjoins, "or in Greene's works, whence she may steal with more security." This allusion to the facility of stealing without detection from an author surely argues the reverse of his being

* [Greene died on the 3rd of September, 1592. See his *Dramatic Works*, by Dyce, 2 vols. 8vo. 1831.]

popular and well known.* Greene's style is in truth most whimsical and grotesque. He lived before there was a good model of familiar prose; and his wit, like a stream that is too weak to force a channel for itself, is lost in rhapsody and diffuseness.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

[Born, 1562. Died, May, 1593.]

WAS born in 1562, took a bachelor's degree at Cambridge, and came to London, where he was a contemporary player and dramatic writer with Shakspeare. Had he lived longer to profit by the example of Shakspeare, it is not straining conjecture to suppose that the strong, misguided energy of Marlowe would have been kindled and refined to excellence by the rivalry; but his death, at the age of thirty, is alike to be lamented for its disgracefulness and prematurity, his own sword being forced upon him in a quarrel at a brothel. Six tragedies, however, and his numerous translations from the classics, evince that if his life was profligate it was not idle. The bishops ordered his translations of Ovid's Love Elegies to be burnt in public for their licentiousness. If all the licentious poems of that period had been included in the martyrdom, Shakspeare's 'Venus and Adonis' would have hardly escaped the flames.

In Marlowe's tragedy of 'Lust's Dominion' there is a scene of singular coincidence with an event that was two hundred years after exhibited in the same country, namely, Spain. A Spanish queen, instigated by an usurper, falsely proclaims her own son to be a bastard:—

"Prince Philip is a bastard born;
O give me leave to blush at mine own shame;
But I for love to you—love to fair Spain,
Choose rather to rip up a queen's disgrace,
Than, by concealing it, to set the crown
Upon a bastard's head."—*Lust's Dom.*, Act iii. sc. iv.

Compare this avowal with the confession which Bonaparte either obtained, or pretended to have obtained, from the mother of Ferdinand VII. in 1808, and one might almost imagine that he had consulted Marlowe's tragedy.

* [See Gifford's *Ben Jonson*, vol. ii. p. 71.]

ROBERT SOUTHWELL

[Born, 1560. Died, 1595.]

Is said to have been descended from an ancient and respectable family in Norfolk, and, being sent abroad for his education, became a Jesuit at Rome. He was appointed prefect of studies there in 1585, and, not long after, was sent as a missionary into England. His chief residence was with Anne Countess of Arundel, who died in the Tower of London. Southwell was apprehended in July, 1592, and carried before Queen Elizabeth's agents, who endeavoured to extort from him some disclosure of secret conspiracies against the government; but he was cautious at his examination, and declined answering a number of ensnaring questions; upon which, being sent to prison, he remained near three years in strict confinement, was repeatedly put to the rack, and, as he himself affirmed, underwent very severe tortures no less than ten times. He owned that he was a priest and a Jesuit, that he came into England to preach the Catholic religion, and was prepared to lay down his life in the cause. On the 20th of February, 1595, he was brought to his trial at the King's Bench, was condemned to die, and was executed the next day at Tyburn. His writings, of which a numerous list is given in the 67th volume of 'The Gentleman's Magazine,' together with the preceding sketch of his life, were probably at one time popular among the Catholics. In a small collection of his pieces there are two specimens of his prose compositions, entitled 'Mary Magdalene's Tears,' and 'The Triumph over Death,' which contain some eloquent sentences. Nor is it possible to read the volume without lamenting that its author should have been either the instrument of bigotry or the object of persecution.*

* [That Southwell was hanged: yet so he had written that piece of his, 'The Burning Babe,' he would have been content to destroy many of his. —*Ben Jonson's Conversations with Drummond*, Laing's edition, p. 13.]

THOMAS WATSON

[Born, 1560. Died about 1592.]

WAS a native of London, and studied the common law, but from the variety of his productions would seem to have devoted himself to lighter studies. Mr. Steevens has certainly overrated his sonnets in preferring them to Shakspeare's.*

EDMUND SPENSER,

[Born, 1553. Died, 1598-9.]

DESCENDED from the ancient and honourable family of Spenser, was born in London, in East Smithfield, by the Tower, probably about the year 1553. He studied at the University of Cambridge, where it appears, from his correspondence, that he formed an intimate friendship with the learned, but pedantic, Gabriel Harvey.† Spenser, with Sir Philip Sydney, was, for a time, a convert to Harvey's Utopian scheme for changing the measures of English poetry into those of the Greeks and Romans.

Spenser even wrote trimeter iambics ‡ sufficiently bad to countenance the English hexameters of his friend; but the Muse would not suffer such a votary to be lost in the pursuit after chimeras, and recalled him to her natural strains. From Cambridge Spenser went to reside with some relations in the

* [The word *Sonnet*, in its laxest sense, means a small copy of verses; in its true and accepted sense, a poem of fourteen lines, written in heroic verse, with alternate and couplet rhymes. Watson's sonnets are all of eighteen lines; and perhaps in their superfluity of four, Steevens thought their excellence to consist.]

† For an account of Harvey the reader may consult Wood's *Athen. Oxon.*, vol. i. Fasti col. 128.

‡ A short example of Spenser's 'Iambicum Trimetrum' will suffice, from a copy of verses in one of his own letters to Harvey:—

“Unhappy verse! the witness of my unhappy state,
 Make thyself fluttering wings of thy fast flying
 Thought, and fly forth unto my love, wheresoever she be,
 Whether lying restless in heavy bed, or else
 Sitting so cheerless at the cheerful board, or else
 Playing alone, careless, on her heavenly virginals.”

north of England, and, in this retirement, conceived a passion for a mistress whom he has celebrated under the name of Rosalind. It appears, however, that she trifled with his affection, and preferred a rival.

Harvey, or Hobinol (by so uncouth a name did the shepherd of hexameter memory, the learned Harvey, deign to be called in Spenser's eclogues), with better judgment than he had shown in poetical matters, advised Spenser to leave his rustic obscurity, and introduced him to Sir Philip Sydney, who recommended him to his uncle, the Earl of Leicester. The poet was invited to the family seat of Sydney at Penshurst, in Kent, where he is supposed to have assisted the Platonic studies of his gallant and congenial friend. To him he dedicated his 'Shepherd's Calendar.' Sydney did not bestow unqualified praise on those eclogues; he allowed that they contained much poetry, but condemned the antique rusticity of the language. It was of these eclogues, and not of 'The Fairy Queen' (as has been frequently misstated), that Ben Jonson said, that the author in affecting the ancients had written no language at all.* They gained, however, so many admirers as to pass through five editions in Spenser's lifetime; and though Dove, a contemporary scholar, who translated them into Latin, speaks of the author being unknown, yet when Abraham Fraunce, in 1583, published his 'Lawyer's Logicke,' he illustrated his rules by quotations from the 'Shepherd's Calendar.'

Pope, Dryden, and Warton have extolled those eclogues, and Sir William Jones has placed Spenser and Gay as the only genuine descendants of Theocritus and Virgil in pastoral poetry. This decision may be questioned. Favourable as the circumstances of England have been to the development of her genius in all the higher walks of poetry, they have not been propitious to the humbler pastoral muse. Her trades and manufactures, the very blessings of her wealth and industry, threw the indolent shepherd's life to a distance from her cities and capital, where poets, with all their love of the country, are generally found; and impressed on the face of the country, and on its rustic manners, a gladsome, but not romantic appearance.

In Scotland, on the contrary, the scenery, rural economy of

* [*Ben Jonson's Works*, by Gifford, vol. ix. p. 215.]

the country, and the songs of the peasantry, sung "at the watching of the fold," presented Ramsay with a much nearer image of pastoral life, and he accordingly painted it with the fresh feeling and enjoyment of nature. Had Sir William Jones understood the dialect of that poet, I am convinced that he would not have awarded the pastoral crown to any other author. Ramsay's shepherds are distinct, intelligible beings, neither vulgar, like the caricatures of Gay, nor fantastic, like those of Fletcher. They afford such a view of a national peasantry as we should wish to acquire by travelling among them; and form a draft entirely devoted to rural manners, which for truth, and beauty, and extent, has no parallel in the richer language of England. Shakspeare's pastoral scenes are only subsidiary to the main interest of the plays where they are introduced. Milton's are rather pageants of fancy than pictures of real life. The shepherds of Spenser's 'Calendar' are parsons in disguise, who converse about heathen divinities and points of Christian theology. Palinode defends the luxuries of the Catholic clergy, and Piers extols the purity of Archbishop Grindal; concluding with the story of a fox, who came to the house of a goat, in the character of a pedlar, and obtained admittance by pretending to be a sheep. This may be burlesquing Æsop, but certainly is not imitating Theocritus. There are fine thoughts and images in the 'Calendar,' but, on the whole, the obscurity of those pastorals is rather their covering, than their principal, defect.

In 1580, Arthur Lord Grey, of Wilton, went as Lord-Lieutenant to Ireland, and Spenser accompanied him as his secretary; we may suppose by the recommendation of the Earl of Leicester. Lord Grey was recalled from his Irish government in 1582, and Spenser returned with him to England, where, by the interest of Grey, Leicester, and Sydney, he obtained a grant from Queen Elizabeth of 3028 acres in the county of Cork, out of the forfeited estates of the Earl of Desmond. This was the last act of kindness which Sydney had a share in conferring on him: he died in the same year, furnishing an almost solitary instance of virtue passing through life uncalumniated.

Whether Sydney was meant or not under the character of Prince Arthur in 'The Fairy Queen,' we cannot conceive the

poet, in describing heroic excellence, to have had the image of Sir Philip Sydney long absent from his mind.

By the terms of the royal grant, Spenser was obliged to return to Ireland, in order to cultivate the lands assigned to him. His residence at Kilcolman, an ancient castle of the Earls of Desmond, is described, by one * who had seen its ruins, as situated on the north side of a fine lake, in the midst of a vast plain, which was terminated to the east by the Waterford mountains, on the north by the Ballyhowra hills, and by the Nagle and Kerry mountains on the south and east. It commanded a view of above half the breadth of Ireland, and must have been, when the adjacent uplands were wooded, a most romantic and pleasant situation. The river Mulla, which Spenser has so often celebrated, ran through his grounds. In this retreat he was visited by Sir Walter Raleigh, at that time a captain in the queen's army. His visit occasioned the first resolution of Spenser to prepare the first books of 'The Fairy Queen' for immediate publication. Spenser has commemorated this interview, and the inspiring influence of Raleigh's praise, under the figurative description of two shepherds tuning their pipes beneath the alders of the *Mulla*—a fiction with which the mind, perhaps, will be much less satisfied, than by recalling the scene as it really existed. When we conceive Spenser reciting his compositions to Raleigh, in a scene so beautifully appropriate, the mind casts a pleasing retrospect over that influence which the enterprise of the discoverer of Virginia, and the genius of the author of 'The Fairy Queen,' have respectively produced on the fortune and language of England. The fancy might even be pardoned for a momentary superstition, that the Genius of their country hovered, unseen, over their meeting, casting her first look of regard on the poet that was destined to inspire her future Milton, and the other on the maritime hero who paved the way for colonising distant regions of the earth, where the language of England was to be spoken, and the poetry of Spenser to be admired. Raleigh, whom the poet accompanied to England, introduced him to Queen Elizabeth. Her Majesty, in 1590-1, conferred on him a pension of 50*l.* a-year. In the

* Smith's 'History of Cork,' quoted by Todd.

patent for his pension he is not styled the laureat, but his contemporaries have frequently addressed him by that title. Mr. Malone's discovery of the patent for this pension refutes the idle story of Burleigh's preventing the royal bounty being bestowed upon the poet, by asking if so much money was to be given for a song; as well as that of Spenser's procuring it at last by the doggerel verses,

"I was promised, on a time,
To have reason for my rhyme," &c.

Yet there are passages in 'The Fairy Queen' which unequivocally refer to Burleigh with severity. The coldness of that statesman to Spenser most probably arose from the poet's attachment to Lord Leicester and Lord Essex, who were each successively at the head of a party opposed to the Lord Chancellor. After the publication of 'The Fairy Queen' he returned to Ireland, and, during his absence, the fame which he had acquired by that poem (of which the first edition, however, contained only the first three books) induced his publisher to compile and reprint his smaller pieces.* He appears to have again visited London about the end of 1591, as his next publication, 'The Elegy on Douglas Howard,' daughter of Henry Lord Howard, is dated January 1591-2. From this period there is a long interval in the history of Spenser, which was probably passed in Ireland, but of which we have no account. He married, it is conjectured, in the year 1594, when he was past forty; and it appears from his 'Epithalamium' that the nuptials were celebrated at Cork. In 1596 the second part of 'The Fairy Queen' appeared, accompanied by a new edition of the first. Of the remaining six books, which would have completed the poet's design, only fragments have been brought to light; and there is little reason to presume that they were regularly furnished. Yet Mr. Todd has proved that the contemporaries of Spenser believed much of his valuable poetry to have been lost in the destruction of his house in Ireland.

* Viz. 1. 'The Ruins of Time.' 2. 'The Tears of the Muses.' 3. 'Virgil's Gnat.' 4. 'Prosopopoia, or Mother Hubbard's Tale.' 5. 'The Ruins of Rome, by Bellay.' 6. 'Mniopotmos, or the Tale of the Butterfly.' 7. 'Visions of the World's Vanitie.' 8. 'Bellay's Visions.' 9. 'Petrarch's Visions.'

In the same year, 1596, he presented to the queen his 'View of the State of Ireland,' which remained in manuscript till it was published by Sir James Ware in 1633. Curiosity turns naturally to the prose work of so old and eminent a poet, which exhibits him in the three-fold character of a writer delineating an interesting country from his own observation, of a scholar tracing back its remotest history, and of a politician investigating the causes of its calamities. The antiquities of Ireland have been since more successfully explored; though on that subject Spenser is still a respectable authority. The great value of the book is the authentic and curious picture of national manners and circumstances which it exhibits; and its style is as nervous as the matter is copious and amusing. A remarkable proposal, in his plan for the management of Ireland, is the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon system of borseholders. His political views are strongly coercive, and consist of little more than stationing proper garrisons, and abolishing ancient customs: and we find him declaiming bitterly against the Irish minstrels, and seriously dwelling on the loose mantles, and glibs, or long hair, of the vagrant poor, as important causes of moral depravity. But we ought not to try the plans of Spenser by modern circumstances, nor his temper by the liberality of more enlightened times. It was a great point to commence earnest discussion on such a subject. From a note in one of the oldest copies of this treatise, it appears that Spenser was at that time clerk to the council of the province of Ulster. In 1597 our poet returned to Ireland, and in the following year was destined to an honourable situation, being recommended by her Majesty to be chosen sheriff for Cork. But in the subsequent month of that year Tyrone's rebellion broke out, and occasioned his immediate flight, with his family, from Kilcolman. In the confusion attending this calamitous departure one of his children was left behind, and perished in the conflagration of his house when it was destroyed by the Irish insurgents. Spenser returned to England with a heart broken by distress, and died at London on the 16th of January, 1598-9. He was buried, according to his own desire, near the tomb of Chaucer; and the most celebrated poets of the time (Shakspeare was probably of the number) followed his hearse and threw tributary verses into his grave.

Mr. Todd, the learned editor of his works, has proved it to be highly improbable that he could have died, as has been sometimes said, in absolute want; for he had still his pension and many friends, among whom Essex provided nobly for his funeral. Yet that he died broken-hearted and comparatively poor is but too much to be feared, from the testimony of his contemporaries Camden and Jonson. A reverse of fortune might crush his spirit without his being reduced to absolute indigence, especially with the horrible recollection of the manner in which his child had perished.

JOHN LYLY

[Born, 1554. Died, 1600.]

WAS born in the Weald of Kent. Wood places his birth in 1553. Oldys makes it appear probable that he was born much earlier.* He studied at both the universities, and for many years attended the court of Elizabeth in expectation of being made Master of the Revels. In this object he was disappointed, and was obliged in his old age to solicit the queen for some trifling grant to support him,† which it is uncertain whether he ever obtained. Very little indeed is known of him, though Blount, his editor, tells us that “he sate at Apollo’s table, and that the god gave him a wreath of his own bays without snatching.” Whether Apollo was ever so complaisant or not, it is certain that Lyly’s work of ‘Euphues and his England,’ preceded by another called ‘Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit,’ &c., promoted a fantastic style of false wit, bombastic metaphor, and pedantic allusion, which it was fashionable to speak at court under the name of Euphuism, and which the ladies thought it indispensable to acquire. Lyly, in his ‘Euphues,’ probably did not create the new style, but only collected and methodised the floating affecta-

* [Lyly was born in Kent, in 1554, and was matriculated at Oxford in 1571, when it was recorded in the entry that he was seventeen years old.—Collier’s *Annals*, vol. iii. p. 174.]

† If he was an old man in the reign of Elizabeth, Oldys’s conjecture as to the date of his birth seems to be verified—as we scarcely call a man old at fifty.

tions of phraseology. Drayton ascribes the overthrow of Euphuism to Sir Philip Sydney, who, he says,—

“————— did first reduce
Our tongue from Lylie’s writing then in use,
Talking of stones, stars, plants, of fishes, flies,
Plying with words and idle similes,
As th’ English apes and very zanies be
Of everything that they do hear and see.”

Sydney died in 1586, and ‘Euphuus’ had appeared but six years earlier. We may well suppose Sydney to have been hostile to such absurdity, and his writings probably promoted a better taste; but we hear of Euphuism being in vogue many years after his death; and it seems to have expired, like all other fashions, by growing vulgar. Lyly wrote nine plays, in some of which there is considerable wit and humour, rescued from the jargon of his favourite system.

ALEXANDER HUME

[Born, 1560? Died, 1609?]

Was the second son of Patrick, fifth Baron of Polwarth, from whom the family of Marchmont are descended. He was born probably about the middle and died about the end of the sixteenth century. During four years of the earlier part of his life he resided in France, after which he returned home and studied law, but abandoned the bar to try his fortune at court. There he is said to have been disgusted with the preference shown to a poetical rival, Montgomery, with whom he exchanged *flytings* (or invectives) in verse, and who boasts of having “driven Polwart from the chimney nook.” He then went into the church, and was appointed rector or minister of Logie; the names of ecclesiastical offices in Scotland then floating between presbytery and prelacy. In the clerical profession he continued till his death. Hume lived at a period when the spirit of Calvinism in Scotland was at its gloomiest pitch, and when a reformation, fostered by the poetry of Lyndsay and by the learning of Buchanan, had begun to grow hostile to elegant literature. Though the drama, rude as it was, had been no mean engine in the hands of Lyndsay against popery, yet the Scottish reformers of this latter period even anticipated the zeal of the English Puritans against

dramatic and romantic poetry, which they regarded as emanations from hell. Hume had imbibed so far the spirit of his times as to publish an exhortation to the youth of Scotland to forego the admiration of all classical heroes, and to read no other books on the subject of love than the Song of Solomon. But Calvinism * itself could not entirely eradicate the beauty of Hume's fancy, and left him still the high fountain of Hebrew poetry to refresh it. In his 'Thanks for a Summer's Day' there is a train of images that seem peculiarly pleasing and unborrowed—the pictures of a poetical mind, humble but genuine in its cast.

THOMAS NASH.

[Born, 1567. Died about 1601.]

THOMAS NASH was born at Lowestoft in Suffolk, † was bred at Cambridge, and closed a calamitous life of authorship at the age, it is said, of forty-two. Dr. Beloe has given a list of his works, and Mr. Disraeli an account of his shifts and miseries. Adversity seems to have whetted his genius, as his most tolerable verses are those which describe his own despair; and in the midst of his woes he exposed to just derision the profound fooleries of the astrologer Harvey, who, in the year 1582, had thrown the whole kingdom into consternation by his predictions of the probable effects of the junction of Jupiter and Saturn. Drayton, in his 'Epistle of Poets and Poesy,' says of him—

“Sharply satiric was he, and that way
He went, since that his being to this day,
Few have attempted, and I surely think
These words shall hardly be set down with ink,
Shall blast and scorch so as his could.”

From the allusion which he makes to Sir Philip Sydney's com-

* This once gloomy influence of Calvinism on the literary character of the Scottish churchmen forms a contrast with more recent times, that needs scarcely to be suggested to those acquainted with Scotland. In extending the classical fame, no less than in establishing the moral reputation of their country, the Scottish clergy have exerted a primary influence; and whatever Presbyterian eloquence might once be, the voice of enlightened principles and universal charity is nowhere to be heard more distinctly than at the present hour from their pulpits.

† [He was baptized at Lowestoft in Nov. 1567.—See *Shakspeare Society's Papers*, vol. iii. p. 178.]

passion, it may be conjectured that he had experienced the bounty of that noble character:—"Gentle Sir Philip Sidney, thou knewst what belonged to a scholler; thou knewst what pains, what toile, what trauell conduct to perfection: wel couldst thou give euery vertue his encouragement, euery art his due, euery writer his desert; cause none more vertuous, witty, or learned than thy selfe. But thou art dead in thy grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the sons of the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plentie, which thy bountie earst planted." *

EDWARD VERE, EARL OF OXFORD.

[Born, 1534. Died, 1604.]

THIS nobleman sat as Great Chamberlain of England upon the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. In the year of the Armada he distinguished his public spirit by fitting out some ships at his private cost. He had travelled in Italy in his youth, and is said to have returned the most accomplished coxcomb of his age. The story of his quarrel with Sir Philip Sydney, as it is related by Collins, gives us a most unfavourable idea of his manners and temper, and shows to what a height the claims of aristocratical privilege were at that time carried.† Some still more discreditable traits of his character are to be found in the history of his life.‡

* 'Pierce Pennilesse,' 4to. 1592.

† The Earl of Oxford, being one day in the tennis-court with Sir Philip Sydney, on some offence which he had taken, ordered him to leave the room, and, on his refusal, gave him the epithet of a puppy. Sir Philip retorted the lie on his lordship, and left the place, expecting to be followed by the peer. But Lord Oxford neither followed him nor noticed his quarrel till her Majesty's council had time to command the peace. The queen interfered, reminding Sir Philip of the difference between "earls and gentlemen," and of the respect which inferiors owed their superiors. Sydney, boldly but respectfully, stated to her Majesty that rank among freemen could claim no other homage than precedency, and did not obey her commands to make submission to Oxford. For a fuller statement of this anecdote, vide the quotation from Collins, in 'The British Bibliographer,' vol. i. p. 83.

‡ By Mr. Park, in the 'Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors.'

THOMAS STORER.

[Died, 1604.]

THE date of this writer's birth can only be generally conjectured from his having been elected a Student of Christ Church, Oxford, in 1587. The slight notice of him by Wood only mentions that he was the son of John Storer, a Londoner, and that he died in the metropolis. Besides the 'History of Cardinal Wolsey,' in three parts, viz. his Aspiring, his Triumph, and Death, he wrote several pastoral pieces in 'England's Helicon.'

JOSEPH HALL.

[Born, 1574. Died, 1656.]

BISHOP HALL, who for his ethical eloquence has been sometimes denominated the Christian Seneca, was also the first who gave our language an example of epistolary composition in prose. He wrote besides a satirical fiction, entitled 'Mundus alter et idem,' in which, under pretence of describing the *Terra Australis Incognita*, he reversed the plan of Sir Thomas More's 'Utopia,' and characterized the vices of existing nations. Of our satirical poetry, taking satire in its moral and dignified sense, he claims, and may be allowed, to be the founder; for the ribaldry of Skelton and the crude essays of the graver Wyat hardly entitle them to that appellation.* Though he lived till beyond the middle of the seventeenth century, his satires were written before, and his 'Mundus alter et idem' about, the year 1600: so that his antiquity, no less than his strength, gives him an important place in the formation of our literature.†

In his 'Satires,' which were published at the age of twenty-three, he discovered not only the early vigour of his own genius,

* [Donne appears to have been the first in order of composition, though Hall and Marston made their appearance in print before him.]

† His name is therefore placed here with a variation from the general order, not according to the date of his death, but about the time of his appearance as a poet.

but the powers and pliability of his native tongue. Unfortunately, perhaps unconsciously, he caught, from studying Juvenal and Persius as his models, an elliptical manner and an antique allusion, which cast obscurity over his otherwise spirited and amusing traits of English manners; though the satirist himself was so far from anticipating this objection that he formally apologises for "*too much stooping to the low reach of the vulgar.*" But in many instances he redeems the antiquity of his allusions by their ingenious adaptation to modern manners; and this is but a small part of his praise; for in the point and volubility and vigour of Hall's numbers we might frequently imagine ourselves perusing Dryden.* This may be exemplified in the harmony and picturesqueness of the following description of a magnificent rural mansion, which the traveller approaches in the hopes of reaching the seat of ancient hospitality, but finds it deserted by its selfish owner:—

"Beat the broad gates, a goodly hollow sound,
With double echoes, doth again rebound;
But not a dog doth bark to welcome thee,
Nor churlish porter canst thou chafing see.
All dumb and silent like the dead of night,
Or dwelling of some sleepy Sybarite;
The marble pavement hid with desert weed,
With houseleek, thistle, dock, and hemlock-seed.

* * * * *

Look to the tower'd chimneys, which should be
The windpipes of good hospitality,
Through which it breatheth to the open air,
Betokening life and liberal welfare.
Lo, there th' unthankful swallow takes her rest,
And fills the tunnel with her circled nest."

His satires are neither cramped by personal hostility nor spun out to vague declamations on vice, but give us the form and

* The satire which I think contains the most vigorous and musical couplets of this old poet is the first of Book iii., beginning,

"Time was, and that was term'd the time of gold,
When world and time were young, that now are old."

I preferred, however, the insertion of others as examples of his poetry, as they are more descriptive of English manners than the fanciful praises of the golden age which that satire contains. It is flowing and fanciful, but conveys only the insipid moral of men decaying by the progress of civilisation—a doctrine not unlike that which Gulliver found in the book of the old woman of Brobdignag, whose author lamented the tiny size of the modern Brobdignagians compared with that of their ancestors.

pressure of the times exhibited in the faults of coeval literature, and in the foppery or sordid traits of prevailing manners. The age was undoubtedly fertile in eccentricity. His picture of its literature may at first view appear to be overcharged with severity, accustomed as we are to associate a general idea of excellence with the period of Elizabeth; but when Hall wrote there was not a great poet firmly established in the language except Spenser, and on him he has bestowed ample applause. With regard to Shakespeare, the reader will observe a passage in the first satire, where the poet speaks of resigning the honours of heroic and tragic poetry to more inspired geniuses; and it is possible that the great dramatist may be here alluded to, as well as Spenser. But the allusion is indistinct, and not necessarily applicable to the bard of Avon. Shakspeare's 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Richard II.,' and 'Richard III.' have been traced in print to no earlier date than the year 1597, in which Hall's first series of satires appeared; and we have no sufficient proof of his previous fame as a dramatist having been so great as to leave Hall without excuse for omitting to pay him homage. But the sunrise of the drama with Shakespeare was not without abundance of attendant mists in the contemporary fustian of inferior playmakers, who are severely ridiculed by our satirist. In addition to this, our poetry was still haunted by the whining ghosts of 'The Mirror for Magistrates,' while obscenity walked in barbarous nakedness, and the very genius of the language was threatened by revolutionary prosodists.

From the literature of the age Hall proceeds to its manners and prejudices, and among the latter derides the prevalent confidence in alchymy and astrology. To us this ridicule appears an ordinary effort of reason; but it was in him a common sense above the level of the times. If any proof were required to illustrate the slow departure of prejudices, it would be found in the fact of an astrologer being patronised, half a century afterwards, by the government of England.*

* William Lilly received a pension from the council of state in 1648. He was, besides, consulted by Charles; and during the siege of Colchester was sent for by the heads of the parliamentary army, to encourage the soldiers, by assuring them that the town would be taken. Fairfax told the seer that he did not understand his art, but hoped it

During his youth and education he had to struggle with poverty; and in his old age he was one of those sufferers in the cause of episcopacy whose virtues shed a lustre on its fall. He was born in the parish of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, in Leicestershire, studied and took orders at Cambridge, and was for some time master of the school of Tiverton, in Devonshire. An accidental opportunity which he had of preaching before Prince Henry seems to have given the first impulse to his preferment, till by gradual promotion he rose to be Bishop of Exeter, having previously accompanied King James, as one of his chaplains, to Scotland, and attended the Synod of Dort at a convocation of the Protestant divines. As Bishop of Exeter he was so mild in his conduct towards the Puritans, that he, who was one of the last broken pillars of the Church, was nearly persecuted for favouring them. Had such conduct been, at this critical period, pursued by the high churchmen in general, the history of a bloody age might have been changed into that of peace; but the violence of Land prevailed over the milder counsels of a Hall, an Usher, and a Corbet. When the dangers of the church grew more instant, Hall became its champion, and was met in the field of controversy by Milton, whose respect for the bishop's learning is ill concealed under the attempt to cover it with derision.

By the little power that was still left to the sovereign in 1641, Hall was created Bishop of Norwich; but having joined, almost immediately after, in the protest of the twelve prelates against the validity of laws that should be passed in their compelled absence, he was committed to the Tower, and, in the sequel, was lawful and agreeable to God's word. Butler alludes to this when he says—

“ Do not our great reformers use
This Sidrophel to forebode news;
To write of victories next year,
And castles taken yet i' th' air?
* * * *

And has not he point-blank foretold
Whats'e'er the Close Committee would;
Made Mars and Saturn for the Cause,
The moon for fundamental laws?
* * * *

Made all the royal stars recant,
Compound, and take the Covenant?”

Hudibras, Canto iii.

marked out for sequestration. After suffering extreme hardships, he was allowed to retire on a small pittance to Higham, near Norwich, where he continued, in comparative obscurity, but with indefatigable zeal and intrepidity, to exercise the duties of a pastor, till he closed his days at the venerable age of eighty-two.

WILLIAM WARNER

[Died, 1608-9.]

WAS a native of Oxfordshire, and was born, as Mr. Ellis conjectures, in 1558. He left the university of Oxford without a degree, and came to London, where he pursued the business of an attorney of the common pleas. Scott, the poet of Amwell, discovered that he had been buried in the church of that parish in 1609, having died suddenly in the night-time.*

His 'Albion's England' was once exceedingly popular. Its publication was at one time interdicted by the Star Chamber, for no other reason that can now be assigned but that it contains some love-stories more simply than delicately related. His contemporaries compared him to Virgil, whom he certainly did not make his model. Dr. Percy thinks he rather resembled Ovid, to whom he is, if possible, still more unlike. His poem is, in fact, an enormous ballad on the history, or rather on the fables appendant to the history of England; heterogeneous, indeed, like the 'Metamorphoses,' but written with an almost doggerel simplicity. Headley has rashly preferred his works to our ancient ballads; but with the best of these they will bear no comparison. 'Argentile and Curan' has indeed some beautiful touches, yet that episode requires to be weeded of many lines to be read with unqualified pleasure; and through the rest of his stories we shall search in vain for the familiar magic of such ballads as 'Chevy Chase' or 'Gill Morrice.'

* [9th March, 1608-9.]

SIR JOHN HARRINGTON.

[Born, 1561 ? Died, 1612?]

THE poetry of Sir John Harrington's father is so polished and refined as almost to warrant a suspicion that the editor of the 'Nugæ Antiquæ' got it from a more modern quarter. The elder Harrington was imprisoned in the Tower, under Queen Mary, for holding a correspondence with Elizabeth; on whose accession his fidelity was rewarded by her favour. His son, the translator of Ariosto, was knighted on the field by the Earl of Essex, not much to the satisfaction of Elizabeth, who was sparing of such honours, and chose to confer them herself. He was created a Knight of the Bath in the reign of James, and distinguished himself, to the violent offence of the high church party, by his zeal against the marriage of bishops.

HENRY PERROT.

PERROT, I suspect, was not the author, but only the collector, of his book of epigrams entitled 'Springes for Woodcocks,' some of which are claimed by other epigrammatists, probably with no better right. It is indeed very difficult to ascertain the real authors of a vast number of little pieces of the 16th and 17th centuries, as the minor poets pilfer from each other with the utmost coolness and apparent impunity.

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY

[Born, 1581. Died, 1613.]

WAS born in 1581, and perished in the Tower of London, 1613, by a fate that is too well known. The compassion of the public for a man of worth, "whose spirit still walked unrevenged amongst them," together with the contrast of his ideal Wife with the Countess of Essex, who was his murderess, attached an interest and popularity to his poem, and made it pass through sixteen editions before the year 1653. His 'Characters, or Witty

Descriptions of the Properties of Sundry Persons,' is a work of considerable merit; but unfortunately his prose, as well as his verse, has a dryness and quaintness that seem to oppress the natural movement of his thoughts. As a poet he has few imposing attractions: his beauties must be fetched by repeated perusal. They are those of solid reflection, predominating over, but not extinguishing, sensibility; and there is danger of the reader neglecting, under the coldness and ruggedness of his manner, the manly but unostentatious moral feeling that is conveyed in his maxims, which are sterling and liberal, if we can only pardon a few obsolete ideas on female education.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

[Born, 1552. Died, 1618.]

IT is difficult exactly to estimate the poetical character of this great man, as many of the pieces that are ascribed to him have not been authenticated. Among these is 'The Soul's Errand,'* which possesses a fire of imagination that we would willingly ascribe to him; but his claim to it, as has been already mentioned, is exceedingly doubtful. The tradition of his having written it on the night before his execution is highly interesting to the fancy, but, like many fine stories, it has the little defect of being untrue, as the poem was in existence more than twenty years before his death.†

Sir Walter was born at Hayes Farm, in Devonshire, and studied at Oxford. Leaving the university at seventeen, he fought for six years under the Protestant banners in France, and afterwards served a campaign in the Netherlands. He next dis-

* [Or, 'The Lie.'—*Ante*, p. 74.]

† This bold and spirited poem has been ascribed to several authors, but to none on satisfactory authority. It can be traced to MS. of a date as early as 1593, when Francis Davison, who published it in his 'Poetical Rhapsody' [1608], was too young to be supposed, with much probability, to have written it; and as Davison's work was a compilation, his claims to it must be very doubtful. Sir Egerton Brydges has published it among Sir Walter Raleigh's poems, but without a title of evidence to show that it was the production of that great man.

['The Lie' is ascribed to Sir Walter Raleigh in an answer to it written at the time, and recently discovered in a MS. in the Chetham Library at Manchester. That it was written by Raleigh is now almost past a doubt.]

tinguished himself in Ireland during the rebellion of 1580, under the lord-deputy, Lord Grey de Wilton, with whom his personal disputes eventually promoted his fortunes; for being heard in his own cause on returning to England, he won the favour of Elizabeth, who knighted him and raised him to such honours as alarmed the jealousy of her favourite Leicester.

In the mean time, as early as 1579, he had commenced his adventures with a view to colonize America—surveyed the territory now called Virginia in 1584, and fitted out successive fleets in support of the infant colony. In the destruction of the Spanish Armada, as well as in the expedition to Portugal in behalf of Don Antonio, he had his full share of action and glory; and though recalled, in 1592, from the appointment of general of the expedition against Panama, he must have made a princely fortune by the success of his fleet, which sailed upon that occasion and returned with the richest prize that had ever been brought to England. The queen was about this period so indignant with him for an amour which he had with one of her maids of honour, that, though he married the lady (she was the daughter of Sir Nicholas Throgmorton), her Majesty committed him, with his fair partner, to the Tower. The queen forgave him, however, at last, and rewarded his services with a grant of the manor of Sherborne, in Dorsetshire, where he built a magnificent seat. Raleigh's mind was not one that was destined to travel in the wheel-ruts of common prejudice. It was rumoured that he had carried the freedom of his philosophical speculation to an heretical height on many subjects; and his acceptance of the church-lands of Sherborne, already mentioned, probably supplied additional motives to the clergy to swell the outcry against his principles. He was accused (by the Jesuits) of atheism—a charge which his own writings sufficiently refute. Whatever were his opinions, the public saved him the trouble of explaining them; and the queen, taking it for granted that they must be bad, gave him an open and no doubt edifying reprimand. To console himself under these circumstances, he projected the conquest of Guiana, sailed thither in 1595, and, having captured the city of San Joseph, returned and published an account of his voyage. In the following year he acted gallantly under the Earl of Essex at Cadiz, as well as in what was called the “Island

Voyage.”* On the latter occasion he failed of complete success only through the jealousy of the favourite.

His letter to Cecil, in which he exhorted that statesman to the destruction of Essex, forms but too sad and notorious a blot in our hero's memory ; yet even that offence will not reconcile us to behold the successor of Elizabeth robbing Raleigh of his estate to bestow it on the minion Carr, and, on the grounds of a plot in which his participation was never proved, condemning to fifteen years of imprisonment the man who had enlarged the empire of his country and the boundaries of human knowledge. James could estimate the wise, but shrank from cordiality with the brave. He released Raleigh from avaricious hopes about the mine of Guiana, and, when disappointed in that object, sacrificed him to motives still baser than avarice. On the 29th of October, 1618, Raleigh perished on a scaffold, in Old Palace-yard, by a sentence originally iniquitous, and which his commission to Guiana had virtually revoked.

JOSHUA SYLVESTER,

[Born, 1563. Died, 1618.]

WHO in his day obtained the epithet of the Silver-tongued, was a merchant adventurer, and died abroad at Middleburgh, in 1618. He was a candidate, in the year 1597, for the office of secretary to a trading company at Stade ; on which occasion the Earl of Essex seems to have taken a friendly interest in his fortunes. Though esteemed by the court of England (on one occasion he signs himself the pensioner of Prince Henry),† he is said to have been driven from home by the enmity which his satires excited. This seems very extraordinary, as there is nothing in his vague and dull declamations against vice that needed to have ruffled the most thin-skinned enemies ; so that his travels were probably made more from the hope of gain than the fear of persecution.

* A voyage that was aimed principally at the Spanish Plate fleets.

† [He had a yearly pension of twenty pounds from Prince Henry. See ‘Extracts from Accounts of Revels at Court,’ *Introduction*, p. xvii. For other new facts about Sylvester, see Mr. Collier's *Introduction* to his ‘Memoirs of the Principal Actors in the Plays of Shakespeare,’ 8vo. 1846.]

He was an eminent linguist, and writes his dedications in several languages, but in his own he often fathoms the bathos, and brings up such lines as these to king James :—

“So much, O king, thy sacred worth presume I on,
James, the just heir of England’s lawful union.”

His works are chiefly translations, including that of ‘The Divine Weeks and Works’ of Du Bartas. His claim to the poem of ‘The Soul’s Errand,’ as has been already mentioned, is to be entirely set aside.

SAMUEL DANIEL.

[Born, 1562. Died, Oct. 1619.]

SAMUEL DANIEL was the son of a music-master, and was born at Taunton, in Somersetshire. He was patronised and probably maintained at Oxford by the noble family of Pembroke. At the age of twenty-three he translated Paulus Jovius’s ‘Discourse of Rare Inventions.’ He was afterwards tutor to the accomplished and spirited Lady Anne Clifford, daughter to the Earl of Cumberland, who raised a monument to his memory, on which she recorded that she had been his pupil. At the death of Spenser he furnished, as a voluntary laureat, several masks and pageants for the court, but retired, with apparent mortification, before the ascendant favour of Jonson.*

While composing his dramas he lived in Old-street, St. Luke’s, which was at that time thought retirement from London ; but at times he frequented the city, and had the honour of ranking Shakspeare and Selden among his friends. In his old age he turned husbandman, and closed his days at a farm in Somersetshire.

* The latest editor of Jonson [Gifford] affirms the whole conduct of that great poet towards Daniel to have been perfectly honourable. Some small exception to this must be made when we turn to the derision of Daniel’s verses, which is pointed out by the editor himself, in ‘Cynthia’s Revels.’ This was unworthy of Jonson, as the verses of Daniel at which he sneers are not contemptible, and as Daniel was confessedly an amiable man, who died “beloved, honoured, and lamented.”

GILES AND PHINEAS FLETCHER.

[Giles Fletcher died, 1623. Phineas Fletcher died about 1650.]

THE affinity and genius of these two poets naturally associate their names. They were the cousins of Fletcher the dramatist, and the sons of a Dr. Giles Fletcher, who, among several important missions in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, negotiated a commercial treaty with Russia, greatly to the advantage of England, in spite of many obstacles that were presented by a capricious czar and a barbarous court. His remarks on Russia were suppressed on their first appearance, but were afterwards republished in 1643, and incorporated with Hakluyt's 'Voyages.'

Mr. A. Chalmers, in his 'British Poets,' mentions Giles as the elder son of this Dr. Fletcher, evidently by mistake, as Giles in his poetry speaks of his own "green Muse hiding her younger head," with reference to his senior brother. Giles was bred at Cambridge, and died at his living of Alderston, in Suffolk, in 1623. Phineas was educated at the same university, and wrote an account of its founders and learned men. He was also a clergyman, and held the living of Hilgay, in Norfolk, for twenty-nine years. They were both the disciples of Spenser, and, with his diction gently modernised, retained much of his melody and luxuriant expression. Giles, inferior as he is to Spenser and Milton, might be figured, in his happiest moments, as a link of connexion in our poetry between those congenial spirits, for he reminds us of both, and evidently gave hints to the latter in a poem on the same subject with 'Paradise Regained.'

Giles's 'Christ's Victory and Triumph' has a tone of enthusiasm peculiarly solemn. Phineas, with a livelier fancy, had a worse taste. He lavished on a bad subject the graces and ingenuity that would have made a fine poem on a good design. Through five cantos of his 'Purple Island' he tries to sweeten the language of anatomy by the flowers of poetry, and to support the wings of allegory by bodily instead of spiritual phenomena. Unfortunately in the remaining cantos he only quits the dissect-

ing-table to launch into the subtlety of the schools, and describes Intellect, the Prince of the Isle of Man, with his eight counselors, Fancy, Memory, the Common Sense, and the five external Senses, as holding out in the Human Fortress against the Evil Powers that besiege it. Here he strongly resembles the old Scottish poet, Gawain Douglas, in his poem of 'King Hart.' But he outstrips all allegorists in conceit, when he exhibits Voletta, or the Will, the wife of Intellect, propped in her fainting-fits by Repentance, who administers restorative waters to the queen, made with lip's confession and with "pickled sighs," stilled in the alembic of a broken spirit. At the approach of the combat between the good and evil powers, the interest of the narration is somewhat quickened, and the parting of the sovereign and the queen, with their champions, is not unfeelingly portrayed:—

" Long at the gate the thoughtful Intellect
Stay'd with his fearful queen and daughter fair;
But when the knights were past their dim aspect,
They follow them with vows and many a prayer.
At last they climb up to the castle's height,
From which they view'd the deeds of every knight,
And mark'd the doubtful end of this intestine fight.

As when a youth, bound for the Belgic war,
Takes leave of friends upon the Kentish shore,
Now are they parted; and he sail'd so far,
They see not now, and now are seen no more;
Yet, far off, viewing the white trembling sails,
The tender mother soon plucks off her veils,
And, shaking them aloft, unto her son she hails."

But the conclusion of 'The Purple Island' sinks into such absurdity and adulation, that we could gladly wish the poet back again to allegorising the bladder and kidneys. In a contest about the eternal salvation of the human soul, the event is decided by King James I. (at that time a sinner upon earth) descending from heaven with his treatise on the Revelation under his arm, in the form of an angel, and preceding the Omnipotent, who puts the forces of the dragon to the rout.

These incongruous conceptions are clothed in harmony, and interspersed with beautiful thoughts: but natural sentiments and agreeable imagery will not incorporate with the shapeless features of such a design; they stand apart from it like things of a different element, and, when they occur, only expose its deformity.

On the contrary, in the brother's poem of 'Christ's Triumph,' its main effect, though somewhat sombrous, is not marred by such repulsive contrasts; its beauties, therefore, all tell in relieving tedium, and reconciling us to defects.

HENRY CONSTABLE,

[Born, 1568? Died, 1604?]

BORN, according to Mr. Ellis's conjecture, about 1568, was a noted sonneteer of his time. Dr. Birch, in his 'Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth,' supposes that he was the same Henry Constable who, for his zeal in the Catholic religion, was long obliged to live in a state of banishment. He returned to England, however, about the beginning of James's reign. The time of his death is unknown.

NICHOLAS BRETON.

[Born, 1555. Died, 1624.]

MR. ELLIS conjectures that this writer was born in 1555, and died in 1624. He is supposed by Mr. Ritson to be the same Captain Nicholas Breton whose monument is still in the church of Norton, in which parish his family were lords of the manor till within these few years. His happiest vein is in little pastoral pieces. In addition to the long roll of his indifferent works which are enumerated in the 'Biographia Poetica,' the 'Censura Literaria' imputes to him a novel of singular absurdity, in which the miseries of the heroine of the story are consummated by having her nose bit off by an aged and angry rival of her husband.

DR. THOMAS LODGE

[Born, 1556. Died, 1625.]

WAS of a family in Lincolnshire, and was educated at Oxford. He practised as a physician in London, and is supposed to have

fallen a martyr to the memorable plague of 1625. He wrote several plays and other poetical works of considerable merit, and translated the works of Josephus into English.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

[Born, 1586. Died, 1616.—Born, 1579. Died, 1625.]

THOSE names, united by friendship and confederate genius, ought not to be disjoined. Francis Beaumont was the son of Judge Beaumont of the Common Pleas, and was born at Grace-Dieu, in Liecestershire, in 1586. He studied at Oxford, and passed from thence to the Inner Temple; but his application to the law cannot be supposed to have been intense, as his first play, in conjunction with Fletcher, was acted in his twenty-first year, and the short remainder of his life was devoted to the drama. He married Ursula, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Henry Isley, of Kent, by whom he had two daughters, one of whom was alive, at a great age, in the year 1700. He died in 1616, and was buried at the entrance of St. Benedict's chapel, near the Earl of Middlesex's monument, in the collegiate church of St. Peter, Westminster. As a lyrical poet, F. Beaumont would be entitled to some remembrance independent of his niche in the drama.

John Fletcher was the son of Dr. Richard Fletcher, Bishop of London: he was born, probably in the metropolis, in 1576, and was admitted a pensioner of Bennet College about the age of fifteen.* His time and progress at the university have not been traced, and only a few anecdotes have been gleaned about the manner of his life and death. Before the marriage of Beaumont, we are told by Aubrey that Fletcher and he lived together in London, near the Bankside, not far from the theatre, had one * * * in the same house between them, the same clothes, cloak, &c. Fletcher died in the great plague of 1625. A friend had invited him to the country, and he unfortunately stayed in town to get a suit of clothes for the visit, during which time he caught the fatal infection. He was interred in St. Saviour's, Southwark,

* [He was born at Rye, in Sussex, and baptized there, as the register records, December 20, 1579.—Dyce's *Beaumont and Fletcher*, vol. i. p. xviii.]

where his grave, like that of Beaumont's in Westminster, is without an inscription.

Fletcher survived his dramatic associate ten years; so that their share in the drama that passes by their joint names was far from equal in quantity, Fletcher having written between thirty and forty after the death of his companion.* Respecting those which appeared in their common lifetime, the general account is, that Fletcher chiefly supplied the fancy and invention of their pieces, and that Beaumont, though he was the younger, dictated the cooler touches of taste and accuracy. This tradition is supported, or rather exaggerated, in the verses of Cartwright to Fletcher, in which he says—

“ Beaumont was fain
To bid thee be more dull; that's write again,
And bate some of thy fire, which from thee came
In a clear, bright, full, but too large a flame.”

Many verses to the same effect might be quoted; but this tradition, so derogatory to Beaumont's genius, is contradicted by other testimonies of rather an earlier date, and coming from writers who must have known the great dramatist themselves much better than Cartwright. Ben Jonson speaks of Beaumont's originality with the emphasis peculiar to the expression of all his opinions; and Earle, the intimate friend of Beaumont, ascribed to him, while Fletcher was still alive, the exclusive claim to those three distinguished plays, 'The Maid's Tragedy,' 'Philaster,' and 'King and No King'—a statement which Fletcher's friends were likely to have contradicted if it had been untrue. If Beaumont had the sole or chief merit of those pieces, he could not have been what Cartwright would have us believe—the mere pruner of Fletcher's luxuriances; an assessor, who made him write again, and more dully. Indeed, with reverence to their memories, nothing that they have left us has much the appearance of being twice written: and whatever their amiable editor, Mr. Seward, may say about the correctness of their plots, the management of their stories would lead us to suspect that neither of the duumvirate troubled themselves much about correctness. Their charm is, vigour and variety; their defects, a coarseness

* Fletcher was assisted by Massinger in one instance, probably in several; and it is likely that after Beaumont's death he had other auxiliaries. [Rowley, Middleton, and Shirley were his other assistants.]

and grotesqueness that betray no circumspection. There is so much more hardihood than discretion in the arrangement of their scenes, that, if Beaumont's taste and judgment had the disposal of them, he fully proved himself the junior partner. But it is not probable that their departments were so divided.

Still, however, the scanty lights that enable us to guess at what they respectively wrote seem to warrant that distinction in the cast of their genius which is made in the poet's allusion to

“ Fletcher's keen treble, and deep Beaumont's base.”

Beaumont was the deeper scholar; Fletcher is said to have been more a man of the world. Beaumont's vein was more pathetic and solemn, but he was not without humour; for the mock-heroic scenes, that are excellent in some of their plays, are universally ascribed to him. Fletcher's Muse, except where she sleeps in pastorals, seems to have been a nymph of boundless unblushing pleasantry. Fletcher's admirers warmly complimented his originality at the expense of Beaumont,* on the strength of his superior gaiety; as if gay thoughts must necessarily be more original than serious ones, or depth of sensibility be allied to shallowness of invention. We are told also that Beaumont's taste leant to the hard and abstract school of Jonson, while his coadjutor followed the wilder graces of Shakspeare. But, if Earle can be credited for Beaumont's having written 'Philaster,' we shall discover him in that tragedy to be the very opposite of an abstract painter of character; it has the spirit of individual life. The piece owes much less to art than it loses by negligence. Its forms and passions are those of romance; and its graces, evidently imitated from Shakspeare, want only the fillet and zone of art to consummate their beauty.

On the whole, while it is generally allowed that Fletcher was the gayer, and Beaumont the graver genius of their amusing theatre, it is unnecessary to depreciate either, for they were both original and creative; or to draw invidious comparisons between men who themselves disdained to be rivals.

* [At the expense of all genius; for in the panegyrical poems in which Fletcher is so warmly complimented, and to which Mr. Campbell alludes, the writers wrote to say good things that looked like true, and were satisfied when the arrow of adulation was drawn to the head. Commendatory poems at the best reflect very little of real opinion, and when brought into biography are more apt to mislead than inform.]

SIR JOHN DAVIES.

[Born, 1570. Died, 1626.]

SIR JOHN DAVIES wrote, at twenty-five years of age, a poem on the Immortality of the Soul; and, at fifty-two, when he was a judge and a statesman, another on *the art of dancing*.* Well might the teacher of that noble accomplishment, in Molière's comedy, exclaim, "*La philosophie est quelque chose—mais la danse!*"

Sir John was the son of a practising lawyer at Tisbury, in Wiltshire. He was expelled from the Temple for beating Richard Martin,† who was afterwards Recorder of London; but his talents redeemed the disgrace. He was restored to the Temple, and elected to parliament, where, although he had flattered Queen Elizabeth in his poetry, he distinguished himself by supporting the privileges of the House, and by opposing royal monopolies. On the accession of King James he went to Scotland with Lord Hunsdon, and was received by the new sovereign with flattering cordiality, as the author of the poem 'Nosce Teipsum.' In Ireland he was successively nominated solicitor and attorney general, was knighted, and chosen speaker of the Irish House of Commons, in opposition to the Catholic interest. Two works which he published as the fruits of his observation in that kingdom have attached considerable importance to his name in the legal and political history of Ireland.‡ On his return to England he sat in parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyne, and had assurances of being appointed chief justice of England, when his death was suddenly occasioned by apoplexy. He married, while in Ireland, Eleanor, a daughter of Lord Audley, by

* [This is not the case; the 'Poeme of Dauncing' appeared in 1596, in his twenty-sixth year, and, curious enough, with a dedicatory sonnet "To his very Friend, Ma. Rich. Martin." A copy, supposed unique, is in the Bridgewater Library. The poem was the work of fifteen days.—See Collier's *Bibliographical Catalogue*, p. 92. The poet wrote his name Dauys.]

† A respectable man, to whom Ben Jonson dedicated his 'Poetaster.'

‡ The works are 'A Discovery of the Causes why Ireland was never subdued till the beginning of his Majesty's Reign,' and 'Reports of Cases adjudged in the King's Courts in Ireland.'

whom he had a daughter, who was married to Ferdinand Lord Hastings, afterwards Earl of Huntingdon. Sir John's widow turned out an enthusiast and a prophetess. A volume of her ravings was published in 1649, for which the revolutionary government sent her to the Tower, and to Bethlehem Hospital.

THOMAS GOFFE.

[Born, 1592. Died, 1627.]

THIS writer left four or five dramatic pieces, of very ordinary merit. He was bred at Christ's Church, Oxford. He held the living of East Clandon, in Surrey, but unfortunately succeeded not only to the living, but to the widow of his predecessor, who, being a Xantippe, contributed, according to Langbaine, to shorten his days by the "*violence of her provoking tongue.*" He had the reputation of an eloquent preacher, and some of his sermons appeared in print.

SIR FULKE GREVILLE,

[Born, 1554. Died, 1628.]

WHO ordered this inscription for his own grave—"Servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sydney"—was created knight of the bath at James's coronation, afterwards appointed sub-treasurer, chancellor of the exchequer, and made a peer, by the title of Baron Brooke, in 1621. He died by the stab of a revengeful servant in 1628.*

SIR JOHN BEAUMONT.

[Born, 1582. Died, 1628.]

SIR JOHN BEAUMONT, brother of the celebrated dramatic poet, was born at Grace-Dieu, the seat of the family, in Leicestershire.

* [It seems to me that Dryden has formed his tragic style more upon Lord Brooke than upon any other author.—Southey, *MS. Note in Lord Brooke's Works*, 1633.]

He studied at Oxford and at the inns of court; but, forsaking the law, married and retired to his native seat. Two years before his death he was knighted by Charles I.

He wrote 'The Crown of Thorns,' a poem, of which no copy is known to be extant; 'Bosworth Field,' and a variety of small original and translated pieces. 'Bosworth Field' may be compared with Addison's 'Campaign,' without a high compliment to either. Sir John has no fancy, but there is force and dignity in some of his passages; and he deserves notice as one of the earliest polishers of what is called the heroic couplet.*

MICHAEL DRAYTON.

[Born, 1570? Died, 1631.]

MICHAEL DRAYTON was born in the parish of Atherston, in Warwickshire. His family was ancient; but it is not probable that his parents were opulent, for he was educated chiefly at the expense of Sir Godfrey Godere. In his childhood, which displayed remarkable proficiency, he was anxious to know what strange kind of beings poets were; and on his coming to college he importuned his tutor, if possible, to make him a poet. Either from this ambition, or from necessity, he seems to have adopted no profession, and to have generally owed his subsistence to the munificence of friends. An allusion which he makes, in the poem of 'Moses' Birth and Miracles,' to the destruction of the Spanish Armada, has been continually alleged as a ground for supposing that he witnessed that spectacle in a military capacity; but the lines, in fact, are far from proving that he witnessed it at all. On the accession of King James I. he paid his court to the new sovereign with all that a poet could offer—his congratulatory verses. James, however, received him but coldly; and though he was patronized by Lord Buckhurst and the Earl of

* ["Earth helped him with a cry of blood." This line is from 'The Battle of Bosworth Field,' by Sir John Beaumont (brother to the dramatist), whose poems are written with much spirit, elegance, and harmony, and have deservedly been reprinted in Chalmers's 'Collection of English Poets.'—Wordsworth, *Notes to the Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.*]

Dorset,* he obtained no situation of independence, but continued to publish his voluminous poetry amidst severe irritations with his booksellers.† Popular as Drayton once was, in comparison of the present neglect of him, it is difficult to conceive that his works were ever so profitable as to allow the bookseller much room for speculation. He was known as a poet many years before the death of Queen Elizabeth. His 'Poly-olbion,' which the learned Selden honoured with notes, did not appear till 1613. In 1626 we find him styled poet laureat; but the title at that time was often a mere compliment, and implied neither royal appointment nor butt of canary. The Countess of Bedford supported him for many years. At the close of his life we find him in the family of the Earl of Dorset, to whose magnanimous countess the Aubrey MSS. ascribe the poet's monument over his grave in Westminster Abbey.

The language of Drayton is free and perspicuous. With less depth of feeling than that which occasionally bursts from Cowley, he is a less excruciating hunter of conceits, and in harmony of expression is quite a contrast to Donne. A tinge of grace and romance pervades much of his poetry; and even his pastorals, which exhibit the most fantastic views of nature, sparkle with elegant imagery. The 'Nymphidia' is in his happiest characteristic manner of airy and sportive pageantry. In some historic sketches of 'The Barons' Wars' he reaches a manner beyond himself—the pictures of Mortimer and the queen, and of Edward's entrance to the castle, are splendid and spirited. In his 'Poly-olbion,' or description of Great Britain, he has treated the subject with such topographical and minute detail as to chain his poetry to the map; and he has unfortunately chosen a form of verse which, though agreeable when interspersed with other measures, is fatiguing in long continuance by itself: still it is impossible to read the poem without admiring the richness of his local associations, and the beauty and variety of the fabulous allusions which he scatters around him. Such indeed is the pro-

* [Lord Buckhurst and the Earl of Dorset—the poet and lord high treasurer—are one and the same person.]

† [He received a yearly pension of ten pounds from Prince Henry, to whom he dedicated his 'Poly-olbion.' See extracts from the 'Accounts of the Revels at Court,' *Introduction*, p. xvii.]

fusion of romantic recollections in the 'Poly-olbion,' that a poet of taste and selection might there find subjects of happy description, to which the author who suggested them had not the power of doing justice; for Drayton started so many remembrances that he lost his inspiration in the effort of memory. In 'The Barons' Wars,' excepting the passages already noticed, where the

*"Purpureus latè qui splendeat unus et alter,
Assuitur pannus,"*

we unhappily exchange only the geographer for the chronicler. On a general survey, the mass of his poetry has no strength or sustaining spirit adequate to its bulk. There is a perpetual play of fancy on its surface; but the impulses of passion, and the guidance of judgment, give it no strong movements nor consistent course. In scenery or in history he cannot command selected views, but meets them by chance as he travels over the track of detail. His great subjects have no interesting centre, no shade for uninteresting things. Not to speak of his dull passages, his description is generally lost in a flutter of whimsical touches. His Muse had certainly no strength for extensive flights, though she sports in happy moments on a brilliant and graceful wing.*

EDWARD FAIRFAX.

[Died, 1632?]

EDWARD FAIRFAX, the truly poetical translator of Tasso, was the second son of Sir Thomas Fairfax, of Denton, in Yorkshire. His family were all soldiers; but the poet, while his brothers were seeking military reputation abroad, preferred the quiet enjoyment of letters at home. He married and settled as a private gentleman at Fuyston, a place beautifully situated between the

* ["Drayton's 'Poly-olbion' is a poem of about 30,000 lines in length, written in Alexandrine couplets, a measure, from its monotony, and perhaps from its frequency in doggerel ballads, not at all pleasing to the ear. It contains a topographical description of England, illustrated with a prodigality of historical and legendary erudition. Such a poem is essentially designed to instruct, and speaks to the understanding more than to the fancy. The powers displayed in it are, however, of a high cast. Yet perhaps no English poem, known as well by name, is so little known beyond its name."] — Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. iii. p. 496-7.]

family seat at Denton and the forest of Knaresborough. Some of his time was devoted to the management of his brother Lord Fairfax's property, and to superintending the education of his lordship's children. The prose MSS. which he left in the library of Denton sufficiently attest his literary industry. They have never been published, and, as they relate chiefly to religious controversy, are not likely to be so; although his treatise on witchcraft, recording its supposed operation upon his own family, must form a curious relic of superstition. Of Fairfax it might, therefore, well be said—

“Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind
Believed the magic wonders which he sung.”*

Of his original works in verse, his ‘History of Edward the Black Prince’ has never been published; but Mr. A. Chalmers (‘Biog. Dict.,’ art. *Fairfax*) is, I believe, as much mistaken in supposing that his Eclogues have never been collectively printed, as in pronouncing them entitled to high commendation for their poetry.† A more obscurely stupid allegory and fable can hardly be imagined than the fourth Eclogue, preserved in Mrs. Cooper’s ‘Muse’s Library:’ its being an imitation of some of the theological pastorals of Spenser is no apology for its absurdity. When a fox is described as seducing the chastity of a lamb, and when the eclogue writer tells us that

“An hundred times her virgin lip he kiss’d,
As oft her maiden finger gently wrung,”

who could imagine that either poetry, or ecclesiastical history, or sense or meaning of any kind, was ever meant to be conveyed under such a conundrum?

The time of Fairfax’s death has not been discovered; it is known that he was alive in 1631; but his translation of the ‘Jerusalem’ was published when he was a young man, was inscribed to Queen Elizabeth, and forms one of the glories of her reign.

* [Collins.]

† [The fourth Eclogue alone is in print; nor is a MS. copy of the whole known to exist.]

SAMUEL ROWLANDS.

[Died, 1634 ?]

THE history of this author is quite unknown, except that he was a prolific pamphleteer in the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I. Ritson has mustered a numerous catalogue of his works, to which the compilers of the 'Censura Literaria' have added some articles. It has been remarked by the latter, that his Muse is generally found in low company, from which it is inferred that he frequented the haunts of dissipation. The conclusion is unjust—Fielding was not a blackguard, though he wrote the adventures of Jonathan Wild. His descriptions of contemporary follies have considerable humour. I think he has afforded in the story of Smug the Smith a hint to Butler for his apologue of vicarious justice, in the case of the brethren who hanged a "poor weaver that was bed-rid," instead of the cobbler who had killed an Indian,

"Not out of malice, but mere zeal,
Because he was an Infidel."

Hudibras, Part ii. Canto ii. l. 420.

 JOHN DONNE, D.D.

[Born, 1573. Died, 1631.]

THE life of Donne is more interesting than his poetry. He was descended from an ancient family; his mother was related to Sir Thomas More, and to Heywood the epigrammatist. A prodigy of youthful learning, he was entered of Hart Hall, now Hertford College, at the unprecedented age of eleven: he studied afterwards with an extraordinary thirst for general knowledge, and seems to have consumed a considerable patrimony on his education and travels. Having accompanied the Earl of Essex in his expedition to Cadiz, he purposed to have set out on an extensive course of travels, and to have visited the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem. Though compelled to give up his design by the insuperable dangers and difficulties of the journey, he did not come

home till his mind had been stored with an extensive knowledge of foreign languages and manners, by a residence in the south of Europe. On his return to England, the Lord Chancellor Ellesmere made him his secretary, and took him to his house. There he formed a mutual attachment to the niece of Lady Ellesmere, and, without the means or prospect of support, the lovers thought proper to marry. The lady's father, Sir George More, on the declaration of this step, was so transported with rage, that he insisted on the chancellor's driving Donne from his protection, and even got him imprisoned, together with the witnesses of the marriage. He was soon released from prison, but the chancellor would not again take him into his service, and the brutal father-in-law would not support the unfortunate pair. In their distress, however, they were sheltered by Sir Francis Wolley, a son of Lady Ellesmere by a former marriage, with whom they resided for several years, and were treated with a kindness that mitigated their sense of dependence.

Donne had been bred a Catholic, but on mature reflection had made a conscientious renunciation of that faith. One of his warm friends, Dr. Morton, afterwards Bishop of Durham, wished to have provided for him, by generously surrendering one of his benefices: he therefore pressed him to take holy orders, and to return to him the third day with his answer to the proposal. "At hearing of this" (says his biographer), "Mr. Donne's faint breath and perplexed countenance gave visible testimony of an inward conflict. He did not however return his answer till the third day; when, with fervid thanks, he declined the offer, telling the bishop that there were some errors of his life which, though long repented of, and pardoned, as he trusted, by God, might yet be not forgotten by some men, and which might cast a dishonour on the sacred office." We are not told what those irregularities were; but the conscience which could dictate such an answer was not likely to require great offences for a stumblingblock. This occurred in the poet's thirty-fourth year.

After the death of Sir F. Wolley, his next protector was Sir Robert Drury, whom he accompanied on an embassy to France. His wife, with an attachment as romantic as poet could wish for, had formed the design of accompanying him as a page. It was on this occasion, and to dissuade her from the design, that he

addressed to her the verses beginning, "By our first strange and fatal interview." Isaak Walton relates, with great simplicity, how the poet, one evening, as he sat alone in his chamber in Paris, saw the vision of his beloved wife appear to him with a dead infant in her arms, a story which wants only credibility to be interesting. He had at last the good fortune to attract the regard of King James; and, at his Majesty's instance, as he might now consider that he had outlived the remembrance of his former follies, he was persuaded to become a clergyman. In this capacity he was successively appointed chaplain to the king, lecturer of Lincoln's Inn, vicar of St. Dunstan's Fleet street, and dean of St. Paul's. His death, at a late age, was occasioned by consumption. He was buried in St. Paul's, where his figure yet remains in the vault of St. Faith's, carved from a painting for which he sat a few days before his death, dressed in his winding-sheet.

THOMAS PICKE.

OF this author I have been able to obtain no further information than that he belonged to the Inner Temple, and translated a great number of John Owen's Latin epigrams into English. His songs, sonnets, and elegies bear the date of 1631. Indifferent as the collection is, entire pieces of it are pilfered.

GEORGE HERBERT.

[Born, 1593. Died, 1633-3.]

"HOLY George Herbert," as he is generally called, was prebendary of Leighton Ecclesia, a village in Huntingdoushire. Though Bacon is said to have consulted him about some of his writings, his memory is chiefly indebted to the affectionate mention of old Isaak Walton.

JOHN MARSTON.

[Died, 1634.]

THIS writer was the antagonist of Jonson in the drama, and the rival of Bishop Hall in satire,* though confessedly inferior to them both in their respective walks of poetry. While none of his biographers seem to know anything about him, Mr. Gifford (in his 'Memoirs of Ben Jonson') conceives that Wood has unconsciously noticed him as a gentlemen of Coventry, who married Mary, the daughter of the Rev. W. Wilkes, chaplain to King James, and rector of St. Martin, in Wiltshire. According to this notice, our poet died at London in 1634, and was buried in the church belonging to the Temple. These particulars agree with what Jonson said to Drummond respecting this dramatic opponent of his, in his conversation at Hawthornden, viz. that Marston wrote his father-in-law's preachings, and his father-in-law Marston's comedies. Marston's comedies are somewhat dull; and it is not difficult to conceive a witty sermon of those days, when puns were scattered from the pulpit, to have been as lively as an indifferent comedy. Marston is the Crispinus of Jonson's 'Poetaster,' where he is treated somewhat less contemptuously than his companion Demetrius (Dekker); an allusion is even made to the respectability of his birth. Both he and Dekker were afterwards reconciled to Jonson; but Marston's reconciliation, though he dedicated his 'Malcontent' to his propitiated enemy, seems to have been subject to relapses. It is amusing to find Langbaine descanting on the chaste purity of Marston as a writer, and the author of the 'Biographia Dramatica' transcribing the compliment immediately before the enumeration of his plays, which are stuffed with obscenity. To this disgraceful characteristic of Marston an allusion is made in 'The Return from Parnassus,' where it is said,

" Give him plain naked words stripp'd from their shirts,
That might beseeem plain-dealing Aretine."

* He wrote 'The Scourge of Villany,' three books of satires, 1599. He was also author of 'The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image,' and certain Satires, published 1598, which makes his date as satirist nearly coeval with that of Bishop Hall.

GEORGE CHAPMAN.

[Born, 1557. Died, 1634.]

GEORGE CHAPMAN was born at Hitching-hill,* in the county of Hertford, and studied at Oxford. From thence he repaired to London, and became the friend of Shakspeare, Spenser, Daniel, Marlowe, and other contemporary men of genius. He was patronised by Prince Henry, and Carr Earl of Somerset. The death of the one, and the disgrace of the other, must have injured his prospects; but he is supposed to have had some place at court, either under King James or his consort Anne. He lived to an advanced age; and, according to Wood, was a person of reverend aspect, religious, and temperate. Inigo Jones, with whom he lived on terms of intimate friendship, planned and erected a monument to his memory over his burial-place, on the south side of St. Giles's church in the fields; but it was unfortunately destroyed with the ancient church.†

Chapman seems to have been a favourite of his own times; and in a subsequent age his version of Homer excited the raptures of Waller, and was diligently consulted by Pope. The latter speaks of its daring fire, though he owns that it is clouded by fustian. Webster, his fellow-dramatist, praises his "full and heightened style," a character which he does not deserve in any favourable sense; for his diction is chiefly marked by barbarous ruggedness, false elevation, and extravagant metaphor. The drama owes him very little; his 'Bussy d'Ambois' is a piece of frigid atrocity, and in 'The Widow's Tears,' where his heroine Cynthia falls in love with a sentinel guarding the corpse of her husband, whom she was bitterly lamenting, he has dramatised one of the most puerile and disgusting legends ever fabricated for the disparagement of female constancy.‡

* William Browne, the pastoral poet, calls him "the learned shepherd of fair Hitching-hill."

† [This is a mistake. It is still to be seen against the exterior south wall of the church.]

‡ ["Chapman would have made a great epic poet, if indeed he has not abundantly shown himself to be one; for his Homer is not so properly a translation as the stories of Achilles and Ulysses re-written."—Charles Lamb.]

THOMAS RANDOLPH.

[Born, 1605. Died, 1634.]

THOMAS RANDOLPH was the son of a steward to Lord Zouch. He was a king's scholar at Westminster, and obtained a fellowship at Cambridge. His wit and learning endeared him to Ben Jonson, who owned him like Cartwright as his adopted son in the *Muses*. Unhappily he followed the taste of Ben not only at the pen but at the bottle, and he closed his life in poverty at the age of twenty-nine,—a date lamentably premature when we consider the promises of his genius. His wit and humour are very conspicuous in the Puritan characters, whom he supposes the spectators of his scenes in '*The Muses' Looking-Glass.*' Throughout the rest of that drama (though it is on the whole his best performance) he unfortunately prescribed to himself too hard and confined a system of dramatic effect. Professing simply,

“ in single scenes to show,
How comedy presents each single vice,
Ridiculous—”

he introduces the vices and contrasted humours of human nature in a tissue of unconnected personifications, and even refines his representations of abstract character into conflicts of speculative opinion.

For his skill in this philosophical pageantry the poet speaks of being indebted to Aristotle, and probably thought of his play what Voltaire said of one of his own, "*This would please you, if you were Greeks.*" The female critic's reply to Voltaire was very reasonable, "*But we are not Greeks.*" Judging of Randolph however by the plan which he professed to follow, his execution is vigorous: his ideal characters are at once distinct and various, and compact with the expression which he purposes to give them. He was author of five other dramatic pieces, besides miscellaneous poems.*

He died at the house of his friend, W. Stafford, Esq. of Bla-

* 1. *Aristippus, or the Jovial Philosopher.*—2. *The Conceited Pedler.*—3. *The Jealous Lovers, a comedy.*—4. *Amyntas, or the Impossible Dowry, a pastoral.*—5. *Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery, a comedy.*

therwyke, in his native county, and was buried in the adjacent church, where an appropriate monument was erected to him by Sir Christopher (afterwards Lord) Hatton.

RICHARD CORBET.

[Born, 1582. Died, 1635.]

THE anecdotes of this facetious bishop, quoted by Headley from the Aubrey MSS., would fill several pages of a jest-book. It is more to his honour to be told, that though entirely hostile in his principles to the Puritans, he frequently softened, with his humane and characteristic pleasantry, the furious orders against them which Laud enjoined him to execute. On the whole he does credit to the literary patronage of James, who made him Dean of Christ Church, and successively Bishop of Oxford and Norwich.

THOMAS MIDDLETON.

[Born, 1570. Buried, 4th July, 1627.]

THE dates of this author's birth and death are both unknown, though his living reputation, as the literary associate of Jonson, Fletcher, Massinger, Dekker, and Rowley, must have been considerable. If Oldys be correct,* he was alive after November 1627. Middleton was appointed chronologer to the city of London† in 1620, and in 1624 was cited before the privy council, as author of 'The Game of Chess.' The verses of Sir W. Lower, quoted by Oldys, allude to the poet's white locks, so that he was probably born as early as the middle of the 16th century.‡ His tragicomedy, 'The Witch,' according to Mr. Malone, was written anterior to 'Macbeth,' and suggested to Shakspeare the

* MS. notes on Langbaine. [He was buried at Newington Butts, near London, on the 4th of July, 1627.—Dyce's *Middleton*, vol. i. p. xxxviii.]

† [Or city poet. Jonson and Quarles filled the office after Middleton, which expired with Elkanah Settle in 1723-4.]

‡ [The verses in question I believe to be a forgery of Chetwood.—Dyce's *Middleton*, vol. i. p. xiii.]

witchcraft scenery in the latter play. The songs beginning "Come away," &c., and "Black Spirits," &c., of which only the two first words are printed in 'Macbeth,' are found in 'The Witch.' Independent of having afforded a hint to Shakspeare, Middleton's reputation cannot be rated highly for the pieces to which his name is exclusively attached. His principal efforts were in comedy, where he deals profusely in grossness and buffoonery. The cheats and debaucheries of the town are his favourite sources of comic intrigue. With a singular effort at the union of the sublime and familiar, he introduces, in one of his course drafts of London vice, an infernal spirit prompting a country gentleman to the seduction of a citizen's wife.

RICHARD NICCOLS.

[Born, 1584.]

THE plan of 'The Mirror for Magistrates,' begun by Ferrers and Sackville, was followed up by Churchyard, Phaer, Higgins, Drayton, and many others. The last contributor of any note was Niccols in 1610, in his 'Winter Night's Vision.' Niccols was the author of 'The Cuckow' [1607,] written in imitation of Drayton's 'Owl,' and several poems of temporary popularity, and of a drama entitled 'The Twynne's Tragedy.' He was a Londoner, and, having studied (says Wood) at Oxford, obtained some employment worthy of his faculties; but of what kind, we are left to conjecture.

CHARLES FITZGEFFREY.

[Died, 1636.]

CHARLES FITZGEFFREY was rector of the parish of St. Dominic, in Cornwall.

BEN JONSON.

[Born, 1574. Died, 1637.]

TILL Mr. Gilchrist and Mr. Gifford stood forward in defence of this poet's memory, it had become an established article of literary faith that his personal character was a compound of spleen, surliness, and ingratitude. The proofs of this have been weighed and found wanting. It is true that he had lofty notions of himself, was proud even to arrogance in his defiance of censure, and in the warmth of his own praises of himself was scarcely surpassed by his most zealous admirers; but many fine traits of honour and affection are likewise observable in the portrait of his character, and the charges of malice and jealousy that have been heaped on his name for an hundred years turn out to be without foundation. In the quarrel with Marston and Dekker his culpability is by no means evident. He did not receive benefits from Shakspeare, and did not sneer at him in the passages that have been taken to prove his ingratitude; and instead of envying that great poet, he gave him his noblest praise; nor did he trample on his contemporaries, but liberally commended them.* With regard to Inigo Jones, with whom he quarrelled, it appears to have been Jonson's intention to have consigned his satires on that eminent man to oblivion; but their enmity, as his editor has shown, began upon the part of the architect, who, when the poet was poor and bedridden, meanly resented the fancied affront of Jonson's name being put before his own to a masque which they had jointly prepared, and used his influence to do him an injury at court.† As to Jonson's envying Shakspeare, men otherwise candid and laborious in the search of truth seem to have had the curse of the Philistines imposed on their

* The names of Shakspeare, Drayton, Donne, Chapman, Fletcher, Beaumont, May, and Browne, which almost exhaust the poetical catalogue of the time, are the separate and distinct subjects of his praise. His unkindness to Daniel seems to be the only exception.

† [Their enmity began in the very early part of their connexion; for in the *complete* copy of Drummond's *Notes* there are several allusions to this hostility. Inigo had the best retaliation in life—but Jonson has it now, and for ever.]

understandings and charities the moment they approached the subject. The fame of Shakspeare himself became an heirloom of traditionary calumnies against the memory of Jonson; the fancied relics of his envy were regarded as so many pious donations at the shrine of the greater poet, whose admirers thought they could not dig too deeply for trophies of his glory among the ruins of his imaginary rival's reputation. If such inquirers as Reed and Malone went wrong upon this subject, it is too severe to blame the herd of literary labourers for plodding in their footsteps; but it must excite regret as well as wonder that a man of pre-eminent living genius* should have been one of those

"quos de tramite recto
Impia sacrilegæ flexit contagio turbæ,"

and should have gravely drawn down Jonson to a parallel with Shadwell for their common traits of low society, vulgar dialect, and intemperance. Jonson's low society comprehended such men as Selden, Camden, and Cary; Shadwell (if we may trust to Rochester's account of him) was probably rather profligate than vulgar; while either of Jonson's vulgarity or indecency in his recorded conversations there is not a trace. But they both wore great-coats—Jonson drank canary, and Shadwell swallowed opium. "*There is a river in Macedon, and there is, moreover, a river at Monmouth.*"

The grandfather of Ben Jonson was originally of Annandale, in Scotland, from whence he removed to Carlisle, and was subsequently in the service of Henry VIII. The poet's father, who lost his estate under the persecution of Queen Mary, and was afterwards a preacher, died a month before Benjamin's birth, and his widow married a master bricklayer of the name of Fowler.† Benjamin through the kindness of a friend was educated at Westminster, and obtained an exhibition to Cambridge; but it proved insufficient for his support. He therefore returned from the university to his father-in-law's house and humble occupation; but disliking the latter, as may be well conceived, he

* [Sir Walter Scott. See Gifford's 'Ben Jonson,' vol. i. p. clxxxii., and Scott's replies in *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. i. p. 227, and vol. vii. p. 374-382.]

† [This is a mistake. The name of her second husband is still unknown. See Collier's 'Life of Shakspeare,' p. clxvi.]

repaired as a volunteer to the army in Flanders, and in the campaign which he served there distinguished himself, though yet a stripling, by killing an enemy in single combat in the presence of both armies. From thence he came back to England, and betook himself to the stage for support; at first probably as an actor, though undoubtedly very early as a writer. At this period he was engaged in a second single combat, which threatened to terminate more disastrously than the former; for, having been challenged by some player* to fight a duel with the sword, he killed his adversary indeed, but was severely wounded in the encounter, and thrown into prison for murder. There the assiduities of a Catholic priest made him a convert to popery, and the miseries of a gaol were increased to him by the visitation of spies, sent no doubt in consequence of his change to a faith of which the bare name was at that time nearly synonymous with the suspicion of treason. He was liberated, however, after a short imprisonment, without a trial. At the distance of twelve years he was restored to the bosom of his mother church. Soon after his release he thought proper to marry, although his circumstances were far from promising, and he was only in his twentieth year. In his two-and-twentieth year he rose to considerable popularity by the comedy of 'Every Man in his Humour,' which two years after became a still higher favourite with the public, when the scene and names were shifted from Italy to England, in order to suit the manners of the piece, which had all along been native. It is at this renovated appearance of his play (1598) that his fancied obligations to Shakspeare for drawing him out of obscurity have been dated; but it is at this time that he is pointed out by Meres as one of the most distinguished writers of the age.

The fame of his 'Every Man out of his Humour' drew Queen Elizabeth to its representation, whose early encouragement of his genius is commemorated by Lord Falkland. It was a fame, however, which, according to his own account, had already exposed him to envy—Marston and Dekker did him this homage. He lashed them in his 'Cynthia's Revels,' and anticipated their revenge in 'The Poetaster.' Jonson's superiority in the contest

* [Gabriel Spenser. See Collier's 'Life of Alleyn,' p. 51, and Collier's 'Memoirs of Actors,' p. xx.—both printed for the Shakspeare Society.]

can scarcely be questioned ; but 'The Poetaster' drew down other enemies on its author than those with whom he was at war. His satire alluded to the follies of soldiers and the faults of lawyers. The former were easily pacified, but the lawyers adhered to him with their wonted tenacity, and it became necessary for the poet to clear himself before the lord chief justice. In our own days the fretfulness of resenting professional derision has been deemed unbecoming even the magnanimity of tailors.

Another proof of the slavish subjection of the stage in those times is to be found soon after the accession of King James, when the authors of 'Eastward Hoe' were committed to prison for some satirical reflections on the Scotch nation which that comedy contained. Only Marston and Chapman, who had framed the offensive passages, were seized ; but Jonson, who had taken a share in some other part of the composition, conceived himself bound in honour to participate their fate, and voluntarily accompanied them to prison. It was on this occasion that his mother, deceived by the rumour of a barbarous punishment being intended for her son, prepared a lusty poison, which she meant to have given him and to have drunk along with him. This was maintaining in earnest the consanguinity of heroism and genius.

The imagined insult to the sovereign being appeased, James's accession proved altogether a fortunate epoch in Jonson's history. A peaceable reign gave encouragement to the arts and festivities of peace ; and in those festivities, not yet degraded to mere sound and show, Poetry still maintained the honours of her primogeniture among the arts. Jonson was therefore congenially employed and liberally rewarded in the preparation of those masques for the court which filled up the intervals of his more properly dramatic labours, and which allowed him room for classical impersonations and lyrical trances of fancy that would not have suited the business of the ordinary stage. The reception of his 'Sejanus,' in 1603, was at first unfavourable ; but it was remodelled and again presented with better success, and kept possession of the theatre for a considerable time. Whatever this tragedy may want in the agitating power of poetry, it has a strength and dramatic skill that might have secured it at least from the petulant contempt with which it has been too often spoken of. Though collected from the dead languages, it is not

a lifeless mass of antiquity, but the work of a severe and strong imagination, compelling shapes of truth and consistency to rise in dramatic order from the fragments of Roman eloquence and history; and an air not only of life but of grandeur is given to those curiously adjusted materials. The arraignment of Caius Silius before Tiberius is a great and poetical cartoon of Roman characters; and if Jonson has translated from Tacitus, who would not thank him for embodying the pathos of history in such lines as these, descriptive of Germanicus?—

“ O that man !
 If there were seeds of the old virtue left,
 They lived in him. * *
 * * * * *

What his funerals lack'd
 In images and pomp, they had supplied
 With honourable sorrow. Soldiers' sadness,
 A kind of silent mourning, such as men
 Who know no tears, but from their captives, use
 To show in so great losses.”

By his three succeeding plays, ‘ Volpone ’ (in 1605), ‘ The Silent Woman ’ (in 1609), and ‘ The Alchemist ’ (in 1610), Jonson’s reputation in the comic drama rose to a pitch which neither his own nor any other pen could well be expected to surpass. The tragedy of ‘ Catiline ’ appeared in 1611, prefaced by an address to the Ordinary Reader as remarkable for the strength of its style as for the contempt of popular judgments which it breathes. Such an appeal from ordinary to extraordinary readers ought at least to have been made without insolence, as the difference between the few and the many in matters of criticism lies more in the power of explaining their sources of pleasure than in enjoying them. ‘ Catiline,’ it is true, from its classical sources, was chiefly to be judged of by classical readers; but its author should have still remembered that popular feeling is the great basis of dramatic fame. Jonson lived to alter his tone to the public, and the lateness of his humility must have made it more mortifying. The haughty preface, however, disappeared from later editions of the play, while its better apology remained in the high delineation of Cicero’s character, and in passages of Roman eloquence which it contains; above all in the concluding speech of Petreius. It is said, on Lord Dorset’s authority, to have been Jonson’s favourite production.

In 1613 he made a short trip to the Continent, and, being in Paris, was introduced to the Cardinal du Perron, who, in compliment to his learning, showed him his translation of Virgil. Ben, according to Drummond's anecdotes, told the cardinal that it was nought; a criticism by all accounts as just as it was brief.

Of his two next pieces, 'Bartholomew Fair' (in 1614), and 'The Devil is an Ass' (in 1616), the former was scarcely a decline from the zenith of his comic excellence, the latter certainly was: if it was meant to ridicule superstition, it effected its object by a singular process of introducing a devil upon the stage. After this he made a long secession of nine years from the theatre, during which he composed some of his finest masques for the court, and some of those works which were irrecoverably lost in the fire that consumed his study. Meanwhile he received from his sovereign a pension of 100 marks, which in courtesy has been called making him poet laureat. The title, till then gratuitously assumed, has been since appropriated to his successors in the pension.

The poet's journey to Scotland (1619) awakens many pleasing recollections when we conceive him anticipating his welcome among a people who might be proud of a share in his ancestry, and setting out with manly strength on a journey of 400 miles on foot. We are assured by one who saw him in Scotland that he was treated with respect and affection among the nobility and gentry; nor was the romantic scenery of Scotland lost upon his fancy. From the poem which he meditated on Lochlomond it is seen that he looked on it with a poet's eye. But, unhappily, the meagre anecdotes of Drummond have made this event of his life too prominent by the over-importance which has been attached to them. Drummond, a smooth and sober gentleman, seems to have disliked Jonson's indulgence in that conviviality which Ben had shared with his Fletcher and Shakspeare at the Mermaid. In consequence of those anecdotes Jonson's memory has been damned for brutality, and Drummond's for perfidy. Jonson drank freely at Hawthornden, and talked big—things neither incredible nor unpardonable. Drummond's perfidy amounted to writing a letter beginning "Sir," with one very kind sentence in it, to the man whom he had described unfavourably in a private memorandum which he never meant for

publication. As to Drummond's decoying Jonson under his roof with any premeditated design on his reputation, no one can seriously believe it.*

By the continued kindness of King James our poet was some years after [September 1621] presented with the reversionary grant of the mastership of the revels, but from which he derived no advantage, as the incumbent, Sir John Astley, survived him. It fell, however, to the poet's son, by the permission of Charles I. † King James, in the contemplation of his laureat's speedy accession to this office, was desirous of conferring on him the rank of knighthood; but Jonson was unwilling to accept the distinction, and prevailed on some of his friends about the court to dissuade the monarch from his purpose. After the death of his patron James, necessity brought him again upon the theatre, and he produced 'The Staple of News,' a comedy of no ordinary merit. Two evils were at this time rapidly gaining on him—

“Disease and poverty, fell pair.”

He was attacked by the palsy in 1625, and had also a tendency to dropsy, together with a scorbutic affection inherent from his youth, which pressed upon the decaying powers of his constitution. From the first stroke of the palsy he gradually recovered so far as to be able to write in the following year the anti-masque of 'Sophiel.' For the three succeeding years his biographer suspects that the court had ceased to call upon him for his customary contributions, a circumstance which must have aggravated his poverty; and his salary it appears was irregularly paid. Meanwhile his infirmities increased, and he was unable to leave his room. In these circumstances he produced his 'New Inn,' a comedy that was driven from the stage with violent hostility. The epilogue to this piece forms a melancholy contrast

* ["The furious invective of Gifford against Drummond for having written private memoranda of his conversations with Ben Jonson, which he did not publish, and which, for aught we know, were perfectly faithful, is absurd. Any one else would have been thankful for so much literary anecdote."—Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. iii. p. 505.]

† [This is not quite correct: the son died in 1635, Jonson in 1637, and Astley a year or so after. Astley thus survived the father, to whom the reversion had been granted, and the son, to whom the transfer had been made. See Gifford, p. cxliv., and Collier's 'Annals,' vol. ii. p. 89. Sir Henry Herbert was Astley's successor.]

to the tone of his former addresses to the audience. He "whom the morning saw so great and high"* was now so humble as to speak of his "faint and faltering tongue," and of his "brain set round with pain." An allusion to the king and queen in the same epilogue awoke the slumbering kindness of Charles, who instantly sent him 100*l.*, and, in compliance with the poet's request, also converted the 100 marks of his salary into pounds, and added of his own accord a yearly tierce of canary, Jonson's favourite wine. His Majesty's injunctions for the preparation of masques for the court were also renewed till they were discontinued at the suggestion of Inigo Jones, who preferred the assistance of one Aurelian Townsend to that of Jonson in the furnishing of those entertainments. His means of subsistence were now perhaps both precariously supplied and imprudently expended. The city in 1631, from whom he had always received a yearly allowance of 100 nobles by way of securing his assistance in their pageants, withdrew their pension.† He was compelled by poverty to supplicate the Lord Treasurer Weston for relief. On the rumour of his necessities assistance came to him from various quarters, and from none more liberally than from the Earl of Newcastle. On these and other timely bounties his sickly existence was propped up to accomplish two more comedies, 'The Magnetic Lady,' which appeared in 1632, and 'The Tale of a Tub,' which came out in the following year. In the last of these, the last indeed of his dramatic career, he endeavoured to introduce some ridicule on Inigo Jones through the machinery of a puppet-show. Jones had distinguished himself at the representation of 'The Magnetic Lady' by his boisterous derision. The attempt at retaliation was more natural than dignified; but the court prevented it, and witnessed the representation of the play at Whitehall with coldness. Whatever humour its manners contain was such as courtiers were not likely to understand.

In the spring of 1633 Charles visited Scotland, and on the

* Sejanus.

† ["Yesterday the barbarous court of aldermen have withdrawn their chandlerly pension for verjuice and mustard, 33*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*."—Jonson to the Earl of Newcastle, 20th December 1631. It was, however, soon restored.]

road was entertained by the Earl of Newcastle with all the luxury and pageantry of loyal hospitality. To grace the entertainment Jonson sent, in grateful obedience to his benefactor the earl, a little interlude, entitled 'Love's Welcome at Welbeck,' and another of the same kind for the king and queen's reception at Bolsover. In despatching the former of these to his noble patron the poet alludes to his past bounties, which had "fallen like the dew of heaven on his necessities."

In his unfinished pastoral drama of 'The Sad Shepherd,' his biographer traces one bright and sunny ray that broke through the gloom of his setting days. Amongst his papers were found the plot and opening of a domestic tragedy on the story of Mortimer Earl of March, together with 'The Discoveries' and 'Grammar of the English Tongue;' works containing no doubt the philological and critical reflections of more vigorous years, but which it is probable that he must have continued to write till he was near his dissolution. That event took place on the 6th of August, 1637.

THOMAS CAREW.

[Born, 1589. Died, 1639.]

WHEN Mr. Ellis pronounced that Carew certainly died in 1634, he had probably some reasons for setting aside the date of the poet's birth assigned by Lord Clarendon; but as he has not given them, the authority of a contemporary must be allowed to stand. He was of the Carews of Gloucestershire, a family descended from the elder stock of that name in Devonshire, and a younger brother of Sir Matthew Carew, who was a zealous adherent of the fortunes of Charles I. He was educated at Oxford, but was neither matriculated nor took any degree. After returning from his travels, he was received with distinction at the court of Charles I. for his elegant manners and accomplishments, and was appointed gentleman of the privy chamber, and sewer in ordinary to his Majesty. The rest of his days seem to have passed in affluence and ease, and he died just in time to save him from witnessing the gay and gallant court, to which he had contributed more than the ordinary

literature of a courtier, dispersed by the storm of civil war that was already gathering.*

The want of boldness and expansion in Carew's thoughts and subjects excludes him from rivalry with *great* poetical names; nor is it difficult, even within the narrow pale of his works, to discover some faults of affectation, and of still more objectionable indelicacy. But among the poets who have walked in the same limited path he is pre-eminently beautiful, and deservedly ranks among the earliest of those who gave a cultivated grace to our lyrical strains. His slowness in composition was evidently that sort of care in the poet which saves trouble to his reader. His poems have touches of elegance and refinement, which their trifling subjects could not have yielded without a delicate and deliberate exercise of the fancy; and he unites the point and polish of later times with many of the genial and warm tints of the elder Muse. Like Waller, he is by no means free from conceit; and one regrets to find him addressing the Surgeon bleeding Celia, in order to tell him that the blood which he draws proceeds not from the fair one's arm, but from the lover's heart. But of such frigid thoughts he is more sparing than Waller; and his conceptions, compared to that poet's, are like fruits of a richer flavour, that have been cultured with the same assiduity.



SIR HENRY WOTTON.

[Born, 1568. Died, 1639.]

SIR HENRY WOTTON was born at Bocton-Malherbe, in Kent. Foreseeing the fall of the Earl of Essex, to whom he was secretary, he left the kingdom, but returned upon the accession of James, and was appointed ambassador to the court of Venice. Towards the close of his life he took deacon's orders, and was nominated provost of Eton.†

* [He is mentioned as alive in 1638 in Lord Falkland's verses on Jonson's death; and as there is no poem by Carew in the 'Jonsonus Virbius,' it is not unlikely that he was dead before its publication.]

† "[Sir Henry Wotton's verses of 'A Happie Lyfe' he hath by heart." *Ben Jonson's Conversations with Drummond*, edition Laing, p. viii.]

WILLIAM ALEXANDER, EARL OF STERLINE.

[Born, 1580. Died, 1640.]

WILLIAM ALEXANDER, of Menstrie, travelled on the continent as tutor to the Earl of Argyll; and after his return to his native country (Scotland), having in vain solicited a mistress, whom he celebrates in his poetry by the name of Aurora, he married the daughter of Sir Walter Erskine. Having repaired to the court of James I., he obtained the notice of the monarch, was appointed gentleman usher to Prince Charles, and was knighted by James. Both of those sovereigns patronized his scheme for colonizing Nova Scotia, of which the latter made him lord-lieutenant. Charles I. created him Earl of Sterline in 1633, and for ten years he held the office of secretary of state for Scotland, with the praise of moderation, in times that were rendered peculiarly trying by the struggles of Laud against the Scottish Presbyterians. He wrote some very heavy tragedies; but there is elegance of expression in a few of his shorter pieces.*

NATHANIEL FIELD.

[Born, 1587. Died, 1632-3.]

NATHANIEL FIELD had the honour of being connected with Massinger in 'The Fatal Dowry,' the play from which Rowe stole the plot of his 'Fair Penitent.' †

* ["Lord Sterline is rather monotonous, as sonnetteers usually are, and he addresses his mistress by the appellation of 'Fair tygress.' Campbell observes that there is elegance of expression in a few of his shorter pieces." —Hallam, *Lit. Hist.*, vol. iii. p. 505.]

† [For the fullest particulars about Nathaniel Field (many entirely new), see Mr. Collier's *Life of Field* in his 'Memoirs of the Principal Actors in the Plays of Shakspeare,' 8vo. 1846.]

THOMAS DEKKER.

[Died about 1638.]

AT the close of the sixteenth century we find that the theatres, conducted by Henslowe and Alleyn, chiefly depended on Jonson, Heywood, Chettle, and this poet, for composing or retouching their pieces. Marston and Dekker had laboured frequently in conjunction with Jonson, when their well-known hostility with him commenced. What grounds of offence Marston and Dekker alleged cannot now be told; but Jonson affirms that, after the appearance of his comedy, 'Every Man in his Humour,' they began to provoke him on every stage with their "*petulant styles*," as if they wished to single him out for their adversary. When Jonson's 'Cynthia's Revels' appeared, they appropriated the two characters of Hedon and Anaiides to themselves, and were brooding over their revenge when 'The Poetaster' came forth, in which Dekker was recognised as Demetrius. Either that his wrath made him more willing, or that he was chosen the champion of the offended host, for his rapid powers and popularity, he furnished the 'Satiromastix;' not indeed a despicable reply to Jonson, but more full of rage than of ridicule. The little that is known of Dekker's history, independent of his quarrel with Jonson, is unfortunate. His talents were prolific, and not contemptible; but he was goaded on by want to hasty productions, acquainted with spunging-houses, and an inmate of the King's Bench prison.* Oldys thinks that he was alive in 1638.

* He was there at one time for three years, according to Oldys. No wonder poor Dekker could rise a degree above the level of his ordinary genius in describing the blessings of Fortunatus's inexhaustible purse: he had probably felt but too keenly the force of what he expresses in the misanthropy of Ampedo:—

" I'm not enamour'd of this painted idol,
 This strumpet world; for her most beauteous looks
 Are poison'd baits, hung upon golden hooks.
 When fools do swim in wealth, her Cynthia beams
 Will wantonly dance on the silver streams;
 But when this squint-eyed age sees virtue poor,
 And by a little spark set shivering,
 Begging of all, relieved at no man's door,
 She smiles on her as the sun shines on fire,
 To kill that little heat."

JOHN WEBSTER.

[Died about 1638.]

LANGBAIN only informs us of this writer that he was clerk of St. Andrew's parish, Holborn,* and esteemed by his contemporaries. He wrote in conjunction with Rowley, Dekker, and Marston. Among the pieces entirely his own are 'The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona,' the tragedy of 'Appius and Virginia,' 'The Devil's Law Case,' and 'The Duchess of Malfi.' From the advertisement prefixed to 'Vittoria Corombona,' the piece seems not to have been successful in the representation. The author says "that it wanted that which is the only grace and setting out of a tragedy, a full and understanding auditory." The auditory, it may be suspected, were not quite so much struck with the beauty of Webster's horrors as Mr. Lamb seems to have been, in writing the notes to his 'Specimens of our old Dramatic Poetry.' In the same preface Webster deprives himself of the only apology that could be offered for his absurdities as a dramatist by acknowledging that he wrote slowly; a circumstance in which he modestly compares himself to Euripides. In his tragedy of 'The Duchess of Malfi,' the duchess is married and delivered of several children in the course of the five acts.

 JOHN FORD.

[Born, 1586. Died, 1640?]

It is painful to find the name of Ford a barren spot in our poetical biography, marked by nothing but a few dates and conjectures, chiefly drawn from his own dedications. He was born of a respectable family in Devonshire; was bred to the law, and entered of the Middle Temple at the age of seventeen. At the age of twenty he published a poem, entitled 'Fame's Memorial,' in honour of the deceased Earl of Devonshire; and, from the

* ["Gildon, I believe, was the first who asserted that our author was clerk of St. Andrew's. I searched the registers of that church, but the name of Webster did not occur in them; and I examined the MSS. belonging to the Parish Clerks' Hall, in Wood-street, with as little success."—Dyce's *Webster*, vol. i. p. 1.]

dedication of that piece, it appears that he chiefly subsisted upon his professional labours, making poetry the solace of his leisure hours. All his plays were published between the years 1629 and 1639; but before the former period he had for some time been known as a dramatic writer, his works having been printed a considerable time after their appearance on the stage; and, according to the custom of the age, had been associated in several works with other composers.* With Dekker he joined in dramatizing a story which reflects more disgrace upon the age than all its genius could redeem, namely, the fate of Mother Sawyer, the Witch of Edmonton, an aged woman, who had been recently the victim of legal and superstitious murder—

*“ Nil adeo fœdum quod non exacta vetustas
Ediderit.”*

The time of his death is unknown.†

WILLIAM ROWLEY.

[Born 15—. Died, 1640?]

OF William Rowley nothing more is known than that he was a player by profession, and for several years at the head of the Prince's ‡ company of comedians. Though his name is found in one instance affixed to a piece conjointly with Shakspeare's, he is generally classed only in the third rank of our dramatists. His Muse is evidently a plebeian nymph, and had not been educated

* [‘Honour Triumphant,’ and ‘A Line of Life,’ two tracts by Ford, unknown to the editors of his works, were reprinted by the Shakespeare Society in 1843.]

† I have declined obtruding on the reader some passages in Ford's plays which possess a superior power to a scene in ‘The Lover's Melancholy,’ because they have been anticipated by Mr. Lamb in his ‘Dramatic Specimens.’ Even if this had not been the case, I should have felt reluctant to give a place to one dreadfully beautiful specimen of his affecting powers, in the tragedy of ‘The Brother and Sister.’ Better that poetry should cease, than have to do with such subjects. ‘The Lover's Melancholy’ has much of the grace and sweetness that distinguishes the genius of Ford. [“Mr. Campbell speaks favourably of the poetic portion of this play; he thinks, and I fully agree with him, that it has much of the grace and sweetness which distinguish the genius of Ford. It has also somewhat more of the sprightliness, in the language of the secondary characters, than is commonly found in his plays.”—Gifford.]

‡ [Prince Charles, afterwards Charles I. The play in which his name is printed conjointly with Shakspeare's is called ‘The Birth of Merlin.’]

in the school of the Graces. His most tolerable production is 'The New Wonder, or a Woman never Vexed.' Its drafts of citizen life and manners have an air of reality and honest truth; the situations and characters are forcible, and the sentiments earnest and unaffected. The author seems to move in the sphere of life which he imitates with no false fears about its dignity, and is not ashamed to exhibit his broken merchant hanging out the bag for charity among the debtors of a prison-house.

PHILIP MASSINGER.

[Born, 1583. Died, 1640.]

THE father of this dramatic poet was attached to the family of Henry, the second Earl of Pembroke, and died in the service of that honourable house. The name of a servant carried with it no sense of degradation in those times, when the great lords and officers of the court numbered inferior nobles among their followers. On one occasion the poet's father was the bearer of letters from the Earl of Pembroke to Queen Elizabeth; a circumstance which has been justly observed to indicate that he could be no mean person, considering the punctilious respect which Elizabeth exacted from her courtiers.

Massinger was born at Salisbury,* or probably at Wilton, in its neighbourhood, the seat of the Earl of Pembroke, in whose family he also appears to have been educated. That nobleman died in the poet's sixteenth year, who thus unfortunately lost whatever chance he ever had of his protecting kindness. His father continued indeed in the service of the succeeding earl,† who was an accomplished man, a votary of the Muses, and one of the brightest ornaments of the courts of Elizabeth and James; but he withheld his patronage from a man of genius, who had claims to it, and would have done it honour, for reasons that have not been distinctly explained in the scanty and sorrowful history of the poet. Mr. Gifford, dissatisfied with former reasons alleged for this neglect, and convinced from the perusal of his writings that Massinger was a Catholic, conjectures that it may be attributed to his having offended the earl by having apostatized while

* [He was baptized in St. Thomas's Church, Salisbury, 24th November, 1583.]

† William, the third Earl of Pembroke.

at the university to that obnoxious faith. He was entered as a commoner of St. Alban's Hall, Oxford, in his eighteenth year, where he continued only four years. Wood and Davies conclude that he missed a degree, and was suddenly withdrawn from the university, in consequence of Pembroke's disapprobation of his attachment to poetry and romances, instead of logic and philosophy. Mr. Gifford prefers the authority of Langbaine, that he was not supported at all at Oxford by the Earl of Pembroke, but by his own father, and concludes that he was withdrawn from it solely by the calamitous event of his death. Whatever was the cause, he left the university abruptly, and, coming to London, without friends, or fortune, or profession, was, as he informs us himself, driven by his necessities to the stage for support.

From the period of his arrival in London in 1606 till the year 1622, when his 'Virgin Martyr' appeared in print, it is sufficiently singular that we should have no notice of Massinger, except in one melancholy relic that was discovered by Mr. Malone in Dulwich College, namely, a letter subscribed by him and two other dramatic poets,* in which they solicit the advance of five pounds from the theatrical manager,† to save them from the horrors of a gaol. The distressful document accidentally discovers the fact of Massinger having assisted Fletcher in one of his dramas, and thus entitles Sir Aston Cokayne's assertion to belief, that he assisted him in more than one. Though Massinger therefore did not appear in print during the long period already mentioned, his time may be supposed to have been partly employed in those confederate undertakings which were so common during the early vigour of our stage; and there is the strongest presumptive evidence that he was also engaged in plays of his own composition, which have been lost to the world among those literary treasures that perished by the neglect of Warburton, the Somerset herald, and the unconscious sacrilege of his cook. Of Massinger's fame for rapidity in composition Langbaine has preserved a testimony in the lines of a contemporary poet: after the date of his first printed performance, those of his subsequent works come in thick succession, and there can be little doubt that the period preceding it was equally prolific.

* Nathaniel Field and Robert Daborne.

† [Philip Henslowe. See Collier's *Life of Alleyn*, p. 120.]

Of his private life literally nothing can be said to be known, except that his dedications bespeak incessant distress and dependence, while the recommendatory poems prefixed to his plays address him with attributes of virtue which are seldom lavished with flattery or falsehood on those who are poor. In one of his dedications he acknowledges the bounty of Philip Earl of Montgomery, the brother to that Earl of Pembroke who so unaccountably neglected him; but, warm as Massinger's acknowledgments are, the assistance appears to have been but transitory.* On the 17th of March, 1640, having gone to bed in apparent health the preceding night, he was found dead in the morning, in his own house in the Bankside. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Saviour's, and his fellow-comedians attended him to the grave; but it does not appear from the strictest search that a stone or inscription of any kind marked the place where his dust was deposited; even the memorial of his mortality is given with a pathetic brevity, which accords but too well with the obscure and humble circumstances of his life: "March 20, 1639-40, buried Philip Massinger, a stranger;"† and of all his admirers, only Sir Aston Cokayne dedicated a line to his memory. Even posterity did him long injustice; Rowe, who had discovered his merits in the depth of their neglect, forbore to be his editor, in the hopes of concealing his plagiarism from 'The Fatal Dowry;'‡ and he seemed on the eve of oblivion, when Dodsley's reprint of our old plays brought him faintly into that light of reputation which has been made perfectly distinct by Mr. Gifford's edition of his works.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING.

[Born, 1608. Died, 1641.]

SUCKLING, who gives levity its gayest expression, was the son of the comptroller of the household to Charles I. Langbaine tells

* [This is a mistake—the assistance was even continued to the widow. "Mr. Philip Massinger, author of severall good playes, was a servant to his lordship, and had a pension of twenty or thirty pounds per annum, which was payed to his wife after his decease. She lived at Cardiff, in Glamorganshire."—Aubrey's *Natural History of Wiltshire*, edited by John Britton, 4to., 1847, p. 91.]

† [The real entry in the register is, "1639. March 18. Philip Massinger, stranger"—that is, a non-parishioner.]

‡ In 'The Fair Penitent.'

us that he spoke Latin at five years of age, but with what correctness or fluency we are not informed. His versatile mind certainly acquired many accomplishments, and filled a short life with many pursuits, for he was a traveller, a soldier, a lyric and dramatic poet, and a musician. After serving a campaign under Gustavus Adolphus, he returned to England, was favoured by Charles I., and wrote some pieces, which were exhibited for the amusement of the court with sumptuous splendour. When the civil wars broke out he expended 1200*l*.* on the equipment of a regiment for the king, which was distinguished, however, only by its finery and cowardice. A brother poet crowned his disgrace with a ludicrous song. The event is said to have affected him deeply with shame; but he did not live long to experience that most incurable of the heart's diseases. Having learnt that his servant had robbed him, he drew on his boots in great haste; a rusty nail,† that was concealed in one of them, pierced his heel, and produced a mortification, of which he died. His poems, his five plays, together with his letters, speeches, and tracts, have been collected into one volume.

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT.

[Born, 1611. Died, 1643.]

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT was the son of an innkeeper at Cirencester, who had been reduced to that situation by spending a good estate. He was a king's scholar at Westminster, and took orders at Oxford, where he became, says Wood, "a most florid and seraphic preacher." Bishop Duppa, his intimate friend, appointed him succentor of the church of Salisbury in 1642. In the same year he was one of the council of war, or delegacy, appointed by the University of Oxford, for providing troops sent by the king to protect, or, as the opposite party alleged, to overawe, the universities. His zeal in this service occasioned his being imprisoned by the parliamentary forces on their arrival; but he was speedily released on bail. Early in the year 1643 he

* [Rather 12,000*l*. See Percy's 'Reliques,' vol. ii. p. 356, where the ludicrous song Mr. Campbell refers to may be found.]

† [Oldys says the blade of a penknife, whilst Aubrey affirms that he was poisoned. The nail or blade may have been poisoned.]

was appointed junior proctor of his university, and also reader in metaphysics. The latter office we may well suppose him to have filled with ability, as, according to Lloyd's account, he studied at the rate of sixteen hours a-day; but he survived his appointment to it for a very short time, being carried off by a malignant fever, called the camp-disease, which was then epidemical at Oxford. Cartwright died in his thirty-second year; but he lived long enough to earn the distinguishing praise of Ben Jonson, who used to say of him, "My son Cartwright writes all like a man."

GEORGE SANDYS.

[Born, 1577. Died, 1643.]

GEORGE SANDYS, to whose translations Pope declared that English poetry owed much of its beauty, was the youngest son of the Archbishop of York. After leaving the university, he set out upon an extensive tour, comprehending Greece, Egypt, and the Holy Land, which is described in his well-known and well-written book of Travels. After his return to England he published a translation of 'The Metamorphoses' of Ovid, and a Paraphrase of the Psalms of David. He translated also the 'Christus Patiens' of Grotius. Few incidents of his life are recorded. For the most part of his latter days he lived with Sir Francis Wenman, of Caswell, near Witney, in Oxfordshire; a situation near to Burford, the retirement of his intimate friend Lucius Lord Falkland, who has addressed several poems to him.*

FRANCIS QUARLES.

[Born, 1592. Died, 1644.]

THIS voluminous saint was bred at Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn, and was appointed cupbearer to Elizabeth, Electress of Bohemia, after quitting whose service he went to Ireland, and was secretary to Archbishop Usher. On the breaking out of the rebellion in that kingdom he was a considerable sufferer, and was obliged to fly for safety to England. He had already been pensioned by

* [The ingenious and learned Mr. Sandys, the best versifier of the former age.—Dryden.]

Charles, and made Chronologer to the city of London; but in the general ruin of the royal cause his property was confiscated, and his books and manuscripts, which he valued more, were plundered. This reverse of fortune is supposed to have accelerated his death.

The charitable criticism of the present age has done justice to Quarles, in contrasting his merits with his acknowledged deformities. That his perfect specimens of the bathos should have been laughed at in the age of Pope is not surprising.* His 'Emblems,' whimsical as they are, have not the merit of originality, being imitated from Herman Hugo. A considerable resemblance to Young may be traced in the blended strength and extravagance, and ill-assorted wit and devotion of Quarles. Like Young, he wrote vigorous prose—witness his 'Enchiridion.' In the parallel, however, it is due to the purity of Young to acknowledge that he never was guilty of such indecency as that which disgraces the 'Argalus and Parthenia' of our pious author.

WILLIAM BROWNE.

[Born, 1590. Died, 1645.]

WILLIAM BROWNE was the son of a gentleman of Tavistock, in Devonshire. He was educated at Oxford, and went from thence

* Of his absurdity one example may suffice from his 'Emblems':—

"Man is a tennis-court, his flesh the wall,
The gamesters God and Satan,—the heart 's the ball;
The higher and the lower hazards are
Too bold presumption and too base despair:
The rackets which our restless balls make fly,
Adversity and sweet prosperity.
The angels keep the court, and mark the place
Where the ball falls, and chalk out every chase.
The line 's a civil life we often cross,
O'er which the ball, not flying, makes a loss.
Detractors are like standers-by, and bet
With charitable men, our life 's the set.
Lord, in these conflicts, in these fierce assaults,
Laborious Satan makes a world of faults.
Forgive them, Lord, although he ne'er implore
For favour, they 'll be set upon our score.
O take the ball before it come to the ground,
For this base court has many a false rebound;
Strike, and strike hard, and strike above the line,
Strike where thou please, so as the set be thine."

to the Inner Temple, but devoted himself chiefly to poetry. In his twenty-third year he published the first part of his 'Britannia's Pastorals,' prefaced by poetical eulogies, which evince his having been, at that early period of life, the friend and favourite of Selden and Drayton. To these testimonies he afterwards added that of Ben Jonson. In the following year he published 'The Shepherd's Pipe,' of which the fourth eclogue is often said to have been the precursor of Milton's 'Lycidas.' A single simile about a rose constitutes all the resemblance! In 1616 he published the second part of his 'Britannia's Pastorals.' His 'Masque of the Inner Temple' was never printed, till Dr. Farmer transcribed it from a MS. of the Bodleian Library, for Thomas Davies's edition of Browne's works, more than 120 years after the author's death.

He seems to have taken his leave of the Muses about the prime of his life, and returned to Oxford, in the capacity of tutor to Robert Dormer, Earl of Caernarvon, who fell in the battle of Newbury, 1643. After leaving the university with that nobleman, he found a liberal patron in William, Earl of Pembroke, whose character, like that of Caernarvon, still lives among the warmly coloured and minutely touched portraits of Lord Clarendon. The poet lived in Lord Pembroke's family; and, according to Wood, grew rich in his employment. But the particulars of his history are very imperfectly known, and his verses deal too little with the business of life to throw much light upon his circumstances. His poetry is not without beauty; but it is the beauty of mere landscape and allegory, without the manners and passions that constitute human interest.

THOMAS NABBES.

[Died, 1645.]

THIS was an inferior dramatist in the time of Charles I., who, besides his plays, wrote a continuation of Knolles's 'History of the Turks.'

THOMAS HEYWOOD.

[Died, 1649.]

THOMAS HEYWOOD was the most prolific writer in the most fertile age of our drama.* In the midst of his theatrical labours as an actor and poet, he composed a formidable list of prose works, and defended the stage against the Puritans in a work that is full of learning. One of his projects was to write the lives of all poets that were ever distinguished, from the time of Homer downwards. Yet it has happened to the framer of this gigantic design to have no historian so kind to his own memory as to record either the period of his death or the spot that covers his remains. His merits entitled him to better remembrance. He composed indeed with a careless rapidity, and seems to have thought as little of Horace's precept of "*sæpe stylum vertas*" as of most of the injunctions in the 'Art of Poetry.' But he possesses considerable power of interesting the affections, by placing his plain and familiar characters in affecting situations. The worst of him is, that his commonplace sentiments and plain incidents fall not only beneath the ideal beauty of art, but are often more fatiguing than what we meet with in the ordinary and unselected circumstances of life. When he has hit upon those occasions where the passions should obviously rise with accumulated expression, he lingers on through the scene with a dull and level indifference. The term artlessness may be applied to Heywood in two very opposite senses. His pathos is often artless in the better meaning of the word, because its objects are true to life, and their feelings naturally expressed. But he betrays still more frequently an artlessness, or we should rather call it a want of art, in deficiency of contrivance. His best performance is 'A Woman killed with Kindness.' In that play the repentance of Mrs. Frankford, who dies of a broken heart for her infidelity to a generous husband, would present a situation consummately moving, if we were left to conceive her death to be produced simply by grief. But the poet most unskilfully prepares us for her death, by her declaring

* [He had, as he himself tells us, "either an entire hand, or at the least a main finger, in two hundred and twenty plays." He was a native of Lincolnshire.]

her intentions to starve herself; and mars, by the weakness, sin, and horror of suicide, an example of penitence that would otherwise be sublimely and tenderly edifying. The scene of the death of Mrs. Frankford has been deservedly noticed for its pathos by an eminent foreign critic, Mr. Schlegel,* who also commends the superior force of its inexorable morality to the reconciling conclusion of Kotzebue's drama on a similar subject. The learned German perhaps draws his inference too rigidly. Mrs. Frankford's crime was recent, and her repentance and death immediately follow it; but the guilt of the other tragic penitent, to whom Mr. S. alludes, is more remote and less heinous; and to prescribe interminable limits, either in real or imaginary life, to the generosity of individual forgiveness is to invest morality with terrors which the frailty of man and the mercy of Heaven do not justify.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND.

[Born, 1585. Died, 1649.]

THIS poet was born at Hawthornden, his father's estate in Mid-Lothian, took a degree at the University of Edinburgh, studied the civil law in France, and, returning home, entered into possession of his paternal estate, and devoted himself to literature. During his residence at Hawthornden he courted, and was on the eve of marrying, a lady of the name of Gunningham. Her sudden death inspired him with a melancholy which he sought to dissipate by travelling. He accordingly visited France, Italy, and Germany, and, during a stay of eight years on the Continent, conversed with the most polished society, and studied the objects most interesting to curiosity and taste. He collected at the same time a number of books and manuscripts, some of which are still in the library of his native university.

On his second return to Scotland he found the kingdom distracted by political and religious ferment, and on the eve of a civil war. What connexion this aspect of public affairs had with his quitting Hawthornden, his biographers have not informed us, but so it was, that he retired to the seat of his brother-in-law,

* Mr. Schlegel, however, is mistaken in speaking of him as anterior to Shakspeare, evidently confounding him with an older poet of the name.

Sir John Scot, of Scotstarvet, a man of letters, and probably of political sentiments congenial with his own. At his abode he wrote his 'History of the Five Jameses, Kings of Scotland,' a work abounding in false eloquence and slavish principles. Having returned at length to settle himself at his own seat, he married a lady of the name of Logan, of the house of Restalrig, in whom he fancied a resemblance to his former mistress, and repaired the family mansion of Hawthornden, with an inscription importing his hopes of resting there in honourable ease. But the times were little suited to promote his wishes; and on the civil war breaking out he involved himself with the Covenanters, by writing in support of the opposite side, for which his enemies not only called him to a severe account, but compelled him to furnish his quota of men and arms to support the cause which he detested. His estate lying in different counties, he contributed halves and quarters of men to the forces that were raised; and on this occasion he wrote an epigram, bitterly wishing that the imaginary division of his recruits might be realised on their bodies. His grief for the death of Charles is said to have shortened his days. Such stories of political sensibility may be believed on proper evidence.

The elegance of Drummond's sonnets, and the humour of his Scotch and Latin macaronics, have been at least sufficiently praised: but when Milton has been described as essentially obliged to him, the compliment to his genius is stretched too far. A modern writer, who edited the works of Drummond, has affirmed that, "perhaps," if we had had no Drummond, we should not have seen the finer delicacies of Milton's 'Comus,' 'Lycidas,' 'L'Allegro,' and 'Il Penseroso.' "Perhaps" is an excellent leading-string for weak assertions. One or two epithets of Drummond may be recognised in Milton, though not in the minor poems already mentioned. It is difficult to apply any precise idea to the tautology of "fine delicacies;" but whatever the editor of Drummond meant by it, he may be assured that there is no debt on the part of Milton to the poet of Hawthornden which the former could be the least impoverished by returning. Philips, the nephew of Milton, edited and extolled Drummond, and pronounced him equal to Tasso himself. It has been inferred from some passages of the 'Theatrum Poetarum'

that Milton had dictated several critical opinions in that performance; and it has been taken for granted that Philips's high opinion of Drummond was imbibed from the author of 'Paradise Lost.' But the parallel between Drummond and Tasso surely could not have been drawn by Milton. Philips had a turn for poetry, and in many of his critical opinions in the 'Theatrum Poetarum' showed a taste that could not be well attributed to his uncle—in none more than in this exaggerated comparison of a smooth sonneteer to a mighty poet. It is equally improbable that he imbibed this absurdity from Milton as that he caught from him his admiration of Drummond's prose compositions and arbitrary principles.

THOMAS MAY.

[Born, 1595. Died, 1650.]

THOMAS MAY, whom Dr. Johnson has pronounced the best Latin poet of England, was the son of Sir Thomas May, of Mayfield, in Sussex. During the earlier part of his public life he was encouraged at the court of Charles I., inscribed several poems to his Majesty, as well as wrote them at his injunction, and received from Charles the appellation of "*his poet*." During this connexion with royalty he wrote his five dramas, translated the 'Georgics' and 'Pharsalia,' continued the latter in English as well as Latin, and by his imitation of Lucan acquired the reputation of a modern classic in foreign countries. It were much to be wished that, on siding with the parliament in the civil wars, he had left a valedictory testimony of regret for the necessity of opposing, on public grounds, a monarch who had been personally kind to him. The change was stigmatised as ungrateful; and it was both sordid and ungrateful if the account given by his enemies can be relied on, that it was owing to the king's refusal of the laureateship, or of a pension—for the story is told in different ways. All that can be suggested in May's behalf is, that no complimentary dedications could pledge his principles on a great question of public justice, and that the motives of an action are seldom traced with scrupulous truth where it is the bias of the narrator to degrade the action itself. Clarendon, the most respectable of his accusers, is exactly in

this situation. He begins by praising his epic poetry as among the best in our language, and inconsistently concludes by pronouncing that May deserves to be forgotten.

The parliament, from whatever motive he embraced their cause, appointed him their secretary and historiographer. In this capacity he wrote his 'Breviary,' which Warburton pronounces "a just composition according to the rules of history." It breaks off, much to the loss of the history of that time, just at the period of the Self-denying Ordinance. Soon after this publication he went to bed one night in apparent health, having drunk freely, and was found dead in the morning. His death was ascribed to his nightcap being tied too tightly under his chin. Andrew Marvell imputes it to the cheerful bottle. Taken together, they were no bad receipt for suffocation. The vampire revenge of his enemies in digging him up from his grave is an event too notorious in the history of the Restoration. They gave him honourable company in this sacrilege, namely, that of Blake.

He has ventured in narrative poetry on a similar difficulty to that Shakspeare encountered in the historical drama, but it is unnecessary to show with how much less success. Even in that department, he has scarcely equalled Daniel or Drayton.

RICHARD CRASHAW.

[Born, 1615? Died, 1652.]

THIS poet fell into neglect in his own age. He was, however, one of the first of our old minor poets that was rescued from oblivion in the following century. Pope borrowed from him, but acknowledged his obligations. Crashaw formed his style on the most quaint and conceited school of Italian poetry, that of Marino; and there is a prevalent harshness and strained expression in his verses, but there are also many touches of beauty and solemnity, and the strength of his thoughts sometimes appears even in their distortion. If it were not grown into a tedious and impertinent fashion to discover the sources of 'Paradise Lost,' one might be tempted to notice some similarity between the speech of Satan in the 'Sospetto di Herode' of Marino (which Crashaw has translated) and Satan's Address to the Sun in Milton. The little that is known of Crashaw's

life exhibits enthusiasm, but it is not that of a weak or selfish mind. His private character was amiable; and we are told by the earliest editor of his 'Steps to the Temple' that he was skilled in music, drawing, and engraving. His father, of whose writings an account is given in the tenth volume of the 'Censura Literaria,' was a preacher at the Temple Church, London. His son, the poet, was born in London, but at what time is uncertain. He was educated at the Charterhouse through the bounty of two friends, Sir Henry Yelverton and Sir Francis Crew. From thence he removed to Cambridge, where he became a fellow, and took a degree of master of arts. There he published his Latin poems, in one of which is the epigram from a Scripture passage, ending with the line, so well known,

"Lympha pudica Deum vidit et erubuit,"—

"The modest water saw its God, and blush'd,"—

and also his pious effusions, called 'Steps to the Temple.' The title of the latter work was in allusion to the church at Cambridge, near his residence, where he almost constantly spent his time. When the Covenant, in 1644, was offered to the universities, he preferred ejection and poverty to subscribing it. Already he had been distinguished as a popular and powerful preacher. He soon after embraced the Catholic religion, and repaired to France. In austerity of devotion he had no great transition to make to Catholicism; and his abhorrence of the religious innovations he had witnessed, together with his admiration of the works of the canonized St. Teresa of Spain, still more easily account for his conversion. Cowley found him at Paris in deplorable poverty, and recommended him to his exiled queen, Henrietta Maria. Her Majesty gave him letters of recommendation to Italy, where he became a secretary to one of the Roman cardinals, and a canon of the church of Loretto. Soon after the latter appointment he died, about the year 1652.

WILLIAM HABINGTON.

[Born, 1605. Died, 1654.]

THE mother of this poet, who was daughter to Lord Morley, is reported to have written the famous letter of warning, in consequence of which the Gunpowder Plot was discovered. His

father, who had been suspected of a share in Babington's conspiracy, and who had owed his release to his being godson to Queen Elizabeth, was a second time imprisoned, and condemned to death, on the charge of having concealed some of the agents in the Gunpowder Plot; but by Lord Morley's interest was pardoned, on condition of confining himself to Worcestershire, of which county he lived to write a voluminous history.

The family were Catholics; and his son, the poet, was sent to St. Omer's, we are told, with a view to make him a Jesuit, which he declined. The same intention never failed to be ascribed to all English families who sent their children to that seminary. On his return from the Continent he lived chiefly with his father, who was his preceptor. Of the subsequent course of his life nothing more seems to be on record than his marriage and his literary works. The latter consisted of effusions entitled 'Castara,' the poetical name of his mistress; 'The Queen of Arragon,' a tragi-comedy; a 'History of Edward IV.;' and 'Observations upon History.'

Habington became a poet from the courtship of the lady whom he married, Lucy, daughter to Lord Powis. There is no very ardent sensibility in his lyrics, but they denote a mind of elegant and chaste sentiments. He is as free as any of the minor poets of his age from the impurities which were then considered as wit. He is indeed rather ostentatiously platonic, but his love language is far from being so elaborate as the complimentary gallantry of the preceding age. A respectable gravity of thought, and succinct fluency of expression, are observable in the poems of his later life.

WILLIAM CHAMBERLAYNE.

[Born, 1619. Died, Jan. 11, 1689.]

I BELIEVE the only notice of this poet that is to be found is in Langbaine, who informs us that he was a physician at Shaftesbury, in Dorsetshire, in the reigns of Charles I. and II. He wrote a single tragi-comedy, 'Love's Victory,' which was acted after the Restoration under the new title of 'Wits led by the Nose, or the Poet's Revenge.' His 'Pharonnida,' an heroic poem, in five books, which Langbaine says has nothing to re-

commend it, is one of the most interesting stories that was ever told in verse, and contained so much amusing matter as to be made into a prose novel in the reign of Charles II. What Dr. Johnson said unjustly of Milton's 'Comus,' that it was like gold hid under a rock, may unfortunately be applied with too much propriety to 'Pharonnida.' Never, perhaps, was so much beautiful design in poetry marred by infelicity of execution: his ruggedness of versification, abrupt transitions, and a style that is at once slovenly and quaint, perpetually interrupt us in enjoying the splendid figures and spirited passions of this romantic tablet, and make us catch them only by glimpses. I am well aware that from a story so closely interwoven a few selected passages, while they may be more than sufficient to exemplify the faults, are not enough to discover the full worth of Chamberlayne. His sketches, already imperfect, must appear still more so in the shape of fragments; we must peruse the narrative itself to appreciate the rich breadth and variety of its scenes, and we must, perhaps, accustom our vision to the thick medium of its uncouth style to enjoy the power and pathos of his characters and situations. Under all the defects of the poem, the reader will then indeed feel its unfinished hints affect the heart and dilate the imagination. From the fate of Chamberlayne a young poet may learn one important lesson, that he who neglects the subsidiary graces of taste has every chance of being neglected by posterity, and that the pride of genius must not prompt him to disdain the study of harmony and of style.



RICHARD LOVELACE.

[Born, 1618. Died, 1658.]

THIS gallant, unfortunate man, who was much distinguished for the beauty of his person, was the son of Sir William Lovelace, of Woolwich, in Kent. After taking a master's degree at Cambridge, he was for some time an officer in the army; but returned to his native country after the pacification of Berwick, and took possession of his paternal estate, worth about 500*l.* per annum. About the same time he was deputed by the county of Kent to deliver their petition to the House of Commons for

restoring the king to his rights and settling the government. This petition gave such offence that he was committed to the Gate-house prison, and only released on finding bail to an enormous amount not to pass beyond the lines of communication. During his confinement to London his fortune was wasted in support of the royal cause. In 1646 he formed a regiment for the service of the French king, was colonel of it, and was wounded at Dunkirk. On this occasion his mistress, Lucasta, a Miss Lucy Sacheverel, married another, hearing that he had died of his wounds. At the end of two years he returned to England, and was again imprisoned till after the death of Charles I. He was then at liberty; but, according to Wood, was left in the most destitute circumstances, his estate being gone. He, who had been the favourite of courts, is represented as having lodged in the most obscure recesses of poverty, and died in great misery in a lodging near Shoe-lane.

KATHERINE PHILIPS.

[Born, 1631. Died, 1664.]

MRS. KATHERINE PHILIPS, wife of James Philips, Esq., of the Priory of Cardigan. Her maiden name was Fowler. She died of the small-pox, in her thirty-third year. The matchless Orinda, as she was called, cannot be said to have been a woman of genius; but her verses betoken an interesting and placid enthusiasm of heart, and a cultivated taste, that form a beautiful specimen of female character. She translated two of the tragedies of Corneille, and left a volume of letters to Sir Charles Cotterell, which were published a considerable time after her death. Jeremy Taylor addressed to her his 'Measures and Offices of Friendship,' and Cowley, as also Flatman, his imitator, honoured her memory with poetical tributes.

WILLIAM HEMINGE.

THIS writer was the son of John Heminge the famous player, who was contemporary with Shakspeare, and whose name is prefixed, together with that of Condell, to the folio edition of the

great poet's works. He was born in 1602, and received his education at Oxford. This is all that is mentioned of him by the compilers of the 'Biographia Dramatica.'

JAMES SHIRLEY.

[Born, 1596. Died, 1666.]

JAMES SHIRLEY was born in London. He was educated at Cambridge,* where he took the degree of A.M. and had a curacy for some time at or near St. Alban's, but, embracing popery, became a schoolmaster [1623] in that town. Leaving this employment, he settled in London as a dramatic writer, and between the years 1625 and 1666 published thirty-nine plays. In the civil wars he followed his patron, the Earl of Newcastle, to the field; but on the decline of the royal cause returned to London, and, as the theatres were now shut, kept a school in Whitefriars, where he educated many eminent characters. At the re-opening of the theatres he must have been too old to have renewed his dramatic labours; and what benefit the Restoration brought him as a royalist we are not informed. Both he and his wife died on the same day, immediately after the great fire of London, by which they had been driven out of their house, and probably owed their deaths to their losses and terror on that occasion.†

ALEXANDER BROME.

[Born, 1620. Died, 1666.]

ALEXANDER BROME was an attorney in the Lord Mayor's court. From a verse in one of his poems, it would seem that

* He had studied also at Oxford, where Wood says that Laud objected to his taking orders, on account of a mole on his left cheek, which greatly disfigured him. This fastidiousness about personal beauty is certainly beyond the Levitical law. [As no mention of Shirley occurs in any of the public records of Oxford, the duration of his residence at St. John's College cannot be determined.—Dyce's 'Life,' p. v.]

† [Shirley was the last of a great race, all of whom spoke nearly the same language, and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common. A new language, and quite a new turn of tragic and comic interest, came in with the Restoration.--Lamb.]

he had been sent once in the civil war (by compulsion no doubt), on the parliament side, but had stayed only three days, and never fought against the King and the cavaliers. He was in truth a strenuous loyalist, and the bacchanalian songster of his party. Most of the songs and epigrams that were published against the Rump have been ascribed to him. He had besides a share in a translation of Horace, with Fanshawe, Holiday, Cowley, and others, and published a single comedy, 'The Cunning Lovers,' which was acted in 1651, at the private house in Drury-lane. There is a playful variety in his metre that probably had a better effect in song than in reading. His thoughts on love and the bottle have at least the merit of being decently jovial, though he arrays the trite arguments of convivial invitation in few original images. In studying the traits and complexion of a past age, amusement, if not illustration, will often be found from the ordinary effusions of party ridicule. In this view the 'Diurnal,' and other political satires of Brome, have an extrinsic value as contemporary caricatures.

ROBERT HERRICK.

[Born, 1591.]

HERRICK'S vein of poetry is very irregular; but where the ore is pure it is of high value. His song beginning "Gather ye rose-buds while ye may," is sweetly Anacreontic. Nichols, in his 'History of Leicestershire,' has given the fullest account of his history hitherto published, and reprinted many of his poems, which illustrate his family connexions. He was the son of an eminent goldsmith in Cheapside, was born in London, and educated at Cambridge. Being patronised by the Earl of Exeter, he was, in 1629, presented by Charles I. to the vicarage of Dean Prior in Devonshire, from which he was ejected during the civil war, and then, having assumed the habit of a layman, resided in Westminster. After the Restoration he was replaced in his vicarage. To his 'Hesperides,' or works human and divine, he added some pieces on religious subjects, where his volatile genius was not in her element.

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

[Born, 1618. Died, 1667.]

ABRAHAM COWLEY was the posthumous son of a grocer in London. His mother, though left a poor widow, found means to get him educated at Westminster School, and he obtained a scholarship at Cambridge. Before leaving the former seminary he published his 'Poetical Blossoms.' He wrote verses while yet a child; and amidst his best poetry as well as his worst, in his touching and 'tender as well as extravagant passages, there is always something that reminds us of childhood in Cowley. From Cambridge he was ejected in 1643 for his loyalty; after a short retirement he was induced by his principles to follow the Queen to Paris, as secretary to the Earl of St. Alban's, and, during an absence of ten years from his native country, was employed in confidential journeys for his party, and in deciphering the royal correspondence. The object of his return to England, in 1656, I am disposed to think, is misrepresented by his biographers; they tell us that he came over, under pretence of privacy, to give notice of the posture of affairs. Cowley came home indeed, and published an edition of his poems, in the preface to which he decidedly declares himself a quietist under the existing government, abjures the idea of all political hostility, and tells us that he had not only abstained from printing, but had burnt the very copies of his verses that alluded to the civil wars. "The enmities of fellow-citizens," he continues, "should be like those of lovers, the redintegration of their amity." If Cowley employed this language to make his privacy the deeper pretence for giving secret intelligence, his office may be worthily named that of a spy; but the manliness and placidity of his character render it much more probable that he was sincere in those declarations; nor were his studious pursuits, which were chiefly botanical, well calculated for political intrigue. He took a doctor's degree, but never practised, and was one of the earliest members of the Philosophical Society. While Butler's satire was unworthily employed in ridiculing the infancy of that institution, Cowley's wit took a more than ordinary stretch of per-

version in the good intention of commending it. Speaking of Bacon, he calls him

“ the mighty man,
Whom a wise king and nature chose
To be the chancellor of both their laws.”

At his first arrival in England he had been imprisoned, and obliged to find bail to a great amount. On the death of Cromwell he considered himself at liberty, and went to France, where he stopped till the Restoration. At that event, when men who had fought under Cromwell were rewarded for coming over to Charles II., Cowley was denied the mastership of the Savoy on pretence of his disloyalty, and the Lord Chancellor told him that his pardon was his reward. The sum of his offences was, that he had lived peaceably under the usurping government, though without having published a word, even in his amiable and pacific preface, that committed his principles. But an absurd idea prevailed that his ‘Cutter of Coleman-street’ was a satire on his party, and he had published an ode to Brutus! It is impossible to contrast this injured honesty of Cowley with the successful profligacy of Waller and Dryden, and not to be struck with the all-prevailing power of impudence. In such circumstances it is little to be wondered at that Cowley should have sighed for retirement, and been ready to accept of it even in the deserts of America. Misanthropy, as far as so gentle a nature could cherish it, naturally strengthened his love of retirement, and increased that passion for a country life which breathes in the fancy of his poetry, and in the eloquence of his prose. By the influence of Buckingham and St. Alban’s, he at last obtained a competence of about 300*l.* a-year from a lease of the Queen’s lands, which enabled him to retire, first to Barnes Elms, and afterwards to Chertsey, on the Thames. But his health was now declining, and he did not long experience either the sweets or inconveniences of rustication. He died, according to Dr. Sprat, in consequence of exposing himself to cold one evening that he stayed late among his labourers. Another account ascribes his death to being benighted in the fields, after having spent too convivial an evening with the same Dr. Sprat.

SIR RICHARD FANSHAWE.

[Born, 1608. Died, 1666.]

SIR RICHARD FANSHAWE, the son of Sir Henry Fanshawe, remembrancer of the Irish Exchequer, was born at Ware, in Hertfordshire, in 1608. An accomplished traveller, he gave our language some of its earliest and most important translations from modern literature, and acted a distinguished part under the Charleses in the political and diplomatic history of England.

SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT.

[Born, 1608. Died, 1668.]

DAVENANT'S personal history is sufficiently curious without attaching importance to the insinuation of Wood, so gravely taken up by Mr. Malone, that he was the son of Shakspeare. He was the son of a vintner at Oxford, at whose house the immortal poet is said to have frequently lodged. Having risen to notice by his tragedy of 'Albovine,' he wrote masques for the court of Charles I., and was made governor of the King and Queen's company of actors in Drury-lane. In the civil wars we find the theatric manager quickly transmuted into a lieutenant-general of ordnance, knighted for his services at the siege of Gloucester, and afterwards negotiating between the King and his advisers at Paris. There he began his poem of 'Gondibert,' which he laid aside for a time for the scheme of carrying a colony from France to Virginia; but his vessel was seized by one of the parliament ships, he was thrown into prison, and owed his life to friendly interference, it is said to that of Milton, whose friendship he returned in kind. On being liberated, his ardent activity was shown in attempting to restore theatrical amusements in the very teeth of bigotry and puritanism, and he actually succeeded so far as to open a theatre in the Charterhouse Yard. At the Restoration he received the patent of the Duke's theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which he held till his death.

'Gondibert' has divided the critics. It is undeniable, on the one hand, that he showed a high and independent conception of

epic poetry, in wishing to emancipate it from the slavery of ancient authority, and to establish its interest in the dignity of human nature, without incredible and stale machinery. His subject was well chosen from modern romantic story, and he strove to give it the close and compact symmetry of the drama. Ingenious and witty images, and majestic sentiments, are thickly scattered over the poem. But Gondibert, who is so formally described, has certainly more of the cold and abstract air of an historical than of a poetical portrait, and, unfortunately, the beauties of the poem are those of elegy and epigram, more than of heroic fiction. It wants the charm of free and forcible narration; the life-pulse of interest is incessantly stopped by solemn pauses of reflection, and the story works its way through an intricacy of superfluous fancies, some beautiful and others conceited, but all, as they are united, tending to divert the interest, like a multitude of weeds upon a stream, that entangle its course while they seem to adorn it.

SIR JOHN DENHAM.

[Born, 1615. Died, 1668.]

SIR JOHN DENHAM was born in Dublin, where his father was chief-baron of the Irish Exchequer. On his father's accession to the same office in the English Exchequer, our poet was brought to London, and there received the elements of his learning. At Oxford he was accounted a slow, dreaming young man, and chiefly noted for his attachment to cards and dice. The same propensity followed him to Lincoln's Inn, to such a degree that his father threatened to disinherit him. To avert this, he wrote a penitentiary 'Essay on Gaming;' but after the death of his father he returned to the vice that most easily beset him, and irrecoverably injured his patrimony. In 1641, when his tragedy of 'The Sophy' appeared, it was regarded as a burst of unpromised genius. In the better and bygone days of the drama, so tame a production would not perhaps have been regarded as astonishing, even from a dreaming young man. He was soon after appointed high-sheriff of Surrey, and made governor of Farnham Castle for the King; but being unskilled in military affairs, he resigned his

command, and joined his Majesty at Oxford, where he published his 'Cooper's Hill.' In the civil wars he served the royal family by conveying their correspondence; but was at length obliged to quit the kingdom, and was sent as ambassador, by Charles II. in his exile, to the King of Poland. At the Restoration he was made surveyor of the King's buildings, and knighted with the order of the Bath; but his latter days were embittered by a second marriage, that led to a temporary derangement of mind.

GEORGE WITHER.

[Born, 1588. Died, 1667.]

GEORGE WITHER, the descendant of a family who had for several generations possessed the property of Manydowne, in Hampshire, was born in that county, at Bentworth, near Alton. About the age of sixteen he was sent to Oxford, where he had just begun to fall in love with the mysteries of logic, when he was called home by his father, much to his mortification, to hold the plough. He was even afraid of being put to some mechanical trade, when he contrived to get to London, and with great simplicity had proposed to try his fortune at court. To his astonishment, however, he found that it was necessary to flatter in order to be a courtier. To show his independence he therefore wrote his 'Abuses Whipt and Stript,' and, instead of rising at court, was committed for some months to the Marshalsea.* But if his puritanism excited enemies, his talents and frankness gained him friends. He appears to have been intimate with the poet Browne, and to have been noticed by Selden. To the latter he inscribed his translation of the poem on the Nature of Man, from the Greek of Bishop Nemesius, an ancient father of the church. While in prison he wrote his 'Shepherd's Hunting,' which contains perhaps the very finest touches that ever came from his hasty and irregular pen, and, besides those prison eclogues, composed his 'Satire to the King,' a justification of his former satires, which,

* He was imprisoned for his 'Abuses Whipt and Stript;' yet this could not have been his first offence, as an allusion is made to a former accusation. [It was for 'The Scourge' (1615) that his first known imprisonment took place.]

if it gained him his liberation, certainly effected it without retracting his principles.

It is not probable that the works of Wither will ever be published collectively, curious as they are, and occasionally marked by originality of thought: but a detailed list of them is given in the 'British Bibliographer.' From youth to age George continued to pour forth his lucubrations, in prophecy, remonstrance, complaint, and triumph, through good and evil report, through all vicissitudes of fortune: at one time in command among the saints, and at another scrawling his thoughts in gaol, when pen and ink were denied him, with red ochre upon a trencher. It is generally allowed that his taste and genius for poetry did not improve in the political contest. Some of his earliest pieces display the native amenity of a poet's imagination; but, as he mixed with the turbulent times, his fancy grew muddy with the stream. While Milton in the same cause brought his learning and zeal as a partisan, he left the Muse behind him, as a mistress too sacred to be introduced into party brawlings: Wither, on the contrary, took his Muse along with him to the camp and the congregation, and it is little to be wondered at that her cap should have been torn and her voice made hoarse in the confusion.

Soon after his liberation from prison he published the 'Hymns and Songs of the Church,' one edition of which is dedicated to King James, in which he declares that the hymns were printed under his Majesty's gracious protection. One of the highest dignitaries of the church also sanctioned his performance; but as it was Wither's fate to be for ever embroiled, he had soon after occasion to complain that the booksellers, "those cruel bee-masters," as he calls them, "who burn the poor Athenian bees for their honey," endeavoured to subvert his copyright; while some of the more zealous clergymen complained that he had interfered with their calling, and slanderous persons termed his hymns needless songs and popish rhymes. From any suspicion of popery his future labours were more than sufficient to clear him. James, it appears, encouraged him to finish a translation of the Psalms, and was kindly disposed towards him. Soon after the decease of his sovereign, on remembering that he had vowed a pilgrimage to the Queen of Bohemia, he travelled

to her court to accomplish his vow, and presented her Highness with a copy of his Psalms.

In 1639 he was a captain of horse in the expedition against the Scots, and quartermaster-general of his regiment, under the Earl of Arundel. But as soon as the civil wars broke out he sold his estate to raise a troop of horse for the parliament, and soon afterwards rose to the rank of major. In the month of October of the same year, 1642, he was appointed by parliament captain and commander of Farnham Castle, in Surrey; but his government was of short duration, for the castle was ceded on the 1st of December to Sir William Waller. Wither says, in his own justification, that he was advised by his superiors to quit the place; while his enemies alleged that he deserted it. The defence of his conduct which he published seems to have been more resolute than his defence of the fortress. In the course of the civil war he was made prisoner by the royalists, and, when some of them were desirous of making an example of him, Denham, the poet, is said to have pleaded with his Majesty that he would not hang him, for as long as Wither lived he (Denham) could not be accounted the worst poet in England. Wood informs us that he was afterwards constituted by Cromwell major-general of all the horse and foot in the county of Surrey. In his addresses to Cromwell there is, mixed with his usual garrulity of advice and solemnity of warning, a considerable degree of adulation. His admonitions probably exposed him to little hazard; they were the croakings of the raven on the right hand. It should be mentioned, however, to the honour of his declared principles, that in the 'National Remembrancer' he sketched the plan of an annual and freely elected parliament, which differed altogether from the shadow of representation afforded by the government of the usurper. On the demise of Cromwell he hailed the accession of Richard with joyful gratulation. He never but once in his life foreboded good, and in that prophecy he was mistaken.

At the Restoration the estates which he had either acquired or purchased during the interregnum were taken from him. But the event which crushed his fortunes could not silence his pen, and he was committed first to Newgate and afterwards to the Tower, for remonstrances which were deemed a libel on the

new government. From the multitude of his writings, during a three years' imprisonment, it may be clearly gathered that he was treated not only with rigour, but injustice; for the confiscation of his property was made by forcible entry, and, besides being illegal in form, was directly contrary to the declaration that had been issued by Charles II. before his accession. That he died in prison may be inferred from the accounts, though not clear from the dates of his biographers; but his last days must have been spent in wretchedness and obscurity.* He was buried between the east door and the south end of the Savoy church, in the Strand.

JASPER MAYNE.

[Born, 1604. Died, 1672.]

THIS writer has a cast of broad humour that is amusing, though prone to extravagance. The idea, in 'The City Match,' of Captain Quartfield and his boon companions exposing simple Timothy dead drunk, and dressed up as a sea-monster, for a show, is not, indeed, within the boundaries of either taste or credibility; but amends is made for it in the next scene, of old Warehouse and Seathrift witnessing in disguise the joy of their heirs at their supposed deaths. Among the many interviews of this nature, by which comedy has sought to produce merriment and surprise, this is not one of the worst managed. Plotwell's cool impudence is well supported, when he gives money to the waterman (who tells that he had escaped by swimming at the time the old citizens were drowned):—

" There, friend, there is
A fare for you: I'm glad you 'scaped; I had
Not known the news so soon else."

Dr. Mayne was a clergyman in Oxfordshire. He lost his

* [He was released from prison on the 27th of July, 1663, on his bond to the Lieutenant of the Tower for his good behaviour; and died, though not in prison, on the 2nd of May, 1667.—See Willmott's 'Lives of the Sacred Poets,' vol. i. The praises of poetry have been often sung in ancient and modern times; strange powers have been ascribed to it of influence over animate and inanimate auditors; its force over fascinated crowds has been acknowledged; but, before Wither, no one had celebrated its power *at home*—the wealth and the strength which this divine gift confers upon its possessor.—Charles Lamb.]

livings at the death of Charles I., and became chaplain to the Earl of Devonshire, who made him acquainted with Hobbes; but the philosopher and the poet are said to have been on no very agreeable terms. At the Restoration he was reinstated in his livings, made a canon of Christ Church, Archdeacon of Chichester, and chaplain in ordinary to the King. Besides the comedy of 'The City Match,' he published a tragi-comedy called 'The Amorous War,' several sermons, dialogues from Lucian, and a pamphlet on the civil wars.

RICHARD BRATHWAITE.

[Born, 1588. Died, 1673.]

RICHARD BRATHWAITE, mentioned incidentally by Warton as a pastoral poet, but more valuable as a fluent though inelegant satirist, was the son of Thomas Brathwaite of Warcop, near Appleby, in Westmoreland. When he had finished his education at both universities, his father gave him the estate of Barnside, in Westmoreland, where he held a commission in the militia, and was deputy-lieutenant of the county. His latter days were spent near Richmond, in Yorkshire, where he died with a highly respectable character. To the list of his pieces enumerated by Wood, two have been since added by Mr. Ellis and Mr. Malone, amounting in all to nineteen, among which are two tragi-comedies, 'Mercurius Britannicus' and 'The Regicidium.'

JOHN MILTON.

[Born, 1608. Died, 1674.]

IF the memory of Milton has been outraged by Dr. Johnson's hostility, the writings of Blackburne, Hayley, and, above all, of Symmons, may be deemed sufficient to have satisfied the poet's injured shade. The apologies for Milton have, indeed, been rather full to superfluity than defective. Dr. Johnson's triumphant regret at the supposed whipping of our great poet at the university is not more amusing than the alarm of his favourable biographers at the idea of admitting it to be true. From all that has been written on the subject, it is perfectly clear that

Milton committed no offence at college which could deserve an ignominious punishment. Admitting Aubrey's authority for the anecdote, and his authority is not very high, it points out the punishment not as a public infliction, but as the personal act of his tutor, who resented or imagined some unkindnesses.

The youthful history of Milton, in despite of this anecdote, presents him in an exalted and amiable light. His father, a man of no ordinary attainments, and so accomplished a musician* as to rank honourably among the composers of his age, intended him for the ministry of the church, and furnished him with a private tutor, who probably seconded his views; but the piety that was early instilled into the poet's mind grew up, with the size of his intellect, into views of religious independence that would not have suited any definite ecclesiastical pale; and if Milton had become a preacher, he must have founded a church of his own. Whilst a boy, the intensity of his studies laid the seeds of his future blindness; and at that period the Latin verses addressed to his father attest not only the prematurity of his attainments, but the endearing strength of his affections.

The few years which he spent at his father's house, at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, after leaving the university, and before setting out on his travels, were perhaps the happiest in his life. In the beautiful scenery of that spot, disinclined to any profession by his universal capacity and thirst for literature, he devoted himself to study, and wrote the most exquisite of his minor poems. Such a mind, in the opening prime of its genius, enjoying rural leisure and romantic walks, and luxuriating in the production of 'Comus' and 'The Arcades,' presents an inspiring idea of human beatitude.

When turned of thirty he went to Italy, the most accomplished Englishman that ever visited her classical shores. The attentions that were there shown to him are well known. We find him at the same time, though a stranger and a heretic, boldly expressing his opinions within the verge of the Vatican. There also, if poetry ever deigns to receive assistance from the younger art, his imagination may have derived at least congenial

* Milton was early instructed in music. As a poet he speaks like one habituated to inspiration under its influence, and seems to have attached considerable importance to the science in his system of education.

impressions from the frescoes of Michael Angelo, and the pictures of Raphael; and those impressions he may have possibly recalled in the formation of his great poem, when his eyes were shut upon the world, and when he looked inwardly for "god-like shapes and forms."

In the eventful year after his return from the Continent, the fate of Episcopacy, which was yet undecided, seemed to depend chiefly on the influence which the respective parties could exercise upon the public mind, through the medium of the press, which was now set at liberty by the ordinance of the Long Parliament. Milton's strength led him foremost on his own side of the controversy; he defended the five ministers, whose book was entitled 'Smectymnus,' against the learning and eloquence of Bishop Hall and Archbishop Usher, and became, in literary warfare, the bulwark of his party. It is performing this and similar services which Dr. Johnson calls Milton's vapouring away his patriotism in keeping a private boarding-house; and such are the slender performances at which that critic proposes that we should indulge in some degree of merriment. Assuredly, if Milton wielded the pen instead of the sword in public dispute, his enemies had no reason to regard the former weapon as either idle or impotent in his hand. An invitation to laugh on such an occasion may remind us of what Sternhold and Hopkins denominate "awful mirth;" for of all topics which an enemy to Milton's principles could select, his impotence in maintaining them is the most unpropitious to merriment.

The most difficult passage of his life for his biographers to comment upon with entire satisfaction is his continued acceptance of Cromwell's wages after Cromwell had become a tyrant. It would be uncandid to deny that his fear of the return of the Stuarts, the symptoms of his having been seldom at the usurper's court, and the circumstance of his having given him advice to spare the liberties of the people, form some apology for this negative adherence. But if the people, according to his own ideas, were capable of liberty after Cromwell's death, they were equally so before it; and a renunciation of his profits under the despot would have been a nobler and fuller sacrifice to public principles than any advice. From ordinary men this was more than could be expected; but Milton prescribed to others such

austerity of duty, that, in proportion to the altitude of his character, the world, which looked to him for example, had a right to expect his practical virtue to be severe.

ANDREW MARVELL.

[Born, 1620. Died, 1678.]

A BETTER edition of Marvell's works than any that has been given is due to his literary and patriotic character. He was the champion of Milton's living reputation, and the victorious supporter of free principles against Bishop Parker, when that venal apostate to bigotry promulgated in his 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' "that it was more necessary to set a severe government over men's consciences and religious persuasions than over their vices and immoralities." The humour and eloquence of Marvell's prose tracts were admired, and probably imitated, by Swift.* In playful exuberance of figure he sometimes resembles Burke. For consistency of principles, it is not so easy to find his parallel. His few poetical pieces betray some adherence to the school of conceit, but there is much in it that comes from the heart warm, pure, and affectionate.

He was a native of Hull. At the age of fifteen he was seduced from Cambridge by the proselytising Jesuits, but was brought back from London by his father, returned to the university, and continued for ever after an enemy to superstition and intrigue. In 1640, his father, who was a clergyman of Hull, embarked on the Humber in company with a youthful pair whom he was to marry at Barrow, in Lincolnshire. Though the weather was calm when they entered the boat, the old gentleman expressed a whimsical presentiment of danger by throwing his cane ashore, and crying out, "Ho for heaven!"† A storm came on, and the whole company perished.

In consequence of this catastrophe, the gentleman whose daughter

* [We still read Marvell's answer to Parker with pleasure, though the book it answers be sunk long ago.—Swift's *Apology for A Tale of a Tub.*]

† The story is told differently in the 'Biographia Britannica;' but the circumstance related there, of a beautiful boy appearing to the mother of the drowned lady, and disappearing with the mystery of a supernatural being, gives an air of incredibility to the other account.

was to have been married, adopted young Marvell as his son, conceiving his father to have sacrificed his life in performing an act of friendship. Marvell's education was thus enlarged: he travelled for his improvement over a considerable part of Europe, and was for some time at Constantinople as secretary to the English embassy at that court. Of his residence and employments for several years there is no account, till, in 1653, he was engaged by the Protector to superintend the education of a Mr. Dutton, at Eton; and for a year and a half before Milton's death he was assistant to Milton in the office of Latin Secretary to the Protector. He sat in the parliament of 1660 as one of the representatives of the city of Hull, and was re-elected as long as he lived. At the beginning of the reign, indeed, we find him absent for two years in Germany and Holland, and on his return, having sought leave from his constituents, he accompanied Lord Carlisle as ambassador's secretary to the Northern courts; but from the year 1665 till his death his attendance in the House of Commons was uninterrupted, and exhibits a zeal in parliamentary duty that was never surpassed. Constantly corresponding with his constituents, he was at once earnest for their public rights and for their local interests. After the most fatiguing attendances, it was his practice to send them a minute statement of public proceedings, before he took either sleep or refreshment. Though he rarely spoke, his influence in both Houses was so considerable, that, when Prince Rupert (who often consulted him) voted on the popular side, it used to be said that the prince had been with his tutor. He was one of the last members who received the legitimate stipend for attendance, and his grateful constituents would often send him a barrel of ale as a token of their regard. The traits that are recorded of his public spirit and simple manners give an air of probability to the popular story of his refusal of a court-bribe. Charles II., having met with Marvell in a private company, found his manners so agreeable, that he could not imagine a man of such complacency to possess inflexible honesty; he accordingly, as it is said, sent his lord-treasurer, Danby, to him next day, who, after mounting several dark staircases, found the author in a very mean lodging, and proffered him a mark of his Majesty's consideration. Marvell assured the lord-treasurer that

he was not in want of the King's assistance, and humorously illustrated his independence by calling his servant to witness that he had dined for three days successively on a shoulder of mutton; and having given a dignified and rational explanation of his motives to the minister, went to a friend and borrowed a guinea. The story of his death having been occasioned by poisoning, it is to be hoped, was but a party fable. It is certain, however, that he had been threatened with assassination. The corporation of Hull voted a sum for his funeral expenses, and for an appropriate monument.

SAMUEL BUTLER.

[Born, 1612. Died, 1680.]

THE merit of 'Hudibras,' excellent as it is, certainly lies in its style and execution, and by no means in the structure of the story. The action of the poem, as it stands, and interrupted as it is, occupies but three days; and it is clear, from the opening line, "When civil dudgeon first grew high," that it was meant to bear date with the civil wars. Yet, after two days and nights are completed, the poet skips at once, in the third part, to Oliver Cromwell's death, and then returns to retrieve his hero, and conduct him through the last canto. Before the third part of 'Hudibras' appeared, a great space of time had elapsed since the publication of the first. Charles II. had been fifteen years asleep on the throne, and Butler seems to have felt that the ridicule of the sectaries had grown a stale subject. The final interest of the piece, therefore, dwindles into the widow's repulse of Sir Hudibras—a topic which has been suspected to allude, not so much to the Presbyterians, as to the reigning monarch's dotage upon his mistresses.

CHARLES COTTON.

[Born, 1630. Died, 1686-7.]

THERE is a careless and happy humour in this poet's 'Voyage to Ireland,' which seems to anticipate the manner of Anstey in 'The Bath Guide.' The tasteless indelicacy of his parody of

'The Æneid' has found but too many admirers. His imitations of Lucian betray the grossest misconception of humorous effect, when he attempts to burlesque that which is ludicrous already. He was acquainted with French and Italian; and, among several works from the former language, translated 'The Horace' of Corneille, and Montaigne's 'Essays.'

The father of Cotton is described by Lord Clarendon as an accomplished and honourable man, who was driven by domestic afflictions to habits which rendered his age less revered than his youth, and made his best friends wish that he had not lived so long. From him our poet inherited an encumbered estate, with a disposition to extravagance little calculated to improve it. After having studied at Cambridge, and returned from his travels abroad, he married the daughter of Sir Thomas Hutchinson, of Owthorp, in Nottinghamshire. He went to Ireland as a captain in the army, but of his military progress nothing is recorded. Having embraced the soldier's life merely as a shift in distress, he was not likely to pursue it with much ambition. It was probably in Ireland that he met with his second wife, Mary, Countess Dowager of Ardglass, the widow of Lord Cornwall. She had a jointure of 1500*l.* a-year, secured from his imprudent management. He died insolvent at Westminster. One of his favourite recreations was angling; and his house, which was situated on the Dove, a fine trout-stream which divides the counties of Derby and Stafford, was the frequent resort of his friend Izaak Walton. There he built a fishing-house, "*Piscatoribus sacrum,*" with the initials of honest Izaak's name and his own united in ciphers over the door. The walls were painted with fishing scenes, and the portraits of Cotton and Walton were upon the beaufet.

DR. HENRY MORE.

[Born, 1614. Died, 1687.]

DR. HENRY MORE was the son of a respectable gentleman at Grantham, in Lincolnshire. He spent the better part of a long and intensely studious life at Cambridge, refusing even the mastership of his college, and several offers of preferment in the church, for the sake of unbroken leisure and retirement. In

1640 he composed his 'Psychozoia, or Life of the Soul,' which he afterwards republished with other pieces in a volume entitled 'Philosophical Poems.' Before the appearance of the former work he had studied the Platonic writers and mystic divines, till his frame had become emaciated, and his faculties had been strained to such enthusiasm, that he began to talk of holding supernatural communications, and imagined that his body exhaled the perfume of violets. With the exception of these innocent reveries, his life and literary character were highly respectable. He corresponded with Des Cartes, was the friend of Cudworth, and, as a divine and moralist, was not only popular in his own time, but has been mentioned with admiration both by Addison and Blair. In the heat of rebellion he was spared even by the fanatics, who, though he refused to take the Covenant, left him to dream with Plato in his academic bower. As a poet he has woven together a singular texture of Gothic fancy and Greek philosophy, and made the Christiano-Platonic system of metaphysics a groundwork for the fables of the nursery. His versification, though he tells us that he was won to the Muses in his childhood by the melody of Spenser, is but a faint echo of the Spenserian tune. In fancy he is dark and lethargic. Yet his 'Psychozoia' is not a commonplace production; a certain solemnity and earnestness in his tone leaves an impression that he "*believed the magic wonders which he sung.*"* His poetry is not, indeed, like a beautiful landscape on which the eye can repose, but may be compared to some curious grotto, whose gloomy labyrinths we might be curious to explore for the strange and mystic associations they excite.

GEORGE ETHEREGE.

[Born, 1636. Died, 1694?]

GEORGE ETHEREGE first distinguished himself among the libertine wits of the age by his 'Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub.' He afterwards gained a more deserved distinction in the comic drama by his 'Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter,' a character which has been the model of all succeeding stage petits-mâîtres.

* [Collins.]

NATHANIEL LEE.

[Died, 1692.*]

MANY of the Bedlam witticisms of this unfortunate man have been recorded by those who can derive mirth from the most humiliating shape of human calamity. His rant and turgidity as a writer are proverbial; but those who have witnessed justice done to the acting of his 'Theodosius' must have felt that he had some powers in the pathetic. He was the son of a clergyman in Hertfordshire. He was bred at Westminster, under Dr. Busby, and became a scholar on the foundation at Trinity College, Cambridge. From thence he came to London, and attempted the profession of an actor. The part which he performed was Duncan, in Sir William Davenant's alteration of 'Macbeth.' He was completely unsuccessful. "Yet Lee," says Cibber, "was so pathetic a reader of his own scenes, that I have been informed by an actor who was present, that, while Lee was reading to Major Mohun, at a rehearsal, Mohun, in the warmth of his admiration, threw down his part, and said, 'Unless I were able to play it as well as you read it, to what purpose should I undertake it?' And yet," continues the laureate, "this very author, whose elocution raised such admiration in so capital an actor, when he attempted to be an actor himself, soon quitted the stage in an honest despair of ever making any profitable figure there." Failing in this object, he became a writer for the stage, and his first tragedy of 'Nero,' which came out in 1675, was favourably received. In the nine subsequent years of his life he produced as many plays of his own, and assisted Dryden in two; at the end of which period an hereditary taint of madness, aggravated by habits of dissipation, obliged him to be confined for four years to the receptacle at Bethlehem. He recovered the use of his faculties so far as to compose two pieces—'The Princess of Cleves,' and 'The Massacre of Paris;' but with all the profits of his invention his circumstances were so reduced that a weekly stipend of ten shillings was his principal support

* ["6 April 1692, Nathaniell Lee a man bur."—*Burial Register of St. Clement Danes*. The period of Lee's decease has not been hitherto ascertained.]

towards the close of his life, and to the last he was not free from occasional derangement.

THOMAS SHADWELL.

[Born, 1640. Died, 1692.]

THOMAS SHADWELL, the laureate of William III., and the Mac Flecknoe of Dryden, was born 1640, and died 1692. Rochester said of him, that if he had burnt all he wrote, and printed all he spoke, he would have had more wit and humour than any other poet. He left seventeen plays, besides other poems.*

HENRY VAUGHAN.

[Born, 1621. Died, 1695.]

HENRY VAUGHAN was a Welsh gentleman, born on the banks of the Uske, in Brecknockshire, who was bred to the law, but relinquished it for the profession of physic. He is one of the harshest even of the inferior order of the school of conceit; but he has some few scattered thoughts that meet our eye amidst his harsh pages, like wild flowers on a barren heath.

JOHN POMFRET.

[Born, 1667. Died, 1703.]

JOHN POMFRET was minister of Malden, in Bedfordshire. He died of the small-pox in his thirty-sixth year. It is asked, in Mr. Southey's 'Specimens of English Poetry,' why Pomfret's 'Choice' is the most popular poem in the English language: it might have been demanded, with equal propriety, why London Bridge is built of Parian marble.†

* [Nahum Tate, of all my predecessors, must have ranked the lowest of the laureates, if he had not succeeded Shadwell.—Southey's *Life of Cowper*, vol. ii. p. 112. This is very unjust: Shadwell's plays are among the best of the Charles II. period of our drama.]

† [Why is Pomfret the most popular of the English poets? The fact is certain, and the solution would be useful.—Southey's *Specimens*, vol. i. p. 91.]

Pomfret's 'Choice' exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions,

THOMAS BROWN.

[Died, 1704.]

THOMAS, usually called TOM BROWN, was the son of a farmer at Shipnel, in Shropshire—was for some time a schoolmaster at Kingston-upon-Thames, but left the ungenial vocation for the life of a wit and author, in London. He was a good linguist, and seems to have rather wasted than wanted talent.

CHARLES SACKVILLE, EARL OF DORSET.

[Born, 1637. Died, 1706.]

THE point and sprightliness of Dorset's pieces entitle him to some remembrance, though they leave not a slender apology for the grovelling adulation that was shown to him by Dryden in his dedications.

GEORGE STEPNEY.

[Born, 1663. Died, 1707.]

GEORGE STEPNEY was the youthful friend of Montague Earl of Halifax, and owed his preferments to that nobleman. It appears, from his verses on the burning of Monmouth's picture, that his first attachment was to the Tory interest, but he left them in sufficient time to be rewarded as a partisan by the Whigs, and was nominated to several foreign embassies. As a poet, Dr. Johnson justly characterizes him as equally deficient in the grace of wit and the vigour of nature.

JOHN PHILIPS.

[Born, 1676. Died, 1708.]

THE fame of this poet (says the grave doctor of the last century) will endure as long as Blenheim is remembered or cider drunk

and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's 'Choice.'—Johnson.

Johnson and Southey have written of what was; Mr. Campbell of what is. Pomfret's 'Choice' is certainly not now perused oftener than any other composition in our language, nor is Pomfret now the most popular of English poets.]

in England. He might have added, as long as tobacco shall be smoked: for Philips has written more meritoriously about the Indian weed than about his native apple; and his Muse appears to be more in her element amidst the smoke of the pipe than of the battle.

His father was Archdeacon of Salop, and minister of Bampton, in Oxfordshire, where the poet was born. He was educated at Winchester, and afterwards at Cambridge. He intended to have followed the profession of physic, and delighted in the study of natural history, but seems to have relinquished scientific pursuits when the reputation of his 'Splendid Shilling,' about the year 1703, introduced him to the patronage of Bolingbroke, at whose request, and in whose house, he wrote his poem on 'The Battle of Blenheim.' This, like his succeeding poem on 'Cider,' was extravagantly praised. Philips had the merit of studying and admiring Milton, but he never could imitate him without ludicrous effect, either in jest or earnest. His 'Splendid Shilling' is the earliest and one of the best of our parodies; but 'Blenheim' is as completely a burlesque upon Milton as 'The Splendid Shilling,' though it was written and read with gravity. In describing his hero, Marlborough, stepping out of Queen Anne's drawing-room, he unconsciously carries the mock heroic to perfection, when he says—

" His plummy crest
Nods horrible. With more terrific port
He walks, and seems already in the fight."

Yet such are the fluctuations of taste, that contemporary criticism bowed with solemn admiration over his Miltonic cadences. He was meditating a still more formidable poem on the Day of Judgment, when his life was prematurely terminated by a consumption.

WILLIAM WALSH.

[Born, 1663. Died, 1709.]

WILLIAM WALSH was knight for his native county, Worcestershire, in several parliaments, and gentleman of the horse to Queen Anne, under the Duke of Somerset. Though a friend to the Revolution, he was kind to Dryden, who praised him, as Pope must have done, merely from the motive of personal grati-

tude ; for, except his encouragement of the early genius of Pope, he seems to have no claim to remembrance.*

THOMAS PARNELL.

[Born, 1679. Died, 1717?]

THE compass of Parnell's poetry is not extensive, but its tone is peculiarly delightful—not from mere correctness of expression, to which some critics have stinted its praises, but from the graceful and reserved sensibility that accompanied his polished phraseology. The *curiosa felicitas*, the studied happiness of his diction, does not spoil its simplicity. His poetry is like a flower that has been trained and planted by the skill of the gardener, but which preserves, in its cultured state, the natural fragrance of its wilder air.

His ancestors were of Congleton, in Cheshire. His father, who had been attached to the republican party in the civil wars, went to Ireland at the Restoration, and left an estate which he purchased in that kingdom, together with another in Cheshire, at his death, to the poet. Parnell was educated at the University of Dublin, and having been permitted, by a dispensation, to take deacon's orders under the canonical age, had the arch-deaconry of Clogher conferred upon him by the Bishop of that diocese, in his twenty-sixth year. About the same time he married a Miss Anne Minchin, an amiable woman, whose death he had to lament not many years after their union, and whose loss, as it affected Parnell, even the iron-hearted Swift mentions as a heavy misfortune.

Though born and bred in Ireland, he seems to have had too little of the Irishman in his local attachments. His aversion to the manners of his native country was more fastidious than amiable. When he had once visited London, he became attached to it for ever. His zest or talents for society made him the favourite of its brightest literary circles. His pulpit oratory was also much admired in the metropolis ; and he renewed his visits to it every year. This, however, was only the bright side

* [All we know of Walsh is his 'Ode to King William,' and Pope's epithet of "knowing Walsh."—Byron.]

of his existence. His spirits were very unequal, and, when he found them ebbing, he used to retreat to the solitudes of Ireland, where he fed the disease of his imagination by frightful descriptions of his retirement. During his intimacy with the Whigs in England, he contributed some papers, chiefly 'Visions,' to the 'Spectator' and 'Guardian.' Afterwards his personal friendship was engrossed by the Tories, and they persuaded him to come over to their side in politics, at the suspicious moment when the Whigs were going out of power. In the frolics of the Scriblerus Club, of which he is said to have been the founder, wherever literary allusions were required for the ridicule of pedantry, he may be supposed to have been the scholar most able to supply them; for Pope's correspondence shows that among his learned friends he applied to none with so much anxiety as to Parnell. The death of the Queen put an end to his hopes of preferment by the Tories, though not before he had obtained, through the influence of Swift, the vicarage of Finglass, in the diocese of Dublin. His fits of despondency, after the death of his wife, became more gloomy, and these aggravated a habit of intemperance which shortened his days. He died, in his thirty-eighth year, at Chester, on his way to Ireland,* and he was buried in Trinity church, in that city, but without a memorial to mark the spot of his interment.

SAMUEL GARTH.

[Died, 1718.]

SAMUEL GARTH was an eminent physician, an accomplished scholar, and a benevolent man. No feuds, either in politics or literature, estranged him from literary merit where he found it. He was an early encourager of Pope, and at the same time the friend of Addison and Granville; a zealous Whig, but the warm admirer of Dryden, whose funeral oration he pronounced. His 'Dispensary' was written from a more honourable motive than satire generally possesses, viz. the promotion of charity, being intended to ridicule the selfishness of the apothecaries, and of

* [He is said to have died in 1717; but in the parish register the entry of his burial is the 18th of October, 1718.—See Goldsmith's *Misc. Works*, by Prior, vol. iv. p. 512.]

some of the faculty, who opposed an institution that was meant to furnish the poor with medicines gratuitously. It is an obvious imitation of the 'Lutrin.' Warton blames the poet for making the fury, Disease, talk like a critic. It is certain, however, that criticism is often a disease, and can sometimes talk like a fury.

PETER ANTHONY MOTTEUX.

[Born, 1660. Died, 1718.]

THE revocation of the Edict of Nantes brought over many ingenious artists to this country from France; but we should hardly have expected an increase to our poets among them: yet Peter Anthony Motteux, who was born and educated at Rouen in Normandy, was driven to England by the event of that persecution; and acquired so much knowledge of the language as to write a good translation of 'Don Quixote,' and to become a successful writer in our drama. But his end was not so creditable; he was found dead in a disorderly house, in the parish of St. Clement Danes, and was supposed either to have been murdered, or to have met with his death from trying an experiment which is not fit to be repeated. He established himself respectably in trade, and had a good situation in the post-office.

MATTHEW PRIOR.

[Born, 1666. Died 1721.]

PRIOR was one of the last of the race of poets who relied for ornament on scholastic allusion and pagan machinery; but he used them like Swift, more in jest than earnest, and with good effect.* In his 'Alma' he contrives even to clothe metaphysics

* [Prior's fictions are mythological. Venus, after the example of the Greek epigram, asks when she was seen *naked and bathing*. Then Cupid is *mistaken*; then Cupid is *disarmed*; then he loses his darts to *Ganymede*; then *Jupiter* sends him a summons by *Mercury*. Then *Chloe* goes a hunting with an *ivory quiver graceful at her side*; *Diana* mistakes her for one of her nymphs, and Cupid laughs at the blunder. All this is surely despicable.—Johnson.

"When Prior wrote, Venus and Cupid were not so obsolete as now. His contemporary writers, and some that succeeded him, did not think them

in the gay and colloquial pleasantry which is the characteristic charm of his manner.*

DR. GEORGE SEWELL.

[Died, Feb. 8, 1726.]

DR. GEORGE SEWELL, author of 'Sir Walter Raleigh,' a tragedy; several papers in the fifth volume of 'The Tatler,' and ninth of 'The Spectator;' a 'Life of John Philips;' and some other things. There is something melancholy in this poor man's history. He was a physician at Hampstead, with very little practice, and chiefly subsisted on the invitations of the neighbouring gentlemen, to whom his amiable character made him acceptable; but at his death not a friend or relative came to commit his remains to the dust! He was buried in the meanest manner, under a hollow tree, that was once part of the boundary of the churchyard of Hampstead. No memorial was placed over his remains.

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH.

[Born, 1666. Died, 1726.]

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH,† the poet and architect, was the oldest beneath their notice. Tibullus, in reality, disbelieved their existence as much as we do; yet Tibullus is allowed to be the prince of all poetical innamoratos, though he mentions them in almost every page. There is a fashion in these things, which the Doctor seems to have forgotten."—Cowper, *Letter to Unwin*, January 5th, 1782.]

*[What Prior meant by his 'Alma' I cannot understand; by the Greek motto to it one would think it was either to laugh at the subject or his reader. There are some parts of it very fine; and let them save the badness of the rest.—Goldsmith.]

What suggested to Johnson the thought that the 'Alma' was written in imitation of 'Hudibras' I cannot conceive. In former years they were both favourites of mine, and I often read them; but I never saw in them the least resemblance to each other; nor do I now, except that they are composed in verse of the same measure.—Cowper, *Letter to Unwin*, March 21st, 1784.]

† The family of Sir John Vanbrugh is stated, in the 'Biographia Dramatica,' to have come originally from France; but my friend, the Rev. George Vanbrugh, rector of Aughton, in Lancashire, the only surviving descendant of the family, informs me that his ancestors were eminent merchants of Antwerp, and fled out of Flanders when the Duke of Alva tried to establish the Inquisition in those provinces. They first took refuge in Holland, and from thence came over to England to enjoy the Protestant protection of Queen Elizabeth.

son of Mr. Giles Vanbrugh of London, merchant; he was born in the parish of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, 1666. He received a very liberal education, and at the age of nineteen was sent by his father to France, where he continued several years. In 1703 he was appointed Clarendieux king of arms, and in 1706 was commissioned by Queen Anne to carry the habit and ensigns of the order of the Garter to King George I., then at Hanover. He was also made comptroller-general of the board of works, and surveyor of the gardens and waters. In 1714 he received the order of knighthood, and in 1719 married Henrietta Maria, daughter of Colonel Yarborough. Sir John died of a quinsy at his house in Scotland-yard, and is interred in the family vault under the church of St. Stephen, Walbrook. He left only one son, who fell at the battle of Fontenoy.

ELIJAH FENTON.

[Born, 1683. Died, 1730.]

ELIJAH FENTON was obliged to leave the university on account of his nonjuring principles. He was for some time secretary to Charles Earl of Orrery: he afterwards taught the grammar-school of Sevenoaks, in Kent; but was induced by Bolingbroke to forsake that drudgery for the more unprofitable state of dependence upon a political patron, who, after all, left him disappointed and in debt. Pope recommended him to Craggs as a literary instructor, but the death of that statesman again subverted his hopes of preferment; and he became an auxiliary to Pope in translating the 'Odyssey,' of which his share was the first, fourth, nineteenth, and twentieth books. The successful appearance of his tragedy of 'Mariamne' on the stage, in 1723, relieved him from his difficulties, and the rest of his life was comfortably spent in the employment of Lady Trumbull, first as tutor to her son, and afterwards as auditor of her accounts. His character was that of an amiable but indolent man, who drank, in his great chair, two bottles of port wine a day. He published an edition of the poetical works of Milton and of Waller.*

* [Fenton wrote nothing equal to his 'Ode to the Lord Gower,' which is written, says Joseph Warton, in the true spirit of lyric poetry. It has received too the praises of Pope and of Akenside, but is better in parts than as a whole.]

EDWARD WARD.

[Born, 1667. Died, 1731.]

EDWARD (familiarily called NED) WARD was a low-born, uneducated man, who followed the trade of a publican. He is said, however, to have attracted many eminent persons to his house by his colloquial powers as a landlord, to have had a general acquaintance among authors, and to have been a great retailer of literary anecdotes. In those times the tavern was a less discreditable haunt than at present, and his literary acquaintance might probably be extensive. Jacob offended him very much by saying, in his account of the poets, that he kept a public-house in the city. He publicly contradicted the assertion as a falsehood, stating that his house was not in the city, but in Moorfields. Ten thick volumes attest the industry, or *cacoethes*, of this facetious publican, who wrote his very will in verse. His favourite measure is the Hudibrastic. His works give a complete picture of the mind of a vulgar but acute cockney. His sentiment is the pleasure of eating and drinking, and his wit and humour are equally gross; but his descriptions are still curious and full of life, and are worth preserving, as delineations of the manners of the times.

JOHN GAY.

[Born, 1688. Died, 1732.]

GAY'S 'Pastorals' are said to have taken with the public not as satires on those of Ambrose Philips, which they were meant to be, but as natural and just imitations of real life and of rural manners. It speaks little, however, for the sagacity of the poet's town readers, if they enjoyed those caricatures in earnest, or imagined any truth of English manners in Cuddy and Cloddipole contending with Amabæan verses for the prize or song, or in Bowzybeus rehearsing the laws of nature. If the allusion to Philips was overlooked, they could only be relished as travesties of Virgil, for Bowzybeus himself would not be laughable unless we recollected Silenus.

Gay's 'Trivia' seems to have been built upon the hint of Swift's 'Description of a City Shower.' It exhibits a picture of the familiar customs of the metropolis that will continue to become more amusing as the customs grow obsolete. As a fabulist he has been sometimes hypercritically blamed for presenting us with allegorical impersonations. The mere naked apologue of Æsop is too simple to interest the human mind when its fancy and understanding are past the state of childhood or barbarism. La Fontaine dresses the stories which he took from Æsop and others with such profusion of wit and *naïveté*, that his manner conceals the insipidity of the matter. "*La sauce vaut mieux que le poisson.*" Gay, though not equal to La Fontaine, is at least free from his occasional prolixity; and in one instance ('The Court of Death') ventures into allegory with considerable power. Without being an absolute simpleton, like La Fontaine, he possessed a *bonhomie* of character which forms an agreeable trait of resemblance between the fabulists.*

MATTHEW GREEN.

[Born, 1696. Died, 1737.]

MATTHEW GREEN was educated among the dissenters; but left them in disgust at their precision, probably without reverting to the mother church. All that we are told of him is, that he had a post at the Customhouse, which he discharged with great fidelity, and died at a lodging in Nag's-head-court, Gracechurch-street, aged forty-one.† His strong powers of mind had received little advantage from education, and were occasionally subject to depression from hypochondria; but his conversation is said to have abounded in wit and shrewdness. One day his friend Sylvanus Bevan complained to him that while he was bathing in the river he had been saluted by a waterman with the cry of "Quaker Quirl,"

* [What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's, Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the 'What-d'ye-call-it'—"Twas when the seas were roaring?" I have been well informed that they all contributed.—Cowper to *Unwin*, August 4th, 1783.]

† [He was a clerk in the Customhouse, on, it is thought, a small salary; but the writer of this note has hunted over official books in vain for a notice of his appointment, and of obituaries for the time of his death.]

and wondered how he should have been known to be a Quaker without his clothes. Green replied, "By your swimming against the stream."

His poem, 'The Spleen,' was never published in his lifetime. Glover, his warm friend, presented it to the world after his death; and it is much to be regretted did not prefix any account of its interesting author. It was originally a very short copy of verses, and was gradually and piecemeal increased. Pope speedily noticed its merit, Melmoth praised its strong originality in Fitzosborne's Letters, and Gray duly commended it in his correspondence with Walpole, when it appeared in Dodsley's collection. In that walk of poetry, where Fancy aspires no farther than to go hand in hand with Common Sense, its merit is certainly unrivalled.*

GEORGE LILLO.

[Born, 1693. Died, 1743.]

GEORGE LILLO was the son of a Dutch jeweller, who married an Englishwoman, and settled in London. Our poet was born near Moorfields, was bred to his father's business, and followed it for many years. The story of his dying in distress was a fiction of Hammond, the poet; for he bequeathed a considerable property to his nephew, whom he made his heir. It has been said that this bequest was in consequence of his finding the young man disposed to lend him a sum of money at a time when he thought proper to feign pecuniary distress, in order that he might discover the sincerity of those calling themselves his friends. Thomas Davies, his biographer and editor, professes to have got this anecdote from a surviving partner of Lillo. It bears, however, an intrinsic air of improbability. It is not usual for sensible tradesmen to affect being on the verge of bankruptcy, and Lillo's character was that of an uncommonly sensible man. Fielding, his intimate friend, ascribes to him a manly simplicity of mind, that is extremely unlike such a stratagem.

Lillo is the tragic poet of middling and familiar life. Instead

* [There is a profusion of wit everywhere in Green; reading would have formed his judgment and harmonized his verse, for even his wood-notes often break out into strains of real poetry and music.—Gray.]

of heroes from romance and history, he gives the merchant and his apprentice ; and the Macbeth of his 'Fatal Curiosity' is a private gentleman, who has been reduced by his poverty to dispose of his copy of Seneca for a morsel of bread. The mind will be apt, after reading his works, to suggest to itself the question, how far the graver drama would gain or lose by a more general adoption of this plebeian principle. The cares, it may be said, that are most familiar to our existence, and the distresses of those nearest to ourselves in situation, ought to lay the strongest hold upon our sympathies, and the general mass of society ought to furnish a more express image of man than any detached or elevated portion of the species.

Lillo is certainly a master of potent effect in the exhibition of human suffering. His representation of actual or intended murder seems to assume a deeper terror from the familiar circumstances of life with which it is invested. Such indeed is said to have been the effect of a scene in his 'Arden of Feversham,' that the audience rose up with one accord and interrupted it. The anecdote, whether true or false, must recall to the mind of every one who has perused that piece the harrowing sympathy which it is calculated to excite. But, notwithstanding the power of Lillo's works, we entirely miss in them that romantic attraction which invites to repeated perusal of them. They give us life in a close and dreadful semblance of reality, but not arrayed in the magic illusion of poetry. His strength lies in conception of situations, not in beauty of dialogue, or in the eloquence of the passions. Yet the effect of his plain and homely subjects was so strikingly superior to that of the vapid and heroic productions of the day, as to induce some of his contemporary admirers to pronounce that he had reached the acmé of dramatic excellence, and struck into the best and most genuine path of tragedy. 'George Barnwell,' it was observed, drew more tears than the rants of Alexander. This might be true, but it did not bring the comparison of humble and heroic subjects to a fair test ; for the tragedy of 'Alexander' is bad, not from its subject, but from the incapacity of the poet who composed it. It does not prove that heroes drawn from history or romance are not at least as susceptible of high and poetical effect as a wicked apprentice, or a distressed gentleman pawning his moveables. It is one

question whether Lillo has given to his subjects from private life the degree of beauty of which they are susceptible. He is a master of terrific, but not of tender impressions. We feel a harshness and gloom in his genius even while we are compelled to admire its force and originality.

The peculiar choice of his subjects was happy and commendable as far as it regarded himself, for his talents never succeeded so well when he ventured out of them. But it is another question whether the familiar cast of those subjects was fitted to constitute a more genuine, or only a subordinate, walk in tragedy. Undoubtedly the genuine delineation of the human heart will please us, from whatever station or circumstances of life it is derived. In the simple pathos of tragedy probably very little difference will be felt from the choice of characters being pitched above or below the line of mediocrity in station. But something more than pathos is required in tragedy; and the very pain that attends our sympathy requires agreeable and romantic associations of the fancy to be blended with its poignancy. Whatever attaches ideas of importance, publicity, and elevation to the object of pity, forms a brightening and alluring medium to the imagination. Athens herself, with all her simplicity and democracy, delighted on the stage to

“let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by.”

Even situations far depressed beneath the familiar mediocrity of life are more picturesque and poetical than its ordinary level. It is certainly on the virtues of the middling rank of life that the strength and comforts of society chiefly depend, in the same manner as we look for the harvest not on cliffs and precipices, but on the easy slope and the uniform plain. But the painter does not in general fix on level countries for the subjects of his noblest landscapes. There is an analogy, I conceive, to this in the moral painting of tragedy. Disparities of station give it boldness of outline. The commanding situations of life are its mountain scenery—the region where its storm and sunshine may be portrayed in their strongest contrast and colouring.

THOMAS TICKELL.

[Born, 1686. Died, 1740.]

THOMAS TICKELL, the son of the Rev. Richard Tickell, was born at Bridekirk, in Cumberland, studied at Oxford, and obtained a fellowship, which he vacated by marrying about his fortieth year. Though he sang the praises of peace when the Tories were negotiating with France, he seems, from the rest of his writings, and his close connexion with Addison, to have deserved the epithet of Whiggissimus, which Swift bestowed on him. His friendship with Addison lasted for life; he accompanied him to Ireland in the suite of Lord Sunderland, became his secretary when Addison was made secretary of state, was left the charge of publishing his works, and prefixed to them his excellent Elegy.* He was afterwards secretary to the lords justices of Ireland, a place which he held till his death.

ALEXANDER POPE.

[Born, 1688. Died, 1744.]

THE faults of Pope's private character have been industriously exposed by his latest editor and biographer,† a gentleman whose talents and virtuous indignation were worthy of a better employment. In the moral portrait of Pope which he has drawn, all the agreeable traits of tender and faithful attachment in his nature have been thrown into the shade, while his deformities are brought out in the strongest, and sometimes exaggerated colours.

* [This Elegy by Mr. Tickell is one of the finest in our language. There is so little new that can be said upon the death of a friend, after the complaints of Ovid and the Latin Italians in this way, that one is surprised to see so much novelty in this to strike us, and so much interest to affect.—Goldsmith.]

Through all Tickell's works there is a strain of ballad-thinking, if I may so express it; and in this professed ballad ['Colin and Lucy'] he seems to have surpassed himself. It is, perhaps, the best in our language in this way.—Goldsmith.

I always thought Tickell's ballad the prettiest in the world.—Gray to *Walpole*.]

† [The Rev. W. L. Bowles: but Mr. William Roscoe is his latest editor and biographer.]

The story of his publishing a character of the Duchess of Marlborough, after having received a bribe to suppress it, rests on the sole authority of Horace Walpole: but Dr. J. Warton, in relating it, adds a circumstance which contradicts the statement itself. The duchess's imputed character appeared in 1746, two years after Pope's death; Pope, therefore, could not have himself published it; and it is exceedingly improbable that the bribe ever existed.* Pope was a steady and fond friend. We shall be told, perhaps, of his treachery to Bolingbroke, in publishing 'The Patriot King.' An explanation of this business was given by the late Earl of Marchmont to a gentleman still living (1820), the Honourable George Rose, which is worth attending to. The Earl of Marchmont's account of it, first published by Mr. A. Chalmers in the 'Biographical Dictionary,' is the following:—

“The Essay on 'The Patriot King' was undertaken at the pressing instance of Lord Cornbury, very warmly supported by the earnest entreaties of Lord Marchmont, with which Lord Bolingbroke at length complied. When it was written it was shown to the two lords and one other confidential friend, who were so much pleased with it that they did not cease their importunities to have it published, till his lordship, after much hesitation, consented to print it, with a positive determination, however, against a publication at that time; assigning as his reason, that the work was not finished [in such a way as he wished it to be before it went into the world. Conformably to that determination some copies of the essay were printed, which were distributed to Lord Cornbury, Lord Marchmont, Sir W. Wyndham, Mr. Lyttleton, Mr. Pope, and Lord Chesterfield. Mr. Pope put his copy into the hands of Mr. Allen, of Prior Park, near Bath, stating to him the injunction of Lord Bolingbroke; but that gentleman was so captivated with it as to press Mr. Pope to allow him to print a small impression at his own expense, using such caution as should effectually prevent a single copy getting into the possession of any one till the consent of the author should be obtained. Under a solemn engagement to that effect, Mr. Pope

* [That the bribe was paid, and the character in print, the publication of 'The Marchmont Papers' since this was written has proved beyond all question.]

very reluctantly consented : the edition was then printed, packed up, and deposited in a separate warehouse, of which Mr. Pope had the key. On the circumstance being made known to Lord Bolingbroke, who was then a guest in his own house at Battersea with Lord Marchmont, to whom he had lent it for two or three years, his lordship was in great indignation, to appease which Lord Marchmont sent Mr. Grevenkop (a German gentleman who had travelled with him, and was afterwards in the household of Lord Chesterfield, when lord-lieutenant of Ireland) to bring out the whole edition, of which a bonfire was instantly made on the terrace of Battersea."

JAMES BRAMSTON.

[Died, 1744.]

I HAVE applied to many individuals for information respecting the personal history of this writer, but have not been able to obtain it, even from the quarters where it was most likely to be found. He was born, probably, about the year 1700; was of Christ Church, Oxford, where he took his degree of A.M.; and was finally vicar of Harting, in Sussex. Besides 'The Man of Taste,' he wrote a political satire entitled 'The Art of Politics,' and 'The Crooked Sixpence,' in imitation of Philips's 'Splendid Shilling.'

WILLIAM MESTON.

[Born, 1688. Died, 1745.]

WILLIAM MESTON was born in the parish of Midmar, in Aberdeenshire. He received a liberal education at the Marischal College of Aberdeen, and was for some time one of the teachers in the High School of that city. He removed from that situation to be preceptor to the young Earl of Marshal, and to his brother, who was afterwards the celebrated Marshal Keith, and by the interest of the family was appointed professor of philosophy in the Marischal College. On the breaking out of the rebellion of 1715, he followed the fortunes of his misguided patrons, who made him governor of Dunotter Castle. After the battle of Sherriff-Muir, till the act of indemnity was passed, he lurked

with a few fugitive associates, for whose amusement he wrote several of the burlesque poems to which he gave the title of 'Mother Grim's Tales.' Not being restored to his professorship, he lived for some time on the hospitality of the Countess of Marshal, and after her death established an academy successively at Elgin, Turiff, Montrose, and Perth, in all of which places he failed, apparently from habits of careless expense and conviviality. The Countess of Elgin supported him during the decline of his latter days, till he removed to Aberdeen, where he died of a languishing distemper. He is said to have been a man of wit and pleasantry in conversation, and of considerable attainments in classical and mathematical knowledge.

ROBERT BLAIR.

[Born, 1699. Died, 1746.]

THE eighteenth century has produced few specimens of blank verse of so powerful and simple a character as that of 'The Grave.' It is a popular poem, not merely because it is religious, but because its language and imagery are free, natural, and picturesque. The latest editor of the poets has, with singularly bad taste, noted some of this author's most nervous and expressive phrases as vulgarisms, among which he reckons that of friendship "the solder of society." Blair may be a homely and even a gloomy poet in the eye of fastidious criticism; but there is a masculine and pronounced character even in his gloom and homeliness that keeps it most distinctly apart from either dullness or vulgarity. His style pleases us like the powerful expression of a countenance without regular beauty.*

JAMES THOMSON.

[Born, 1700. Died, 1748.]

IT is singular that a subject of such beautiful unity, divisibility, and progressive interest as the description of the year should not

* [Blair's 'Grave' is the only poem I can call to mind which has been composed in imitation of the 'Night Thoughts.'—Southey, *Life of Cowper*, vol. ii. p. 143.]

have been appropriated by any poet before Thomson.* Mr. Twining, the translator of Aristotle's 'Poetics,' attributes the absence of poetry devoted to pure rural and picturesque description among the ancients to the absence or imperfection of the art of landscape-painting. The Greeks, he observes, had no Thomsons because they had no Claudes. Undoubtedly, they were not blind to the beauties of natural scenery; but their descriptions of rural objects are almost always what may be called sensual descriptions, exhibiting circumstances of corporeal delight, such as breezes to fan the body, springs to cool the feet, grass to repose the limbs, or fruits to regale the taste and smell, rather than objects of contemplative pleasure to the eye and imagination. From the time of Augustus, when, according to Pliny, landscape-painting was first cultivated, picturesque images and descriptions of prospects seem to have become more common. But on the whole there is much more studied and detailed description in modern than in ancient poetry. There is besides in Thomson a pure theism and a spirit of philanthropy, which, though not unknown to classic antiquity, was not familiar to its popular breast. The religion of the ancients was beautiful in fiction, but not in sentiment. It had revealed the most voluptuous and terrific agencies to poetry, but had not taught her to contemplate nature as one great image of Divine benignity, or her creatures as the objects of comprehensive human sympathy. Before popular poetry could assume this character, Christianity, philosophy, and freedom must have civilised the human mind.

Habits of early admiration teach us all to look back upon this poet as the favourite companion of our solitary walks, and as the author who has first or chiefly reflected back to our minds a

* Even Thomson's extension of his subject to the whole year seems to have been an after-thought, as he began with the last of the seasons. It is said^a that he conceived the first design of his 'Winter' from a poem on the same subject by a Mr. Rickleton.—Vide the 'Censura Literaria,' vol. ii., where there is an amusing extract from the first and second editions of Thomson's 'Winter.' I have seen an English poem, entitled 'The Seasons,' which was published earlier (I think) than those of Thomson; but it is so insignificant that it may be doubted if Thomson ever heard of it.

^a [He tells us so himself in one of his early letters.—See Memoir of Thomson in 'Aldine Poets,' p. xvii. The recovery of Rickleton's poem would be an addition to our poetry, for Thomson speaks of its many masterly strokes.]

heightened and refined sensation of the delight which rural scenery affords us. The judgment of cooler years may somewhat abate our estimation of him, though it will still leave us the essential features of his poetical character to abide the test of reflection. The unvaried pomp of his diction suggests a most unfavourable comparison with the manly and idiomatic simplicity of Cowper; at the same time the pervading spirit and feeling of his poetry is in general more bland and delightful than that of his great rival in rural description. Thomson seems to contemplate the creation with an eye of unqualified pleasure and ecstasy, and to love its inhabitants with a lofty and hallowed feeling of religious happiness; Cowper has also his philanthropy, but it is dashed with religious terrors, and with themes of satire, regret, and reprehension. Cowper's image of nature is more curiously distinct and familiar: Thomson carries our associations through a wider circuit of speculation and sympathy; his touches cannot be more faithful than Cowper's, but they are more soft and select, and less disturbed by the intrusion of homely objects. Cowper was certainly much indebted to him; and though he elevates his style with more reserve and judgment than his predecessor, yet in his highest moments he seems to retain an imitative remembrance of him.* It is almost stale to remark the beauties of a poem so universally felt—the truth and genial interest with which

* [Thomson was admirable in description; but it always seemed to me that there was somewhat of affectation in his style, and that his numbers are sometimes not well harmonised. I could wish too, with Dr. Johnson, that he had confined himself to this country; for when he describes what he never saw, one is forced to read him with some allowances for possible misrepresentation. He was, however, a true poet, and his lasting fame has proved it.—Cowper, *Letter to Mrs. King*, June 19th, 1788.

Thomson was an honour to his country and to mankind, and a man to whose writings I am under very particular obligations; for if I have any true relish for the beauties of nature, I may say with truth that it was from Virgil and from Thomson that I caught it.—Beattie.

The love of nature seems to have led Thomson to a cheerful religion; and a gloomy religion to have led Cowper to a love of nature. The one would carry his fellow-men along with him into nature, the other flies to nature from his fellow-men. In chastity of diction however, and the harmony of blank verse, Cowper leaves Thomson immeasurably below him; yet I still feel the latter to have been the born poet.—Coleridge.

Thomson's genius does not so often delight us by exquisite minute touches in the description of nature as that of Cowper. It loves to paint on a great scale, and to dash objects off sweepingly by bold strokes. Cowper sets nature before your eyes—Thomson before your imagination.—Professor Wilson.]

he carries us through the life of the year ; the harmony of succession which he gives to the casual phenomena of nature ; his pleasing transition from native to foreign scenery ; and the soul of exalted and unfeigned benevolence which accompanies his prospects of the creation. It is but equal justice to say, that amidst the feeling and fancy of 'The Seasons' we meet with interruptions of declamation, heavy narrative, and unhappy digression—with a parhelion eloquence that throws a counterfeit glow of expression on commonplace ideas—as when he treats us to the solemnly ridiculous bathing of Musidora ; or draws from the classics instead of nature ; or, after invoking Inspiration from her hermit-seat, makes his dedicatory bow to a patronising countess, or speaker of the House of Commons.* As long as he dwells in the pure contemplation of nature, and appeals to the universal poetry of the human breast, his redundant style comes to us as something venial and adventitious—it is the flowing vesture of the Druid ; and perhaps to the general experience is rather imposing : but when he returns to the familiar narrations or courtesies of life, the same diction ceases to seem the mantle of inspiration, and only strikes us by its unwieldy difference from the common costume of expression. Between the period of his composing 'The Seasons' and 'The Castle of Indolence' he wrote several works, which seem hardly to accord with the improvement and maturity of his taste exhibited in the latter production. To 'The Castle of Indolence' he brought not only the full nature but the perfect art of a poet. The materials of that exquisite poem are derived originally from Tasso ; but he was more immediately indebted for them to 'The Fairy Queen : ' and in meeting with the paternal spirit of Spenser he seems as if he were admitted more intimately to the home of inspiration.†

* [This is too true ; but Thomson, we learn from Smollett, intended, had he lived, to have withdrawn the whole of these dedications—not from their poetic impropriety, however, but from the ingratitude of his patrons. To 'The Castle of Indolence,' his latest, chastest, but not his best work, there is no dedication.]

† [He had slight obligations also to Alexander Barclay's 'Castle of Labour,' and to a poem of Mitchell's on 'Indolence,' which, with his own lazy way of life, gave occasion to this delightful allegorical poem, in which the manner he professed to imitate is perhaps the most perfect without servility ever made of any author. There is no imitation of Spenser to approach it in genius and in manner. Gilbert West has Spenser's style, and his style only.]

There he redeemed the jejune ambition of his style, and retained all its wealth and luxury without the accompaniment of ostentation. Every stanza of that charming allegory, at least of the whole of the first part of it, gives out a group of images from which the mind is reluctant to part, and a flow of harmony which the ear wishes to hear repeated.

I S A A C W A T T S.

[Born, 1674. Died, 1748.]

DR. WATTS'S devotional poetry was for the most part intentionally lowered to the understanding of children. If this was a sacrifice of taste, it was at least made to the best of intentions. The sense and sincerity of his prose writings, the excellent method in which he attempted to connect the study of ancient logic with common sense, and the conciliatory manner in which he allures the youthful mind to habits of study and reflection, are probably remembered with gratitude by nine men out of ten who have had proper books put into their hands at an early period of their education. Of this description was not poor old Percival Stockdale, who in one of his lucubrations gives our author the appellation of "*Mother Watts*." The nickname would not be worth mentioning if it did not suggest a compassionate reflection on the difference between the useful life and labours of Dr. Watts and the utterly useless and wasted existence of Percival Stockdale. It might have been happy for the frail intellects of that unfortunate man if they had been braced and rectified in his youth by such works as Watts's '*Logic and Improvement of the Mind*.' The study of them might possibly have saved even him from a life of vanity, vexation, and oblivion.

A M B R O S E P H I L I P S.

[Born, 1671. Died, 1749.]

A M B R O S E P H I L I P S, the pastoral rival of Pope, was educated at Cambridge, and distinguished for many years in London as a member of clubs witty and political, and as a writer for the Whigs. The best of his dramatic writings is '*The Distressed*

Mother,' a translation of Racine's 'Andromache.' His two other tragedies, 'The Briton' and 'Humphrey Duke of Gloucester,' are not much better than his Pastorals.

LEONARD WELSTED.

[Born, 1688. Died, 1746-7.]

LEONARD WELSTED, a victim of Pope's satire, whose verses did not always deserve it.

AMHURST SELDEN.

OF the history of this author I am sorry that I can give no account. His poem of 'Love and Folly' was published in April, 1749. It seemed to me to be somewhat better than that which is generally condemned to oblivion.

AARON HILL

WAS born in 1685, and died in the very minute of the earthquake of 1750, of the shock of which, though speechless, he appeared to be sensible. His life was active, benevolent, and useful: he was the general friend of unfortunate genius, and his schemes for public utility were frustrated only by the narrowness of his circumstances. Though his manners were unassuming, his personal dignity was such that he made Pope fairly ashamed of the attempt to insult him, and obliged the satirist to apologise to him with a mean equivocation.

WILLIAM HAMILTON.

[Born, 1704. Died, 1754.]

WILLIAM HAMILTON, of Bangour, was of an ancient family in Ayrshire. He was liberally educated, and his genius and delicate constitution seemed to mark him out for pacific pursuits alone; but he thought fit to join the standard of rebellion in 1745, celebrated the momentary blaze of its success in an ode on the battle of Gladsmuir, and finally escaped to France, after much wander-

ing and many hardships in the Highlands. He made his peace, however, with the government, and came home to take possession of his paternal estate; but the state of his health requiring a warmer climate, he returned to the Continent, where he continued to reside till a slow consumption carried him off at Lyons, in his fiftieth year.

The praise of elegance is all that can be given to his verses. In case any reader should be immoderately touched with sympathy for his love sufferings, it is proper to inform him that Hamilton was thought by the fair ones of his day to be a very inconstant swain. A Scotch lady, whom he teased with his addresses, applied to Home, the author of Douglas, for advice how to get rid of them. Home advised her to affect to favour his assiduities. She did so, and they were immediately withdrawn.*

WILLIAM COLLINS.

[Born, 1720. Died, 1759.]

COLLINS published his 'Oriental Eclogues' while at college, and his lyrical poetry at the age of twenty-six. Those works will abide comparison with whatever Milton wrote under the age of thirty. If they have rather less exuberant wealth of genius, they exhibit more exquisite touches of pathos. Like Milton, he leads us into the haunted ground of imagination; like him, he has the rich economy of expression haloed with thought, which by single or few words often hints entire pictures to the imagination. In what short and simple terms, for instance, does he open a wide and majestic landscape to the mind, such as we might view from Benlomond or Snowdon, when he speaks of the hut

"That from the mountain's side
Views wilds and swelling floods!"

And in the line "Where faint and sickly winds for ever howl around," he does not merely seem to describe the sultry desert, but brings it home to the senses.

A cloud of obscurity sometimes rests on his highest conceptions, arising from the fineness of his associations, and the daring sweep of his allusions; but the shadow is transitory, and inter-

* [It has not hitherto been noticed that the first translation from Homer in blank verse was made by Hamilton.]

feres very little with the light of his imagery, or the warmth of his feelings. The absence of even this speck of mysticism from his 'Ode on the Passions' is perhaps the happy circumstance that secured its unbounded popularity. Nothing is commonplace in Collins. The pastoral eclogue, which is insipid in all other English hands, assumes in his a touching interest and a picturesque air of novelty. It seems that he himself ultimately undervalued those eclogues, as deficient in characteristic manners; but surely no just reader of them cares any more about this circumstance than about the authenticity of the tale of Troy.

In his 'Ode to Fear' he hints at his dramatic ambition, and he planned several tragedies. Had he lived to enjoy and adorn existence, it is not easy to conceive his sensitive spirit and harmonious ear descending to mediocrity in any path of poetry; yet it may be doubted if his mind had not a passion for the visionary and remote forms of imagination too strong and exclusive for the general purposes of the drama. His genius loved to breathe rather in the preternatural and ideal element of poetry than in the atmosphere of imitation, which lies closest to real life; and his notions of poetical excellence, whatever vows he might address to the manners, were still tending to the vast, the undefinable, and the abstract. Certainly, however, he carried sensibility and tenderness into the highest regions of abstracted thought: his enthusiasm spreads a glow even amongst "the shadowy tribes of mind," and his allegory is as sensible to the heart as it is visible to the fancy.

EDWARD MOORE.

[Born, 1712. Died, 1757.]

EDWARD MOORE was the son of a dissenting clergyman at Abingdon, in Berkshire, and was bred to the business of a linen-draper, which he pursued, however, both in London and Ireland, with so little success that he embraced the literary life (according to his own account) more from necessity than inclination. His 'Fables' (in 1744) first brought him into notice. The Right Honourable Mr. Pelham was one of his earliest friends; and his 'Trial of Selim' gained him the friendship of Lord

Lyttelton. Of three works which he produced for the stage, his two comedies, 'The Foundling' and 'Gil Blas,' were unsuccessful; but he was fully indemnified by the profits and reputation of 'The Gamester.' Moore himself acknowledges that he owed to Garrick many popular passages of his drama; and Davies, the biographer of Garrick, ascribes to the great actor the whole scene between Lewson and Stukely in the fourth act; but Davies's authority is not oracular. About the year 1751 Lord Lyttelton, in concert with Dodsley, projected the paper of 'The World,' of which it was agreed that Moore should enjoy the profits, whether the numbers were written by himself or by volunteer contributors. Lyttelton's interest soon enlisted many accomplished coadjutors, such as Cambridge, Jenyns, Lord Chesterfield, and H. Walpole. Moore himself wrote sixty-one of the papers. In the last number of 'The World' the conclusion is made to depend on a fictitious incident which had occasioned the death of the author. When the papers were collected into volumes, Moore, who superintended the publication, realised this jocular fiction by his own death, whilst the last number was in the press.*

JOHN DYER.

[Born, 1700. Died, 1758.]

DYER was the son of a solicitor at Aberglasney, in Caermarthen-shire. The witticism on his 'Fleece,' related by Dr. Johnson, that its author, if he was an old man, would be buried in woollen, has, perhaps, been oftener repeated than any passage in the poem itself.

ALLAN RAMSAY.

[Born, 1686. Died, 1757.]

THE personal history of Allan Ramsay is marked by few circumstances of striking interest; yet, independently of his poetry, he cannot be reckoned an insignificant individual who gave Scotland

* [Mr. Moore was a poet who never had justice done him while living. There are few of the moderns who have a more correct taste or a more pleasing manner of expressing their thoughts. It was upon his 'Fables' he chiefly founded his reputation; yet they are by no means his best production.—Goldsmith.]

her first circulating library, and who established her first regular theatre. He was born in the parish of Crawford Moor, in Lanarkshire, where his father had the charge of Lord Hopeton's lead-mines. His mother, Alice Bower, was the daughter of an Englishman who had emigrated to that place from Derbyshire. By his paternal descent the poet boasts of having sprung from "a Douglas loin;" but, owing to the early death of his father, his education was confined to a parish-school, and at the age of fifteen he was bound apprentice to the humble business of a wig-maker. On this subject one of his Scottish biographers refutes, with some indignation, a report which had gone abroad, that our poet was bred a barber; and carefully instructs the reader, that in those good times, when a fashionable wig cost twenty guineas, the employment of manufacturing them was both lucrative and creditable.* Ramsay, however, seems to have felt no ambition either for the honours or profits of the vocation, as he left it on finishing his apprenticeship. In his twenty-fourth year he married the daughter of a writer, or attorney, in Edinburgh. His eldest son† rose to well-known eminence as a painter. Our

* Apropos to this delicate distinction of the Scottish biographer may be mentioned the advertisement of a French perruquier in the Palais Royale, who ranks his business among the "imitative arts." A London artist in the same profession had a similar jealousy with the historian of Ramsay's life at the idea of mere "trimmers of the human face" being confounded with "genuine perruquiers." In advertising his crop-wigs he alluded to some wig-weaving competitors, whom he denominated "mere hairdressers and barbers;" and "shall a barber," he exclaims, "affect to rival these crops?" "Barbarus has segetes."—Virgil.

† This son of the poet was a man of literature as well as genius. The following whimsical specimen of his poetry is subjoined as a curiosity. The humorous substitution of the kirk-treasury man for Horace's wolf, in the third stanza, will only be recognised by those who understand the importance of that ecclesiastical officer in Scotland, and the powers with which he is invested for summoning delinquents before the clergy and elders in cases of illegitimate love:—

HORACE'S "INTEGRO VITÆ," &c.

By Allan Ramsay, Jun.

"A man of no base (John) life or conversation,
Needs not to trust in coat of mail nor buffskin,
Nor need he vapour, with the sword and rapier,
Pistol, or great gun.

"Whether he ranges eastward to the Ganges,
Or if he bends his course to the West Indies,
Or sail the Sea Red, which so many strange odd
Stories are told of.

poet's first means of subsistence after his marriage were to publish small poetical productions in a cheap form, which became so popular that even in this humble sale he was obliged to call upon the magistrates to protect his literary property from the piracy of the hawkers. He afterwards set up as a bookseller, and published, at his own shop, a new edition of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' with two cantos of his own subjoined to the ancient original, which is ascribed to James I. of Scotland. A passage in one of those modern cantos of Ramsay's, describing a husband fascinated homewards from a scene of drunkenness by the gentle persuasions of his wife, has been tastefully selected by Wilkie, and been made the subject of his admirable pencil.

In 1724 he published a collection of popular Scottish songs, called 'The Tea-Table Miscellany,' which speedily ran through twelve impressions. Ruddiman assisted him in the glossary, and Hamilton of Bangour, Crawford, and Mallet were among the contributors to his modern songs. In the same year appeared his 'Evergreen,' a collection of pieces from the Bannatyne MSS. written before the year 1600. Here the vanity of adorning what it was his duty to have faithfully transcribed led him to take many liberties with the originals; and it is pretty clear that one poem, viz. 'The Vision,' which he pretended to have found in ancient manuscript, was the fruit of his own brain. But 'The Vision,' considered as his own, adds a plume to his poetical character which may overshadow his defects as an editor.

In 1726 he published his 'Gentle Shepherd.' The first rudi-

"For but last Monday, walking at noon-day,
Conning a ditty, to divert my Betty,
By me that son's Turk (I not frighted) our Kirk-
Treasurer's man pass'd :

"And sure more horrid monster in the torrid
Zone ne'er was found, Sir, though for snakes renown'd, Sir,
Nor can great Peter's empire boast such creatures,
Th' of bears the wet-nurse.

"Should I by hap land on the coast of Lapland,
Where there no fir is, much less pears and cherries,
Where stormy weather's sold by hags, whose leather
faces would fright one—

"Place me where tea grows, or where sooty negroes
Sheep's guts round tie them, lest the sun should fry them—
Still while my Betty smiles and talks so pretty,
I will adore her."

ments of that pleasing drama had been given to the public in two pastoral dialogues, which were so much liked that his friends exhorted him to extend them into a regular play. The reception of this piece soon extended his reputation beyond Scotland. His works were reprinted at Dublin, and became popular in the colonies. Pope was known to admire 'The Gentle Shepherd;' and Gay, when he was in Scotland, sought for explanations of its phrases, that he might communicate them to his friend at Twickenham. Ramsay's shop was a great resort of the congenial fabulist while he remained in Edinburgh; and from its windows, which overlooked the Exchange, the Scottish poet used to point out to Gay the most remarkable characters of the place.

A second volume of his Poems appeared in 1728; and in 1730 he published a collection of Fables. His Epistles in the former volume are generally indifferent; but there is one addressed to the poet Somerville, which contains some easy lines. Professing to write from nature more than art, he compares, with some beauty, the rude style which he loved and practised to a neglected orchard:—

“ I love the garden wild and wide,
 Where oaks have plum-trees by their side,
 Where woodbines and the twisting vine
 Clip round the pear-tree and the pine;
 Where mix'd jonquils and gowans * grow,
 And roses midst rank clover blow,
 Upon a bank of a clear strand,
 Its wimplings led by nature's hand;
 Though docks and brambles, here and there,
 May sometimes cheat the gard'ner's care,
 Yet this to me's a paradise,
 Compared to prime cut plots and nice,
 Where nature has to art resign'd,
 And all looks stiff, mean, and confined.”

Of original poets he says, in one expressive couplet,—

“ The native bards first plunged the deep,
 Before the artful dared to leap.”

About the age of forty-five he ceased to write for the public. The most remarkable circumstance of his life was an attempt which he made to establish a theatre in Edinburgh. Our poet had been always fond of the drama, and had occasionally supplied prologues to the players who visited the northern capital. But though the age of fanaticism was wearing away, it had not yet suffered the drama to have a settled place of exhibition in Scot-

* Daisies.

land; and when Ramsay had, with great expense, in the year 1736, fitted up a theatre in Carubber's Close, the act for licensing the stage, which was passed in the following year, gave the magistrates of Edinburgh a power of shutting it up, which they exerted with gloomy severity. Such was the popular hatred of playhouses in Scotland at this period, that, some time afterwards, the mob of Glasgow demolished the first playhouse that was erected in their city; and though the work of destruction was accomplished in daylight, by many hundreds, it was reckoned so godly that no reward could bribe any witness to appear or inform against the rioters. Ten years from the date of this disappointment Ramsay had the satisfaction of seeing dramatic entertainments freely enjoyed by his fellow-citizens; but in the mean time he was not only left without legal relief for his own loss in the speculation (having suffered what the Scotch law denominated a "*damnum sine injuria*"), but he was assailed with libels on his moral character, for having endeavoured to introduce the "*hell-bred playhouse comedians*."

He spent some of the last years of his life in a house of whimsical construction, on the north side of the Castle-hill of Edinburgh, where the place of his residence is still distinguished by the name of Ramsay Garden.

A scurvy in his gums put a period to his life in his seventy-second year. He died at Edinburgh, and was interred in Grey Friars churchyard. Ramsay was small in stature, with dark but expressive and pleasant features. He seems to have possessed the constitutional philosophy of good humour. His genius gave him access to the society of those who were most distinguished for rank and talents in his native country; but his intercourse with them was marked by no servility, and never seduced him from the quiet attention to trade by which he ultimately secured a moderate independence. His vanity in speaking of himself is often excessive, but it is always gay and good-natured. On one occasion he modestly takes precedence of Peter the Great, in estimating their comparative importance with the public. "But ha'd,* proud Czar," he says, "I wad na niffert† fame." Much of his poetry breathes the subdued aspirations of Jacobitism. He was one of those Scotsmen who for a long time would not extend their patriotism to the empire in which their country

* Hold.

† Exchange.

was merged, and who hated the cause of the Whigs in Scotland, from remembering its ancient connection with the leaven of fanaticism. The Tory cause had also found its way to their enthusiasm by being associated with the pathos and romance of the lost independence of their country. The business of Darien was still "alta mente repostum." Fletcher's eloquence on the subject of the Union was not forgotten, nor that of Belhaven, who had apostrophized the genius of Caledonia in the last meeting of her senate, and who died of grief at the supposed degradation of his country. Visionary as the idea of Scotland's independence as a kingdom might be, we must most of all excuse it in a poet whose fancy was expressed, and whose reputation was bound up, in a dialect from which the Union took away the last chance of perpetuity.

Our poet's miscellaneous pieces, though some of them are very ingenious,* are upon the whole of a much coarser grain than his pastoral drama. The admirers of 'The Gentle Shepherd' must perhaps be contented to share some suspicion of national partiality, while they do justice to their own feeling of its merit. Yet, as this drama is a picture of rustic Scotland, it would perhaps be saying little for its fidelity, if it yielded no more agreeableness to the breast of a native than he could expound to a stranger by the strict letter of criticism. We should think the painter had finished the likeness of a mother very indifferently, if it did not bring home to her children traits of indefinable expression which had escaped every eye but that of familiar affection. Ramsay had not the force of Burns; but neither, in just proportion to his merits, is he likely to be felt by an English reader. The fire of Burns' wit and passion glows through an obscure dialect by its confinement to short and concentrated bursts. The interest which Ramsay excites is spread over a long poem, delineating manners more than passions; and the mind must be at home both in the language and manners to appreciate the skill and comic archness with which he has heightened the display of rustic character without giving it vulgarity, and refined the view of peasant life by situations of sweetness and tenderness without departing in the least degree from its simplicity. 'The Gentle Shepherd'

* Particularly the tale of 'The Monk and the Miller's Wife.' This story is unhappily unfit for a popular collection, but it is well told. It is borrowed from an old poem attributed to Dunbar.

stands quite apart from the general pastoral poetry of modern Europe. It has no satyrs, nor featureless simpletons, nor drowsy and still landscapes of nature, but distinct characters and amusing incidents. The principal shepherd never speaks out of consistency with the habits of a peasant; but he moves in that sphere with such a manly spirit, with so much cheerful sensibility to its humble joys, with maxims of life so rational and independent, and with an ascendancy over his fellow-swains so well maintained by his force of character, that, if we could suppose the pacific scenes of the drama to be suddenly changed into situations of trouble and danger, we should, in exact consistency with our former idea of him, expect him to become the leader of the peasants, and the Tell of his native hamlet. Nor is the character of his mistress less beautifully conceived. She is represented, like himself, as elevated, by a fortunate discovery, from obscure to opulent life, yet as equally capable of being the ornament of either. A Richardson or a D'Arblay, had they continued her history, might have heightened the portrait, but they would not have altered its outline. Like the poetry of Tasso and Ariosto, that of 'The Gentle Shepherd' is engraven on the memory of its native country. Its verses have passed into proverbs; and it continues to be the delight and solace of the peasantry whom it describes.

WILLIAM SHENSTONE.

[Born, 1714. Died, 1763.]

THE Frenchman who dedicated a stone in his garden to the memory of Shenstone* was not wholly wrong in ascribing to him a "*taste natural*," for there is a freshness and distinctness in his rural images, like those of a man who had enjoyed the

* M. Girardin, at his estate of Ermenonville, formed a garden in some degree on the English model, with inscriptions after the manner of Shenstone, one of which, dedicated to Shenstone himself, ran thus:—

" This plain stone
To William Shenstone.
In his writings he display'd
A mind natural;
At Leasowes he laid
Arcadian greens rural."

country with his own senses, and very unlike the descriptions of

“A pastoral poet from Leadenhall-street,”

who may have never heard a lamb bleat but on its way to the slaughterhouse. At the same time there is a certain air of masquerade in his pastoral character as applied to the man himself; and he is most natural in those pieces where he is least Arcadian. It may seem invidious, perhaps, to object to Shenstone making his appearance in poetry with his pipe and his crook, while custom has so much inured us to the idea of Spenser feigning himself to be Colin Clout, and to his styling Sir Walter Raleigh the “Shepherd of the Ocean”—an expression, by the way, which is not remarkably intelligible, and which, perhaps, might not unfairly be placed under Miss Edgeworth’s description of English bulls. Gabriel Harvey used also to designate himself Hobbinol in his poetry; and Browne, Lodge, Drayton, Milton, and many others, describe themselves as surrounded by their flocks, though none of them probably ever possessed a live sheep in the course of their lives. But with respect to the poets of Elizabeth’s reign, their distance from us appears to soften the romantic licence of the fiction, and we regard them as beings in some degree characterised by their vicinity to the ages of romance. Milton, though coming later, invests his pastoral disguise (in ‘Lycidas’) with such enchanting picturesqueness as wholly to divert our attention from the unreal shepherd to the real poet. But from the end of the seventeenth century pastoral poetry became gradually more and more unprofitable in South Britain, and the figure of the genuine shepherd swain began to be chiefly confined to pictures on china, and to opera ballets. Shenstone was one of the last of our respectable poets who affected this Arcadianism, but he was too modern to sustain it in perfect keeping. His entire poetry, therefore, presents us with a double image of his character: one impression which it leaves is that of an agreeable, indolent gentleman, of cultivated taste and refined sentiments; the other that of Corydon, a purely amatory and ideal swain. It would have been so far well, if those characters had been kept distinct, like two impressions on the opposite sides of a medal. But he has another pastoral name, that of Damon, in which the swain and the gentleman are rather incongruously blended together. Damon has also his festive garlands and

dances at wakes and may-poles, but he is moreover a disciple of virtù :

“his bosom burns
With statues, paintings, coins, and urns.”

“He sighs to call one Titian stroke his own ;” expends his fortune on building domes and obelisks, is occasionally delighted to share his vintage with an old college acquaintance, and dreams of inviting Delia to a mansion with Venetian windows.

Apart from those ambiguities, Shenstone is a pleasing writer, both in his lighter and graver vein. His genius is not forcible, but it settles in mediocrity without meanness. His pieces of levity correspond not disagreeably with their title. His ‘Ode to Memory’ is worthy of protection from the power which it invokes. Some of the stanzas of his ‘Ode to Rural Elegance’ seem to recall to us the country-loving spirit of Cowley, subdued in wit, but harmonised in expression. From the commencement of the stanza in that ode, “O sweet disposer of the rural hour,” he sustains an agreeable and peculiarly refined strain of poetical feeling. The ballad of ‘Jemmy Dawson,’ and the elegy on ‘Jessy,’ are written with genuine feeling. With all the beauties of the Leasowes in our minds, it may be still regretted that, instead of devoting his whole soul to clumping beeches, and projecting mottos for summer-houses, he had not gone more into living nature for subjects, and described her interesting realities with the same fond and *naïve* touches which give so much delightfulness to his portrait of the ‘Schoolmistress.’*

HENRY CAREY.

[Died, Oct. 4, 1743.]

HENRY CAREY was a musician by profession, and author both of the words and melody of the pleasing song of ‘Sally in our Alley.’ He came to an untimely death by his own hands.

* [This poem is one of those happinesses in which a poet excels himself, as there is nothing in all Shenstone which any way approaches it in merit ; and though I dislike the imitations of our English poets in general, yet, on this minute subject, the antiquity of the style produces a very ludicrous absurdity.—Goldsmith.

‘The Schoolmistress’ is excellent of its kind and masterly.—Gray to *Walpole*.

“When I bought Spenser first,” says Shenstone, “I read a page or two of

CHARLES CHURCHILL.

[Born, 1731. Died, 1764.]

HE was the son of a respectable clergyman, who was curate and lecturer of St. John's, Westminster. He was educated at Westminster School, and entered of Trinity College, Cambridge; but not being disposed

"O'er crabbed authors life's gay prime to waste,
Or cramp wild genius in the chains of taste,"

he left the university abruptly, and, coming to London, made a clandestine marriage in the Fleet.* His father, though much displeased at the proceeding, became reconciled to what could not be remedied, and received the imprudent couple for about a year under his roof. After this young Churchill went for some time to study theology at Sunderland, in the north of England, and, having taken orders, officiated at Cadbury, in Somersetshire, and at Rainham, a living of his father's, in Essex, till, upon the death of his father, he succeeded in 1758 to the curacy and lectureship of St. John's, Westminster. Here he conducted himself for some time with a decorum suitable to his profession, and increased his narrow income by undertaking private tuition. He got into debt, it is true; and Dr. Lloyd, of Westminster, the father of his friend the poet, was obliged to mediate with his creditors for their acceptance of a composition; but when fortune put it into his power Churchill honourably discharged all his obligations. His 'Rosciad' appeared, at first anonymously, in 1761, and was ascribed to one or other of half the wits in town; but his acknowledgment of it, and his poetical 'Apology,' in which he retaliated upon the critical reviewers of his poem (not fearing to affront even Fielding and Smollett), made him at once famous and formidable. The players at least felt him to be so. Garrick himself, who, though extolled in 'The Rosciad,' was sarcastically alluded to in 'The Apology,' courted him like a suppliant; and 'The Faerie Queene,' and cared not to proceed. After that Pope's 'Alley' made me consider him ludicrously; and in that light I think one may read him with pleasure." We owe 'The Schoolmistress' to this complete misconception of Spenser's genius and manner.

Mr. Disraeli has an entertaining paper on Shenstone, but has omitted to mention that the first sketch of 'The Schoolmistress,' in twelve stanzas, is in Shenstone's first publication.]

* [Mr. Southey believes that his marriage took place previous to his entering the University of Cambridge.—*Life of Cowper*, vol. i. p. 70.]

his satire had the effect of driving poor Tom Davies, the biographer of Garrick, though he was a tolerable performer, from the stage.* A letter from another actor, of the name of Davis, who seems rather to have dreaded than experienced his severity, is preserved in Nichols's 'Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century,' in which the poor comedian deprecates the poet's censure in an expected publication, as likely to deprive him of bread. What was meant in Garrick might have been an object of compassion in this humble man; but Churchill answered him with surly contempt, and, holding to the plea of justice, treated his fears with the apparent satisfaction of a hangman. His moral character, in the mean time, did not keep pace with his literary reputation. As he got above neglect, he seems to have thought himself above censure. His superior, the Dean of Westminster, having had occasion to rebuke him for some irregularities, he threw aside at once the clerical habit and profession, and arrayed his ungainly form in the splendour of fashion. Amidst the remarks of his enemies, and what he pronounces the still more insulting advice of his prudent friends upon his irregular life, he published his epistle to Lloyd, entitled 'Night,' a sort of manifesto of the impulses, for they could not be called principles, by which he professed his conduct to be influenced. The leading maxims of this epistle are, that prudence and hypocrisy in these times are the same thing! that good hours are but fine words; and that it is better to avow faults than to conceal them. Speaking of his convivial enjoyments he says

"Night's laughing hours unheeded slip away,
Nor one dull thought foretells approach of day."

In the same description he somewhat awkwardly introduces

"Wine's gay god, with TEMPERANCE by his side,
—whilst HEALTH attends."

How would Churchill have belaboured any fool or hypocrite who had pretended to boast of health and temperance in the midst of orgies that turned night into day!

By his connexion with Wilkes he added political to personal

* Nichols, in his 'Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century,' vol. vi. p. 424, gives this information of Tom Davies's being driven off the stage by Churchill's satire, on the authority of Dr. Johnson. This Davies was the editor of 'Dramatic Miscellanies,' and of 'The Life and Works of Lillo.' The name of the other poor player who implored Churchill's mercy was T. Davis, his name being differently spelt from that of Garrick's biographer. Churchill's answer to him is also preserved by Nichols.

causes of animosity, and did not diminish the number of unfavourable eyes that were turned upon his private character. He had certainly, with all his faults, some strong and good qualities of the heart; but the particular proofs of these were not likely to be sedulously collected as materials of his biography, for he had now placed himself in that light of reputation when a man's likeness is taken by its shadow and darkness. Accordingly, the most prominent circumstances that we afterwards learn respecting him are, that he separated from his wife, and seduced the daughter of a tradesman in Westminster. At the end of a fortnight, either from his satiety or repentance, he advised this unfortunate woman to return to her friends; but took her back again upon her finding her home made intolerable by the reproaches of a sister.* His reputation for inebriety also received some public acknowledgments. Hogarth gave as much celebrity as he could to his love of porter, by representing him in the act of drinking a mug of that liquor in the shape of a bear;† but the painter had no great reason to congratulate himself ultimately on the effects of his caricature. Our poet was included in the general warrant that was issued for apprehending Wilkes. He hid himself, however, and avoided imprisonment. In the autumn of 1764 he paid a visit to Mr. Wilkes at Boulogne, where he caught a miliary fever, and expired in his thirty-third year.‡

* [The only laudable part of Churchill's conduct during his short career of popularity was, that he carefully laid by a provision for those who were dependent on him. This was his meritorious motive for that greediness of gain with which he was reproached: as if it were any reproach to a successful author, that he doled out his writings in the way most advantageous for himself, and fixed upon them as high a price as his admirers were willing to pay! He thus enabled himself to bequeath an annuity of sixty pounds to his widow, and of fifty to the more unhappy woman who, after they had both repented of their guilty intercourse, had fled to him again for the protection which she knew not where else to seek. And when these duties had been provided for, there remained some surplus for his two sons. Well would it be if he might be as fairly vindicated on other points.—Southey, *Cowper*, vol. ii. p. 160.]

† [Mr. Campbell has missed the point of the picture. Churchill is represented as a bear in clerical bands that are torn, and ruffled paws.]

‡ His body was brought from Boulogne to Dover, and interred in the church of St. Martin, where his grave is distinguished by what Mr. Southey calls an epicurean line from one of his own poems:—

“Life to the last enjoy'd, here Churchill lies.”

See also Byron's poem entitled ‘Churchill's Grave:’—

“I stood before the grave of him who blazed

The comet of a season”—

(*Works*, vol. x. p. 287,) and Scott's note.]

Churchill may be ranked as a satirist immediately after Pope and Dryden, with perhaps a greater share of humour than either. He has the bitterness of Pope, with less wit to atone for it; but no mean share of the free manner and energetic plainness of Dryden. After 'The Rosciad' and 'The Apology' he began his poem of 'The Ghost' (founded on the well-known story of Cocklane), many parts of which tradition reports him to have composed when scarce recovered from his fits of drunkenness. It is certainly a rambling and scandalous production, with a few such original gleams as might have crossed the brain of genius amidst the bile and lassitude of dissipation. The novelty of political warfare seems to have given a new impulse to his powers in 'The Prophecy of Famine,' a satire on Scotland, which even to Scotchmen must seem to sheath its sting in its laughable extravagance. His poetical Epistle to Hogarth is remarkable, amidst its savage ferocity, for one of the best panegyrics that was ever bestowed on that painter's works. He scalps indeed even barbarously the infirmities of the man, but, on the whole, spares the laurels of the artist. The following is his description of Hogarth's powers:—

“ In walks of humour, in that cast of style,
Which, probing to the quick, yet makes us smile;
In comedy, his nat'ral road to fame,
Nor let me call it by a meaner name,
Where a beginning, middle, and an end
Are aptly join'd; where parts on parts depend,
Each made for each, as bodies for their soul,
So as to form one true and perfect whole;
Where a plain story to the eye is told,
Which we conceive the moment we behold,
Hogarth unrivall'd stands, and shall engage
Unrivall'd praise to the most distant age.”

There are two peculiarly interesting passages in his 'Conference.' One of them, expressive of remorse for his crime of seduction, has been often quoted. The other is a touching description of a man of independent spirit reduced by despair and poverty to accept of the means of sustaining life on humiliating terms:—

“ What proof might do, what hunger might effect,
What famish'd nature, looking with neglect
On all she once held dear, what fear, at strife
With fainting virtue for the means of life,
Might make this coward flesh, in love with breath,
Shudd'ring at pain, and shrinking back from death,

In treason to my soul, descend to bear,
 Trusting to fate, I neither know nor care.
 Once—at this hour those wounds afresh I feel,
 Which nor prosperity nor time can heal,

* * * * *

Those wounds, which humbled all that pride of man,
 Which brings such mighty aid to virtue's plan;—
 Once, awed by fortune's most oppressive frown,
 By legal rapine to the earth bow'd down,
 My credit at last gasp, my state undone,
 Trembling to meet the shock I could not shun,
 Virtue gave ground, and black despair prevail'd;
 Sinking beneath the storm, my spirits fail'd,
 Like Peter's faith."

But without enumerating similar passages, which may form an exception to the remark, the general tenor of his later works fell beneath his first reputation. His 'Duellist' is positively dull; and his 'Gotham,' the imaginary realm of which he feigns himself the sovereign, is calculated to remind us of the proverbial wisdom of its sages.* It was justly complained that he became too much an echo of himself, and that, before his short literary career was closed, his originality appeared to be exhausted.

ROBERT LLOYD.

[Born, 1733. Died, 1764.]

ROBERT LLOYD was the son of one of the masters of Westminster School. He studied at Cambridge, and was for some time usher at Westminster, but forsook that employment for the life of an author and the habits of a man of pleasure. His first publication that attracted any notice was 'The Actor,' the reputation of which stimulated Churchill to his 'Rosciad.' He contributed to several periodical works; but was unable by his literary efforts to support the dissipated life which he led with Colman, Thornton, and other gay associates. His debts brought him to the Fleet; and those companions left him to moralise on the instability of convivial friendships. Churchill, however, adhered to him, and gave him pecuniary relief to prevent him from starving in prison. During his confinement he published a

* [Cowper was of another opinion. "'Gotham,'" he says, "is a noble and beautiful poem: making allowance (and Dryden perhaps, in his 'Ab-salom and Achitophel,' stands in need of the same indulgence) for an unwarrantable use of Scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance."—Southey's *Cowper*, vol. i. p. 91.]

volume of his poems; wrote a comic opera, 'The Capricious Lovers;' and took a share in translating the 'Contes Moraux' of Marmontel. When the death of Churchill was announced to him, he exclaimed, "I shall follow poor Charles!" fell into despondency, and died within a few weeks. Churchill's sister, to whom he was betrothed, died of a broken heart for his loss.*

DAVID MALLET.

[Born about 1700. Died, 1765.]

OF Mallet's birthplace and family nothing is certainly known; but Dr. Johnson's account of his descent from the sanguinary clan of MacGregor is probably not much better founded than what he tells us of his being janitor to the High School of Edinburgh. That officer has, from time immemorial, lived in a small house at the gate of the school, of which he sweeps the floors and rings the bell.† Mallet, at the alleged time of his being thus employed, was private tutor in the family of Mr. Home, of Dreghorn, near Edinburgh. By a Mr. Scott he was recommended to be tutor to the sons of the Duke of Montrose, and after travelling on the Continent with his pupils, and returning to London, made his way, according to Dr. Johnson, into the society of wits, nobles, and statesmen, by the influence of the family in which he had lived. Perhaps the mere situation of a nobleman's tutor would not have gained such access to a diffident man; but Mallet's manners and talents were peculiarly fitted to make their way in the world. His ballad of 'William and Margaret,' in 1724, first brought him into notice. He became intimate with Pope, and had so much celebrity in his day as to be praised in rhyme both by Savage and Lord Chesterfield. In time [June 1742] he was appointed under-secretary to the Prince of Wales. Some of his letters in the earlier part of his life express an interest and a friendship for the poet Thomson which do honour to his heart; but it cannot be disguised that his general history exhibits more address than

* [Lloyd's best productions are his two Odes, to 'Obscurity' and 'Oblivion,' written in ridicule of Gray; and in which the elder Colman had an uncertain share.]

† [And is an office always intrusted, we believe, to men technically called up in years.]

principle, and his literary career is unimportant. Some years before his death he was appointed keeper of the book of entries for the port of London, and enjoyed a pension for an address to the public which contributed to hasten the execution of Byng—a fact for which, if true, his supposed ancestors, the MacGregors, might have been ashamed to acknowledge him.

EDWARD YOUNG.

[Born, 1681. Died, 1765.]

YOUNG's satires have at least the merit of containing a number of epigrams, and, as they appeared rather earlier than those of Pope, they may boast of having afforded that writer some degree of example. Swift's opinion of them, however, seems not to have been unjust—that they should have either been more merry or more angry. One of his tragedies is still popular on the stage; and his 'Night Thoughts' have many admirers both at home and abroad. Of his lyrical poetry he had himself the good sense to think but indifferently. In none of his works is he more spirited and amusing than in his 'Essay on Original Composition,' written at the age of eighty.

The 'Night Thoughts' have been translated into more than one foreign language; and it is usual for foreigners to regard them as eminently characteristic of the peculiar temperament of English genius. Madame de Staël has, indeed, gravely deduced the genealogy of our national melancholy from Ossian and the Northern Scalds down to Dr. Young. Few Englishmen, however, will probably be disposed to recognise the author of the 'Night Thoughts' as their national poet by way of eminence. His devotional gloom is more in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisium than of an English divine; and his austerity is blended with a vein of whimsical conceit that is still more unlike the plainness of English character. The 'Night Thoughts' certainly contain many splendid and happy conceptions, but their beauty is thickly marred by false wit and overlaboured antithesis: indeed his whole ideas seem to have been in a state of antithesis while he composed the poem. One portion of his fancy appears devoted to aggravate the picture of his desolate feelings, and the other half to contradict that picture by eccentric

images and epigrammatic ingenuities. As a poet he was fond of exaggeration, but it was that of the fancy more than of the heart. This appears no less in the noisy hyperboles of his tragedies, than in the studied melancholy of the 'Night Thoughts,' in which he pronounces the simple act of laughter to be half immortal. That he was a pious man, and had felt something from the afflictions described in 'The Complaint,' need not be called in question,* but he seems covenanting with himself to be as desolate as possible, as if he had continued the custom ascribed to him at college, of studying with a candle stuck in a human skull; while, at the same time, the feelings and habits of a man of the world, which still adhere to him, throw a singular contrast over his renunciations of human vanity. He abjures the world in witty metaphors, commences his poem with a sarcasm on sleep, deploras his being neglected at court, compliments a lady of quality by asking the moon if she would choose to be called the "*fair Portland of the skies,*" and dedicates to the patrons of "*a much indebted Muse,*" one of whom (Lord Wilmington†) on some occasion he puts in the balance of antithesis as a counterpart to heaven. He was, in truth, not so sick of life as of missing its preferments, and was still ambitious not only of converting Lorenzo, but of shining before this utterly worthless and wretched world as a sparkling, sublime, and witty poet. Hence his poetry has not the majestic simplicity of a heart abstracted from human vanities; and while the groundwork of his sentiments is more darkly shaded than is absolutely necessary either for poetry or religion, the surface of his expression glitters with irony and satire, and with thoughts sometimes absolutely approaching to pleasantry. His ingenuity in the false sublime is very peculiar. In Night IX. he concludes his description of the day of judgment by showing the just and the unjust consigned respectively to their "*sulphureous or ambrosial seats,*" while

"Hell through all her glooms
Returns in groans a melancholy roar."

This is aptly put under the book of Consolation. But instead of winding up his labours, he proceeds through a multitude of re-

* It appears, however, from Sir Herbert Croft's account of his life, [in Johnson's 'Poets,'] that he had not lost the objects of his affection in such rapid succession as he feigns, when he addresses the "insatiate archer (Death) whose shaft flew thrice ere thrice yon moon had filled her horn."

† [The Lord Wilmington of Thomson's 'Winter.']

flections, and amidst many comparisons assimilates the constellations of heaven to gems of immense weight and value on a ring for the finger of their Creator. Conceit could hardly go farther than to ascribe finery to Omnipotence. The taste of the French artist was not quite so bold, when, in the picture of Belshazzar's Feast, he put a ring and ruffle on the hand that was writing on the wall.

Here, however, he was in earnest comparatively with some other passages, such as that in which he likens Death to Nero driving a phaeton in a female guise, or where he describes the same personage, Death, borrowing the "*cockaded brow of a spendthrift*," in order to gain admittance to "*a gay circle*." Men, with the same familiarity, are compared to monkeys before a looking-glass; and, at the end of the eighth book, Satan is roundly denominated a "*dunce*:"* the first time, perhaps, that his abilities were ever seriously called in question.†

Shall we agree with Dr. Johnson when he affirms of the 'Night Thoughts' that particular lines are not to be regarded, that the power is in the whole, and that in the whole there is a magnificence like that which is ascribed to a Chinese plantation, the magnificence of vast extent and endless diversity? Of a Chinese plantation few men have probably a very distinct conception; but unless that species of landscape be an utterly capricious show of objects, in which case even extent and variety will hardly constitute magnificence, it must possess amusement and vicissitude, arising from the relation of parts to each other. But there is nothing of entertaining succession of parts in the 'Night Thoughts.' The poem excites no anticipation as it proceeds. One book bespeaks no impatience for another, nor is found to have laid the smallest foundation for new pleasure when the succeeding night sets in. The poet's fancy discharges itself on the mind in short *ictuses* of surprise, which rather lose than increase their force by reiteration; but he is remarkably defective in progressive interest and collective effect. The power of the poem, instead of "*being in the whole*," lies in

* "Nor think this sentence is severe on thee,—
Satan, thy master, I dare call a dunce."

Concluding lines of *Night VIII*.

† [The 'Night Thoughts' are spoken of differently, either with exaggerated applause or contempt, as the reader's disposition is either turned to mirth or melancholy.—Goldsmith.]

short, vivid, and broken gleams of genius; so that, if we disregard particular lines, we shall but too often miss the only gems of ransom which the poet can bring as the price of his relief from surrounding tedium. Of any long work, where the power really lies in the whole, we feel reluctant to hazard the character by a few short quotations, because a few fragments can convey no adequate idea of the architecture; but the directly reverse of this is the case with the 'Night Thoughts,' for by selecting particular beauties of the poem we should delight and electrify a sensitive reader, but might put him to sleep by a perusal of the whole. This character of detached felicities, unconnected with interesting progress or reciprocal animation of parts, may be likened to a wilderness, without path or perspective, or to a Chinese plantation (if the illustration be more agreeable); but it does not correspond with our idea of the magnificence of a great poem, of which it can be said that the power is in the whole. After all, the variety and extent of reflection in the 'Night Thoughts' is to a certain degree more imposing than real. They have more metaphorical than substantial variety of thought. Questions which we had thought exhausted and laid at rest in one book, are called up again in the next in a Proteus metamorphosis of shape, and a chameleon diversity of colour. Happily the awful truths which they illustrate are few and simple. Around those truths the poet directs his course with innumerable sinuosities of fancy, like a man appearing to make a long voyage while he is in reality only crossing and recrossing the same expanse of water.

He has been well described in a late poem, as one in whom

"Still gleams and still expires the cloudy day
Of genuine poetry."

The above remarks have been made with no desire to depreciate what is genuine in his beauties. The reader most sensitive to his faults must have felt that there is in him a spark of originality which is never long extinguished, however far it may be from vivifying the entire mass of his poetry. Many and exquisite are his touches of sublime expression, of profound reflection, and of striking imagery. It is recalling but a few of these to allude to his description, in the eighth book, of the man whose *thoughts are not of this world*, to his simile of the traveller at the opening of the ninth book, to his spectre of the antediluvian

world, and to some parts of his very unequal description of the conflagration ; above all, to that noble and familiar image,

“ When final Ruin fiercely drives
Her ploughshare o'er creation.”*

It is true that he seldom, if ever, maintains a flight of poetry long free from oblique associations ; but he has individual passages which Philosophy might make her texts and Experience select for her mottoes.

JOHN BROWN.

[Born, 1715. Died, 1765.]

His poetry never obtained, or indeed deserved, much attention ; but his ‘ Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times ’ passed through seven editions, and threw the nation into a temporary ferment. Voltaire alleges that it roused the English from lethargy by the imputation of degeneracy, and made them put forth a vigour that proved victorious in the war with France.

MICHAEL BRUCE.

[Born, 1746. Died, 1767.]

MICHAEL BRUCE was born in the parish of Kinneswood, in Kinross-shire, Scotland. His father was by trade a weaver, who out of his scanty earnings had the merit of affording his son an education at the grammar-school of Kinross, and at the University of Edinburgh. Michael was delicate from his childhood, but showed an early disposition for study, and a turn for poetry, which was encouraged by some of his neighbours lending him a few of the most popular English poets. The humblest individuals who have befriended genius deserve to be gratefully mentioned. The first encouragers to whom Bruce showed his poetical productions were a Mr. Arnot, a farmer on the banks of Lochleven, and one David Pearson, whose occupation is not described. In his sixteenth year he went to the University of

* [A passage imitated by Burns in his poem ‘ To the Daisy : ’—

“ Stern Ruin’s ploughshare drives elate
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush’d beneath the furrow’s weight
Shall be thy doom.”

Edinburgh, where, after the usual course of attendance, he entered on the study of divinity, intending, probably, to be a preacher in the Burgher sect of dissenters, to whom his parents belonged. Between the latter sessions which he attended at college, he taught a small school at Gairney Bridge, in the neighbourhood of his native place, and afterwards at Forest-hill, near Allan, in Clackmannanshire. This is nearly the whole of his sad and short history. At the latter place he was seized with a deep consumption, the progress of which in his constitution had always inclined him to melancholy. Under the toils of a day and evening school, and without the comforts that might have mitigated disease, he mentions his situation to a friend in a touching but resigned manner—"I had expected," he says, "to be happy here; but my sanguine hopes are the reason of my disappointment." He had cherished sanguine hopes of happiness, poor youth! in his little village-school; but he seems to have been ill encouraged by his employers, and complains that he had no company, but what was worse than solitude. "I believe," he adds, "if I had not a lively imagination I should fall into a state of stupidity or delirium." He was now composing his poem on Lochleven, in which he describes himself,

"Amid unfertile wilds, recording thus
The dear remembrance of his native fields,
To cheer the tedious night; while slow disease
Prey'd on his pining vitals, and the blasts
Of dark December shook his humble cot."

During the winter he quitted his school, and, returning to his father's house, lingered on for a few months till he expired, in his twenty-first year. During the spring he wrote an elegy on the prospect of his own dissolution, a most interesting relic of his amiable feelings and fortitude.

JAMES GRAINGER.

[Born, 1721. Died, 1766.]

DR. JAMES GRAINGER, the translator of Tibullus, was for some time a surgeon in the army; he afterwards attempted, without success, to obtain practice as a physician in London, and finally settled in St. Kitt's, where he married the governor's

daughter. The novelty of West Indian scenery inspired him with the unpromising subject of the Sugar-cane, in which he very poetically dignifies the poor negroes with the name of "*swains*."*

WILLIAM FALCONER.

[Born, 1730. Died, 1769.]

WILLIAM FALCONER was the son of a barber in Edinburgh, and went to sea at an early age in a merchant-vessel of Leith. He was afterwards mate of a ship that was wrecked in the Levant, and was one of only three out of her crew that were saved, a catastrophe which formed the subject of his future poem. He was for some time in the capacity of a servant to Campbell, the author of '*Lexiphanes*,' when purser of a ship. Campbell is said to have discovered in Falconer talents worthy of cultivation, and, when the latter distinguished himself as a poet, used to boast that he had been his scholar. What he learned from Campbell it is not very easy to ascertain. His education, as he often assured Governor Hunter, had been confined to reading, writing, and a little arithmetic, though in the course of his life he picked up some acquaintance with the French, Spanish, and Italian languages. In these his countryman was not likely to have much assisted him; but he might have lent him books, and possibly instructed him in the use of figures. Falconer published his '*Shipwreck*' in 1762, and by the favour of the Duke of York, to whom it was dedicated, obtained the appointment of a midshipman in the Royal George, and afterwards that of purser in the Glory frigate. He soon afterwards married a Miss Hicks, an accomplished and beautiful woman, the daughter of the surgeon of Sheerness-yard. At the peace of 1763 he was on the point of being reduced to distressed circumstances by his ship being laid up in ordinary at Chatham, when, by the friendship of Commissioner Hanway, who ordered the cabin of the Glory to be fitted up for his residence, he enjoyed for some time a retreat for study without expense or embarrassment. Here he

* [If Grainger has invoked the Muse to sing of rats, and metamorphosed in Arcadian phrase negro-slaves into swains, the fault is in the writer, not in the topic. The arguments which he has prefixed are, indeed, ludicrously flat and formal.—*Southey, Quar. Rev.*, vol. xi. p. 489.]

employed himself in compiling his 'Marine Dictionary,' which appeared in 1769, and has been always highly spoken of by those who are capable of estimating its merits. He embarked also in the politics of the day, as a poetical antagonist to Churchill, but with little advantage to his memory. Before the publication of his 'Marine Dictionary' he had left his retreat at Chatham for a less comfortable abode in the metropolis, and appears to have struggled with considerable difficulties, in the midst of which he received proposals from the late Mr. Murray, the bookseller,* to join him in the business which he had newly established. The cause of his refusing this offer was, in all probability, the appointment which he received to the pursership of the *Aurora* East Indiaman. In that ship he embarked for India in September 1769, but the *Aurora* was never heard of after she passed the Cape, and was thought to have foundered in the Channel of Mozambique; so that the poet of 'The Shipwreck' may be supposed to have perished by the same species of calamity which he had rehearsed.

The subject of 'The Shipwreck,' and the fate of its author, bespeak an uncommon partiality in its favour. If we pay respect to the ingenious scholar who can produce agreeable verses amidst the shades of retirement, or the shelves of his library, how much more interest must we take in the "ship-boy on the high and giddy mast," cherishing refined visions of fancy at the hour which he may casually snatch from fatigue and danger! Nor did Falconer neglect the proper acquirements of seamanship in cultivating poetry, but evinced considerable knowledge of his profession, both in his 'Marine Dictionary' and in the nautical precepts of 'The Shipwreck.' In that poem he may be said to have added a congenial and peculiarly British subject to the language; at least we had no previous poem of any length of which the characters and catastrophe were purely naval.

The scene of the catastrophe (though he followed only the fact of his own history) was poetically laid amidst seas and shores where the mind easily gathers romantic associations, and where it supposes the most picturesque vicissitudes of scenery and climate. The spectacle of a majestic British ship on the shores of Greece brings as strong a reminiscence to the mind as can

* [The grandfather of the publisher of this volume.]

well be imagined of the changes which time has wrought in transplanting the empire of arts and civilization. Falconer's characters are few ; but the calm sagacious commander, and the rough obstinate Rodmond, are well contrasted. Some part of the love-story of Palemon is rather swainish and protracted, yet the effect of his being involved in the calamity leaves a deeper sympathy in the mind for the daughter of Albert, when we conceive her at once deprived both of a father and a lover. The incidents of 'The Shipwreck,' like those of a well-wrought tragedy, gradually deepen, while they yet leave a suspense of hope and fear to the imagination. In the final scene there is something that deeply touches our compassion in the picture of the unfortunate man who is struck blind by a flash of lightning at the helm. I remember, by the way, to have met with an affecting account of the identical calamity befalling the steersman of a forlorn vessel in a similar moment given in a prose and veracious history of the loss of a vessel on the coast of America. Falconer skilfully heightens this trait by showing its effect on the commiseration of Rodmond, the roughest of his characters, who guides the victim of misfortune to lay hold of a sail.

" A flash, quick glancing on the nerves of light,
Struck the pale helmsman with eternal night :
Rodmond, who heard a piteous groan behind,
Touch'd with compassion, gazed upon the blind ;
And, while around his sad companions crowd,
He guides th' unhappy victim to the shroud.
Hie thee aloft ! my gallant friend, he cries ;
Thy only succour on the mast relies !"

The effect of some of his sea-phrases is to give a definite and authentic character to his descriptions ; but that of most of them, to a landsman's ear, resembles slang, and produces obscurity. His diction, too, generally abounds with commonplace expletives and feeble lines. His scholarship on the shores of Greece is only what we should accept of from a seaman ; but his poem has the sensible charm of appearing a transcript of reality, and leaves an impression of truth and nature on the mind.*

* [Thy woes, Arion ! and thy simple tale,
O'er all the heart shall triumph and prevail !
Charm'd as they read the verse too sadly true,
How gallant Albert and his weary crew
Heaved all their guns, their foundering bark to save,
And toil'd—and shriek'd—and perish'd on the wave !

Campbell, *The Pleasures of Hope.*]

MARK AKENSIDE.

[Born, 1721. Died, 1770.]

It may be easy to point out in Akenside a superfluous pomp of expression; yet the character which Pope bestowed on him, "that he was not an every-day writer,"* is certainly apparent in the decided tone of his moral sentiments, and in his spirited maintenance of great principles. His verse has a sweep of harmony that seems to accord with an emphatic mind. He encountered in his principal poem the more than ordinary difficulties of a didactic subject—

"To paint the finest features of the mind,
And to most subtle and mysterious things
Give colour, strength, and motion."—Book i.

The object of his work was to trace the various pleasures which we receive from nature and art to their respective principles in the human imagination, and to show the connexion of those principles with the moral dignity of man, and the final purposes of his creation. His leading speculative ideas are derived from Plato, Addison, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson. To Addison he has been accused of being indebted for more than he acknowledged; but surely in plagiarisms from 'The Spectator' it might be taken for granted that no man could have counted on concealment; and there are only three passages (I think) in his poem where his obligations to that source are worthy of notice.† Independent of these, it is true that he adopted Addison's three-fold division of the sources of the pleasures of the imagination; but in doing so he properly followed a theory which had the advantage of being familiar to the reader; and when he afterwards substituted another, in recasting his poem, he profited nothing by the change. In the purely ethical and didactic parts

* [While he was yet unknown.]

† Viz., in his comparison of the Votary of Imagination to a knight-errant, in some enchanted paradise, 'Pleasures of Imagination,' book iii. l. 507; in his sketch of the village matron, book i. l. 255; and in a passage of book iii., at line 379, beginning, "But were not nature thus endowed at large." His idea of the final cause of our delight in the vast and illimitable is the same with one expressed in 'The Spectator,' No. 413. But Addison and he borrowed it in common from the sublime theology of Plato. The leading hint of his well-known passage, "Say why was man so eminently raised," &c., is avowedly taken from Longinus.

of his subject he displays a high zeal of classical feeling, and a graceful development of the philosophy of taste. Though his metaphysics may not be always invulnerable, his general ideas of moral truth are lofty and prepossessing. He is peculiarly eloquent in those passages in which he describes the final causes of our emotions of taste; he is equally skilful in delineating the processes of memory and association; and he gives an animated view of Genius collecting her stores for works of excellence. All his readers must recollect with what a happy brilliancy he comes out in the simile of art and nature, dividing our admiration when he compares them to the double appearance of the sun distracting his Persian worshipper. But "*non satis est pulchra esse poemata dulcia sunt.*" The sweetness which we miss in Akenside is that which should arise from the direct representations of life, and its warm realities and affections. We seem to pass in his poem through a gallery of pictured abstractions rather than of pictured things. He reminds us of odours which we enjoy artificially extracted from the flower instead of inhaling them from its natural blossom. It is true that his object was to teach and explain the nature of mind, and that his subject led him necessarily into abstract ideas, but it admitted also of copious scenes, full of solid human interest, to illustrate the philosophy which he taught. Poetry, whatever be its title, should not make us merely contemplate existence, but feel it over again. That descriptive skill which expounds to us the nature of our own emotions is rather a sedative than a stimulant to enthusiasm. The true poet renovates our emotions, and is not content with explaining them. Even in a philosophical poem on the Imagination, Akenside might have given historical tablets of the power which he delineated; but his illustrations for the most part only consist in general ideas fleetingly personified. There is but one pathetic passage (I think) in the whole poem, namely, that in which he describes the lover embracing the urn of his deceased mistress. On the subject of the passions, in Book ii., when our attention evidently expects to be disengaged from abstraction by spirited draughts illustrative of their influence, how much are we disappointed by the cold and tedious episode of Harmodius's vision, an allegory which is the more intolerable, because it professes to teach us resignation to the will of Heaven, by a fiction which neither imposes on the fancy nor communicates a moral

to the understanding! Under the head of 'Beauty' he only personifies Beauty herself, and her image leaves upon the mind but a vague impression of a beautiful woman, who might have been anybody. He introduces indeed some illustrations under the topic of ridicule, but in these his solemn manner overlaying the levity of his subjects unhappily produces a contrast which approaches itself to the ridiculous. In treating of novelty he is rather more descriptive; we have the youth breaking from domestic endearments in quest of knowledge, the sage over his midnight lamp, the virgin at her romance, and the village matron relating her stories of witchcraft. Short and compressed as those sketches are, they are still beautiful glimpses of reality, and it is expressly from observing the relief which they afford to his didactic and declamatory passages that we are led to wish that he had appealed more frequently to examples from nature. It is disagreeable to add, that, unsatisfactory as he is in illustrating the several parts of his theory, he ushers them in with great promises, and closes them with self-congratulation. He says,

"Thus with a faithful aim have we presumed
Adventurous to delineate nature's form,"

when, in fact, he has delineated very little of it. He raises triumphal arches for the entrance and exit of his subject, and then sends beneath them a procession of a few individual ideas.

He altered the poem in maturer life, but with no accession to its powers of entertainment. Harmodius was indeed dismissed, as well as the philosophy of ridicule; but the episode of Solon was left unfinished, and the whole work made rather more dry and scholastic; and he had even the bad taste, I believe, to mutilate some of those fine passages, which, in their primitive state, are still deservedly admired and popular.

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

[Born, Nov. 20, 1752. Died, Aug. 25, 1770;

AGED SEVENTEEN YEARS, NINE MONTHS, AND A FEW DAYS.]*

THOMAS CHATTERTON was the posthumous child of the master of a free-school in Bristol. At five years of age he was sent to

* [O, early ripe! to thy abundant store
What could advancing age have added more?

Dryden of Oldham.]

the same school which his father had taught; but he made so little improvement that his mother took him back, nor could he be induced to learn his letters till his attention had been accidentally struck by the illuminated capitals of a French musical MS. His mother afterwards taught him to read from an old black-letter Bible. One of his biographers has expressed surprise that a person in his mother's rank of life should have been acquainted with black-letter. The writer might have known that books of the ancient type continued to be read in that rank of life long after they had ceased to be used by persons of higher station. At the age of eight he was put to a charity-school in Bristol, where he was instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic. From his tenth year he discovered an extraordinary passion for books; and, before he was twelve, had perused about seventy volumes, chiefly on history and divinity. The prematurity of his mind, at the latter period, was so strongly marked in a serious and religious cast of thought as to induce the bishop to confirm him and admit him to the sacrament at that early age. His piety, however, was not of long duration. He had also written some verses sufficiently wonderful for his years, and had picked up some knowledge of music and drawing, when, at the age of fourteen, he was bound apprentice to a Mr. Lambert, a scrivener, in his native city. In Mr. Lambert's house his situation was very humble; he ate with the servants, and slept in the same room with the footboy; but his employments left him many hours of leisure for reading, and these he devoted to acquiring a knowledge of English antiquities and obsolete language, which, together with his poetical ingenuity, proved sufficient for his Rowleian fabrications.

It was in the year 1768 that he first attracted attention. On the occasion of the new bridge of Bristol being opened, he sent to Farley's 'Journal,' in that city, a letter, signed Dunhelmus Bristoliensis, containing an account of a procession of friars, and of other ceremonies, which had taken place, at a remote period, when the old bridge had been opened. The account was said to be taken from an ancient MS. Curiosity was instantly excited; and the sages of Bristol, with a spirit of barbarism which the monks and friars of the fifteenth century could not easily have rivalled, having traced the letter to Chatterton, interrogated him, with *threats*, about the original. Boy as he was, he

haughtily refused to explain upon compulsion; but by milder treatment was brought to state that he had found the MS. in his mother's house. The true part of the history of those ancient papers, from which he pretended to have derived this original of Farley's letter, as well as his subsequent poetical treasures, was, that in the muniment-room of St. Mary Redcliffe church, of Bristol, several chests had been anciently deposited, among which was one called the "Cofre" of Mr. Canynge, an eminent merchant of Bristol, who had rebuilt the church in the reign of Edward IV. About the year 1727 those chests had been broken open by an order from proper authority: some ancient deeds had been taken out, and the remaining MSS. left exposed as of no value. Chatterton's father, whose uncle was sexton of the church, had carried off great numbers of the parchments, and had used them as covers for books in his school. Amidst the residue of his father's ravages, Chatterton gave out that he had found many writings of Mr. Canynge, and of Thomas Rowley (the friend of Canynge), a priest of the fifteenth century. The rumour of his discoveries occasioned his acquaintance to be sought by a few individuals of Bristol, to whom he made presents of vellum MSS. of professed antiquity. The first who applied to him was a Mr. Catcott, who obtained from him 'The Bristowe Tragedy,' and Rowley's 'Epitaph' on Canynge's ancestor. Mr. Barret, a surgeon, who was writing a history of Bristol, was also presented with some of the poetry of Rowley; and Mr. Burgum, a pewterer, was favoured with 'The Romaunt of the Knyghte,' a poem, said by Chatterton to have been written by the pewterer's ancestor, John de Berghum, about 450 years before. The believing presentees, in return, supplied him with small sums of money, lent him books, and introduced him into society. Mr. Barret even gave him a few slight instructions in his own profession. Chatterton's spirit and ambition perceptibly increased; and he used to talk to his mother and sisters of his prospects of fame and fortune, always promising that they should be partakers in his success.*

* [Nothing can be more extraordinary than the delight which Chatterton appears to have felt in executing these numberless and multifarious impositions. His ruling passion was not the vanity of a poet who depends upon the opinion of others for its gratification, but the stoical pride of talent, which felt nourishment in the solitary contemplation of superiority over the

Having deceived several incompetent judges with regard to his MSS., he next ventured to address himself to Horace Walpole, to whom he sent a letter, offering to supply him with an account of a series of eminent painters who had flourished at Bristol. Walpole returned a polite answer, desiring farther information; on which Chatterton transmitted to him some of his Rowleian poetry, described his own servile situation, and requested the patronage of his correspondent. The virtuoso, however, having shown the poetical specimens to Gray and Mason, who pronounced them to be forgeries, sent the youth a cold reply, advising him to apply to the business of his profession. Walpole set out soon after for Paris, and neglected to return the MSS. till they had been twice demanded back by Chatterton, the second time in a very indignant letter. On these circumstances was founded the whole charge that was brought against Walpole, of blighting the prospects, and eventually contributing to the ruin, of the youthful genius. Whatever may be thought of some expressions respecting Chatterton which Walpole employed in the explanation of the affair which he afterwards published, the idea of taxing him with criminality in neglecting him was manifestly unjust. But in all cases of misfortune, the first consolation to which human nature resorts is, right or wrong, to find somebody to blame; and an evil seems to be half cured when it is traced to an object of indignation.

In the mean time, Chatterton had commenced a correspondence with 'The Town and Country Magazine' in London, to which he transmitted several communications on subjects relating to English antiquities, besides his specimens of Rowley's poetry, and fragments, purporting to be translations of Saxon poems, written in the measured prose of Macpherson's style. His poetical talent also continued to develop itself in several pieces of verse, avowedly original, though in a manner less pleasing than in his feigned relics of the Gothic Muse. When

dupes who fell into his toils. He has himself described this leading feature of his character in a letter to Mr. Barret: "It is my pride, my damned, native, unconquerable pride, that plunges me into distraction. You must know that 19-20ths of my composition is pride. I must either live—a slave—a servant—have no will of my own which I may fairly declare as such, or die."—Sir Walter Scott, *Misc. Works*, vol. xvii. p. 231.

"I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perish'd in his pride."

Wordsworth.]

we conceive the inspired boy transporting himself in imagination back to the days of his fictitious Rowley, embodying his ideal character, and giving to airy nothing a "local habitation and a name," we may forget the impostor in the enthusiast, and forgive the falsehood of his reverie for its beauty and ingenuity. One of his companions has described the air of rapture and inspiration with which he used to repeat his passages from Rowley, and the delight which he took to contemplate the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, while it awoke the associations of antiquity in his romantic mind. There was one spot in particular, full in view of the church, where he would often lay himself down, and fix his eyes, as it were, in a trance. On Sundays, as long as daylight lasted, he would walk alone in the country around Bristol, taking drawings of churches, or other objects that struck his imagination. The romance of his character is somewhat disenchanted when we find him in his satire of 'Kew Gardens,' which he wrote before leaving Bristol, indulging in the vulgar scandal of the day upon the characters of the Princess Dowager of Wales and Lord Bute, whatever proofs such a production may afford of the quickness and versatility of his talents.

As he had not exactly followed Horace Walpole's advice with regard to moulding his inclinations to business, he felt the irksomeness of his situation in Mr. Lambert's office at last intolerable; and he vehemently solicited and obtained the attorney's consent to release him from his apprenticeship. His master is said to have been alarmed into this concession by the hints which Chatterton gave of his intention to destroy himself; but even without this fear, Mr. Lambert could have no great motive to detain so reluctant an apprentice from the hopes of his future services.

In the month of April, 1770, Chatterton arrived in London, aged seventeen years and five months. He immediately received from the booksellers, with whom he had already corresponded, several important literary engagements. He projected a 'History of England,' and a 'History of London,' wrote for the magazines and newspapers, and contributed songs for the public gardens. But party politics soon became his favourite object, as they flattered his self-importance, and were likely to give the most lucrative employment to his pen. His introduction to one

or two individuals, who noticed him on this account, seems to have filled his ardent and sanguine fancy with unbounded prospects of success. Among these acquaintances was the Lord Mayor Beckford, and it is not unlikely, if that magistrate had not died soon after, that Chatterton might have found a patron. His death, however, and a little experience, put an end to the young adventurer's hopes of making his fortune by writing in hostility to government; and, with great accommodation of principle, he addressed a letter to Lord North in praise of his administration. There was, perhaps, more levity than profligacy in this tergiversation,* though it must be owned that it was not the levity of an ingenuous boy.

During the few months of his existence in London, his letters to his mother and sister, which were always accompanied with presents, expressed the most joyous anticipations. But suddenly all the flush of his gay hopes and busy projects terminated in despair. The particular causes which led to his catastrophe have not been distinctly traced. His own descriptions of his prospects were but little to be trusted; for while apparently exchanging his shadowy visions of Rowley for the real adventures of life, he was still moving under the spell of an imagination that saw everything in exaggerated colours. Out of this dream he was at length awakened, when he found that he had miscalculated the chances of patronage and the profits of literary labour. The abortive attempt which he made to obtain the situation of a surgeon's mate on board an African vessel shows that he had abandoned the hopes of gaining a livelihood by working for the booksellers, though he was known to have shrewdly remarked that they were not the worst patrons of merit. After this disappointment his poverty became extreme; and though there is an account of a gentleman having sent him a guinea within the few last days of his life, yet there is too much reason to fear that the pangs of his voluntary death were preceded by the actual sufferings of want. Mrs. Angel, a sack-maker, in Brook-street, Holborn, in whose house he lodged, offered him a dinner the day before his death, knowing that he

* [Mr. Campbell has borrowed the expression from Chalmers's 'Life.' "To call," says Mr. Southey, "Chatterton's boyish essays, in political controversy, political tergiversation, is as preposterous an abuse of language as it would be to call Mr. Chalmers a judicious critic or a candid biographer."—*Quar. Rev.*, vol. xi. p. 494.]

had fasted a long time; but his pride made him refuse it with some indignation. On the 25th of August he was found dead in his bed from the effects of poison which he had swallowed. He was interred in a shell in the burial-ground of Shoe-lane workhouse.

The heart which can peruse the fate of Chatterton without being moved is little to be envied for its tranquillity; but the intellects of those men must be as deficient as their hearts are uncharitable, who, confounding all shades of moral distinction, have ranked his literary fiction of Rowley in the same class of crimes with pecuniary forgery, and have calculated that, if he had not died by his own hand, he would have probably ended his days upon a gallows. This disgusting sentence has been pronounced upon a youth who was exemplary for severe study, temperance, and natural affection. His Rowleian forgery must, indeed, be pronounced improper by the general law which condemns all falsifications of history; but it deprived no man of his fame, it had no sacrilegious interference with the memory of departed genius, it had not, like Lauder's imposture, any malignant motive to rob a party or a country of a name which was its pride and ornament.*

Setting aside the opinion of those uncharitable biographers whose imaginations have conducted him to the gibbet, it may be owned that his unformed character exhibited strong and conflicting elements of good and evil. Even the momentary project of the infidel boy to become a Methodist preacher betrays an obliquity of design, and a contempt of human credulity, that is not very amiable. But had he been spared, his pride and ambition would have come to flow in their proper channels, his understanding would have taught him the practical value of truth and the dignity of virtue, and he would have despised artifice when he had felt the strength and security of wisdom. In estimating the promises of his genius, I would rather lean

* [Nor is Chatterton's imposition reprehensible like Ireland's forgeries, for no real name or fame suffered as Shakspeare's might have suffered. A real Rowley, such as Chatterton gave birth to, never existed till he wrote, and no poet between Chaucer and Spenser but might own with pride the productions of the boy "of Bristowe." Lauder's imposture went to degrade a great author, Ireland's to make another write as only an Ireland could have written, but Chatterton's to make a new poet to advance the glory of his native city and of his nation at large. "The deception," says Southey, "was not intended to defraud or injure one human being."]

to the utmost enthusiasm of his admirers, than to the cold opinion of those who are afraid of being blinded to the defects of the poems attributed to Rowley by the veil of obsolete phraseology which is thrown over them. If we look to the ballad of 'Sir Charles Bawdin,' and translate it into modern English, we shall find its strength and interest to have no dependence on obsolete words. In the striking passage of the martyr Bawdin, standing erect in his car to rebuke Edward, who beheld him from the window, when

"The tyrant's soul rush'd to his face,"

and when he exclaimed,

"Behold the man! he speaks the truth,
He's greater than a king;"—

in these, and in all the striking parts of the ballad, no effect is owing to mock antiquity, but to the simple and high conception of a great and just character, who

"Summ'd the actions of the day
Each night before he slept."

What a moral portraiture from the hand of a boy! The inequality of Chatterton's various productions may be compared to the disproportions of the ungrown giant. His works had nothing of the definite neatness of that precocious talent which stops short in early maturity. His thirst for knowledge was that of a being taught by instinct to lay up materials for the exercise of great and undeveloped powers. Even in his favourite maxim, pushed it might be to hyperbole, that a man by abstinence and perseverance might accomplish whatever he pleased, may be traced the indications of a genius which nature had meant to achieve works of immortality. Tasso alone can be compared to him as a juvenile prodigy.* No English poet ever equalled him at the same age.

CHRISTOPHER SMART.

[Born, 1722. Died, 1770.]

CHRISTOPHER SMART was born at Shipbourne, in Kent. Being an eight months' child, he had from his birth an infirm constitution, which unfortunately his habits of life never tended to

* In the verses which Tasso sent to his mother when he was nine years old.

strengthen. His father, who was steward of the Kentish estates of Lord Barnard (afterwards Earl of Darlington), possessed a property in the neighbourhood of Shipbourne of about 300*l.* a year; but it was so much encumbered by debt that his widow was obliged to sell it at his death at a considerable loss. This happened in our poet's eleventh year, at which time he was taken from the school of Maidstone, in Kent, and placed at that of Durham. Some of his paternal relations resided in the latter place. An ancestor of the family, Mr. Peter Smart, had been a prebendary of Durham in the reign of Charles I., and was regarded by the Puritans as a proto-martyr in their cause, having been degraded, fined, and imprisoned for eleven years, on account of a Latin poem which he published in 1643, and which the high-church party chose to consider as a libel. What services young Smart met with at Durham from his father's relations we are not informed; but he was kindly received by Lord Barnard, at his seat of Raby Castle; and through the interest of his lordship's family obtained the patronage of the Duchess of Cleveland, who allowed him for several years an annuity of forty pounds. In his seventeenth year he went from the school of Durham to the University of Cambridge, where he obtained a fellowship of Pembroke Hall, and took the degree of master of arts. About the time of his obtaining his fellowship he wrote a farce, entitled 'The Grateful Fair, or the Trip to Cambridge,' which was acted in the hall of his college. Of this production only a few songs and the mock-heroic soliloquy of the Princess Periwinkle have been preserved; but from the draught of the plot given by his biographer the comic ingenuity of the piece seems not to have been remarkable. He distinguished himself at the university both by his Latin and English verses: among the former was his translation of Pope's 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,' on the subject of which, and of other versions which he projected from the same author, he had the honour of corresponding with Pope. He also obtained, during several years, the Seatonian prize for poetical essays on the attributes of the Deity. He afterwards printed those compositions, and probably rested on them his chief claims to the name of a poet. In one of them he rather too loftily denominates himself "*the poet of his God.*" From his verses upon 'The Eagle chained in a College Court,' in which he addresses the bird,

"Thou type of wit and sense, confined,
Chain'd by th' oppressors of the mind,"

it does not appear that he had great respect for his college teachers ; nor is it pretended that the oppressors of the mind, as he calls them, had much reason to admire the application of his eagle genius to the graver studies of the university ; for the life which he led was so dissipated as to oblige him to sequester his fellowship for tavern debts.

In the year 1753 he quitted college, upon his marriage with a Miss Carnan, the stepdaughter of Mr. Newbery, the bookseller. With Newbery he had already been engaged in several schemes of authorship, having been a frequent contributor to 'The Student, or Oxford and Cambridge Miscellany,' and having besides conducted 'The Midwife, or Old Woman's Magazine.' He had also published a collection of his poems ; and having either detected or suspected that the notorious Sir John (formerly Dr.) Hill had reviewed them unfavourably, he proclaimed war with the paper knight, and wrote a satire on him, entitled 'The Hilliad.' One of the bad effects of 'The Dunciad' had been to afford to indignant witlings an easily copied example of allegory and vituperation. Every versifier who could echo Pope's numbers, and add an *iad* to the name of the man or thing that offended him, thought himself a Pope for the time being, and, however dull, an hereditary champion against the powers of Dulness. Sir John Hill, who wrote also a book* upon Cookery, replied in a 'Smartiad ;' and probably both of his books were in their different ways useful to the pastry-cooks. If the town was interested in such a warfare, it was to be pitied for the dearth of amusement. But though Smart was thus engaged, his manners were so agreeable and his personal character so in-offensive as to find friends among some of the most eminent men of his day, such as Dr. Johnson, Garrick, and Dr. Burney. Distress brought on by imprudence, and insanity produced by distress, soon made him too dependent on the kindness of his friends. Some of them contributed money, Garrick gave him a free benefit at Drury Lane Theatre, and Dr. Johnson furnished him with several papers for one of his periodical publications. During the confinement which his alienation of mind rendered necessary, he was deprived of pen and ink and paper ; and used to indent his poetical thoughts with a key on the wainscot of the

wall. On his recovery he resumed his literary employments, and for some time conducted himself with industry. Among the compositions of his saner period was a verse translation of the Fables of Phædrus, executed with tolerable spirit and accuracy. But he gave a lamentable proof of his declining powers in his translation of the Psalms and in his 'Parables of Jesus Christ, done into familiar verse,' which were dedicated to Master Bonnel Thornton, a child in the nursery. He was also committed for debt to the King's Bench prison, within the rules of which he died, after a short illness, of a disorder in the liver.

If Smart had any talent above mediocrity, it was a slight turn for humour.* In his serious attempts at poetry, he reminds us of those

"whom Phœbus in his ire
Hath blasted with poetic fire."

The history of his life is but melancholy. Such was his habitual imprudence that he would bring home guests to dine at his house, when his wife and family had neither a meal nor money to provide one. He engaged, on one occasion, to write 'The Universal Visitor,' and for no other work, by a contract which was to last ninety-nine years. The publication stopped at the end of two years. During his bad health he was advised to walk for exercise, and he used to walk for that purpose to the alehouse; but *he was always carried back.*

THOMAS GRAY.

[Born, 1716. Died, 1771.]

MR. MATTHIAS, the accomplished editor of Gray, in delineating his poetical character, dwells with peculiar emphasis on the charm of his lyrical versification, which he justly ascribes to the naturally exquisite ear of the poet having been trained to consummate skill in harmony, by long familiarity with the finest models in the most poetical of all languages, the Greek and Italian. "He was indeed," says Mr. Matthias, "the inventor, it may be strictly said so, of a new lyrical metre in his own tongue. The peculiar formation of *his* strophe, antistrophe, and

* An instance of his wit is given in his extemporary spondaic on the three fat beadles of the university:—

"Pinguia tergemina abdomina bedellorum."

epode was unknown before him ; and it could only have been planned and perfected by a master genius, who was equally skilled by long and repeated study, and by transfusion into his own mind of the lyric compositions of ancient Greece and of the higher ‘*canzoni*’ of the Tuscan poets, ‘*di maggior carne e suono,*’ as it is termed in the commanding energy of their language. Antecedent to ‘The Progress of Poetry’ and to ‘The Bard,’ no such lyrics had appeared. There is not an ode in the English language which is constructed like these two compositions ; with such power, such majesty, and such sweetness, with such proportioned pauses and just cadences, with such regulated measures of the verse, with such master principles of lyrical art displayed and exemplified, and, at the same time, with such a concealment of the difficulty, which is lost in the softness and uninterrupted flowing of the lines in each stanza, with such a musical magic, that every verse in it in succession dwells on the ear and harmonizes with that which has gone before.”

So far as the versification of Gray is concerned, I have too much pleasure in transcribing these sentiments of Mr. Matthias to encumber them with any qualifying remarks of my own on that particular subject ; but I dissent from him in his more general estimate of Gray’s genius, when he afterwards speaks of it as “second to none.”

In order to distinguish the positive merits of Gray from the loftier excellence ascribed to him by his editor, it is unnecessary to resort to the criticisms of Dr. Johnson. Some of them may be just, but their general spirit is malignant and exaggerated. When we look to such beautiful passages in Gray’s odes as his Indian poet amidst the forests of Chili, or his prophet bard scattering dismay on the array of Edward and his awestruck chieftains on the side of Snowdon—when we regard his elegant taste, not only gathering classical flowers from the Arno and Ilyssus, but revealing glimpses of barbaric grandeur amidst the darkness of Runic mythology—when we recollect his “*thoughts that breathe, and words that burn*”—his rich personifications, his broad and prominent images, and the crowning charm of his versification, we may safely pronounce that Johnson’s critical fulminations have passed over his lyrical character with more noise than destruction.

At the same time it must be recollected that his beauties are

rather crowded into a short compass than numerous in their absolute sum. The spirit of poetry, it is true, is not to be computed mechanically by tale or measure; and abundance of it may enter into a very small bulk of language. But neither language nor poetry are compressible beyond certain limits; and the poet whose thoughts have been concentrated into a few pages cannot be expected to have given a very full or interesting image of life in his compositions. A few odes, splendid, spirited, and harmonious, but by no means either faultless or replete with subjects that come home to universal sympathy, and an Elegy, unrivalled as it is in that species of composition,—these achievements of our poet form, after all, no such extensive grounds of originality as to entitle their author to be spoken of as in genius “*second to none*.” He had not, like Goldsmith, the art of unbending from grace to levity. Nothing can be more unexhilarating than his attempts at wit and humour, either in his letters or lighter poetry. In his graver and better strains some of the most exquisite ideas are his own; and his taste, for the most part, adorned and skilfully recast the forms of thought and expression which he borrowed from others. If his works often “whisper whence they stole their balmy spoils,” it is not from plagiarism, but from a sensibility that sought and selected the finest impressions of genius from other gifted minds. But still there is a higher appearance of culture than fertility, of acquisition than originality, in Gray. He is not that being of independent imagination, that native and creative spirit, of whom we should say that he would have plunged into the flood of poetry had there been none to leap before him. Nor were his learned acquisitions turned to the very highest account. He was the architect of no poetical design of extensive or intricate compass. One noble historical picture, it must be confessed, he has left in the opening scene of his ‘Bard;’ and the sequel of that ode, though it is not perhaps the most interesting prophecy of English history which we could suppose Inspiration to pronounce, contains many richly poetical conceptions. It is, however, exclusively in the opening of ‘The Bard’ that Gray can be ever said to have portrayed a grand, distinct, and heroic scene of fiction.*

* [Gray’s Elegy pleased instantly and eternally. His Odes did not, nor do they yet, please like his Elegy.—Byron, *Works*, vol. v. p. 15.

Had Gray written nothing but his Elegy, high as he stands, I am not sure

The obscurity so often objected to him is certainly a defect not to be justified by the authority of Pindar, more than anything else that is intrinsically objectionable. But it has been exaggerated. He is nowhere so obscure as not to be intelligible by recurring to the passage. And it may be further observed, that Gray's lyrical obscurity never arises, as in some writers, from undefined ideas or paradoxical sentiments. On the contrary, his moral spirit is as explicit as it is majestic; and, deeply read as he was in Plato, he is never metaphysically perplexed. The fault of his meaning is to be latent, not indefinite or confused. When we give his beauties re-perusal and attention, they kindle and multiply to the view. The thread of association that conducts to his remote allusions, or that connects his abrupt transitions, ceases then to be invisible. His lyrical pieces are like paintings on glass, which must be placed in a strong light to give out the perfect radiance of their colouring.

CUTHBERT SHAW.

[Born, 1738. Died, 1771.]

CUTHBERT SHAW was the son of a shoemaker, and was born at Ravensworth, near Richmond, in Yorkshire. He was for some time usher to the grammar-school at Darlington, where he published, in 1756, his first poem, entitled 'Liberty.' He afterwards appeared in London and other places as a player; but having no recommendations for the stage, except a handsome figure, he betook himself to writing for subsistence. In 1762 he attacked Colman, Churchill, Lloyd, and Shirley, in a satire called 'The Four Farthing Candles;'^{*} and next selected the author of 'The Rosciad' as the exclusive subject of a mock-heroic poem, entitled 'The Race, by Mercurius Spur, with Notes by Faustinus Scriblerus.' He had for some time the care of instructing an infant son of the Earl of Chesterfield in the first rudiments of learning. He married a woman of superior connexions, who, for his sake, forfeited the countenance of her family, but who did not live long to share his affections and misfortunes. Her death, that he would not stand higher; it is the corner-stone of his glory; without it, his Odes would be insufficient for his fame.—Byron, *Works*, vol. vi. p. 569.]

^{*} [A poem of which no copy is known to exist.]

in 1768, and that of their infant, occasioned those well-known verses which give an interest to his memory. Lord Lyttelton, struck by their feeling expression of a grief similar to his own, solicited his acquaintance, and distinguished him by his praise, but rendered him no substantial assistance. The short remainder of his days was spent in literary drudgery. He wrote a satire on political corruption, with many other articles, which appeared in 'The Freeholder's Magazine.' Disease and dissipation carried him off in the prime of life, after the former had left irretrievable marks of its ravages upon his countenance.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

[Born, 1721. Died, 1771.]

TOBIAS SMOLLETT was the grandson of Sir James Smollett, of Bonhill, a member of the Scottish parliament, and one of the commissioners for the Union. The father of the novelist was a younger son of the knight, and had married without his consent. He died in the prime of life, and left his children dependent on their grandfather. Were we to trust to Roderick Random's account of his relations for authentic portraits of the author's family, we should entertain no very prepossessing idea of the old gentleman; but it appears that Sir James Smollett supported his son and educated his grandchildren.

Smollett was born near Renton, in the parish of Cardross, and shire of Dumbarton, and passed his earliest years among those scenes on the banks of the Leven which he has described with some interest in 'The Adventures of Humphrey Clinker.' He received his first instructions in classical learning at the school of Dumbarton. He was afterwards removed to the college of Glasgow, where he pursued the study of medicine; and, according to the practice then usual in medical education, was bound apprentice to a Mr. Gordon, a surgeon in that city. Gordon is generally said to have been the original of Potion in 'Roderick Random.' This has been denied by Smollett's biographers; but their conjecture is of no more weight than the tradition which it contradicts. In the characters of a work so compounded of truth and fiction, the author alone could have estimated the personality which he intended, and of that intention he was not

probably communicative. The tradition still remaining at Glasgow is, that Smollett was a restive apprentice and a mischievous stripling. While at the university he cultivated the study of literature, as well as of medicine, and showed a disposition for poetry, but very often in that bitter vein of satire which he carried so plentifully into the temper of his future years. He had also, before he was eighteen, composed a tragedy, entitled 'The Regicide.' This tragedy was not published till after the lapse of ten years, and then it probably retained but little of its juvenile shape. When printed, "*to shame the rogues,*" it was ushered in by a preface, abusing the stage-managers, who had rejected it, in a strain of indignation with which the perusal of the play itself did not dispose the reader to sympathise.

The death of his grandfather left Smollett without provision, and obliged him to leave his studies at Glasgow prematurely. He came to London, and obtained the situation of a surgeon's mate on board a ship of the line, which sailed in the unfortunate expedition to Carthage. The strong picture of the discomforts of his naval life, which he afterwards drew, is said to have attracted considerable attention to the internal economy of our ships of war, and to have occasioned the commencement of some salutary reforms. But with all the improvements which have been made, it is to be feared that the situation of an assistant surgeon in the navy is still left less respectable and comfortable than it ought to be made. He is still without equal advantages to those of a surgeon's mate in the army, and is put too low in the rank of officers.

Smollett quitted the naval service in the West Indies, and resided for some time in Jamaica. He returned to London in 1746, and in the following year married a Miss Lascelles, whom he had courted in Jamaica, and with whom he had the promise of 3000*l.* Of this sum, however, he obtained but a small part, and that after an expensive lawsuit. Being obliged therefore to have recourse to his pen for support, he, in 1748, published his 'Roderick Random,' the most popular of all the novels on which his high reputation rests. Three years elapsed before the appearance of 'Peregrine Pickle.' In the interval he had visited Paris; where his biographer, Dr. Moore, who knew him there, says that he indulged in the common prejudices of the English against the French nation, and never attained the language so

perfectly as to be able to mix familiarly with the inhabitants. When we look to the rich traits of comic effect which his English characters derive from transferring the scene to France, we can neither regard his journey as of slight utility to his powers of amusement, nor regret that he attended more to the follies of his countrymen than to French manners and phraseology. After the publication of 'Peregrine Pickle' he attempted to establish himself at Bath as a physician, but was not successful. His failure has been attributed to the haughtiness of his manners. It is not very apparent, however, what claims to medical estimation he could advance; and the celebrity for aggravating and exposing personal follies, which he had acquired by his novels, was rather too formidable to recommend him as a confidential visitant to the sick chambers of fashion. To a sensitive valetudinarian many diseases would be less alarming than a doctor who might slay the character by his ridicule, and might *not* save the body by his prescriptions.

Returning disappointed from Bath, he fixed his residence at Chelsea, and supported himself during the rest of his life by his literary employments. The manner in which he lived at Chelsea, and the hospitality which he afforded to many of his poorer brethren of the tribe of literature, have been somewhat ostentatiously described by his own pen;* but Dr. Moore assures us that the account of his liberality is not overcharged. In 1753 he produced his novel of 'Count Fathom;' and three years afterwards, whilst confined in prison for a libel on Admiral Knowles, amused himself with writing 'The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves.' In the following year he attempted the stage in a farce, entitled 'The Reprisals,' which, though of no great value, met with temporary success. Prolific as his pen was, he seems from this period to have felt that he could depend for subsistence more securely upon works of industry than originality; and he engaged in voluminous drudgeries, which added nothing to his fame, whilst they made inroads on his health and equanimity. His conduct of 'The Critical Review,' in particular, embroiled him in rancorous personalities, and brought forward the least agreeable parts of his character. He supported the ministry of Lord Bute with his pen, but missed the reward which he expected. Though he had realised large sums by several of his

* [In 'Humphrey Clinker.']

works, he saw the evening of his life approach with no provision in prospect but what he could receive from severe and continued labours ; and with him that evening might be said to approach prematurely, for his constitution seems to have begun to break down when he was not much turned of forty. The death of his only daughter obliged him to seek relief from sickness and melancholy by travelling abroad for two years ; and the Account of his Travels in France and Italy, which he published on his return, afforded a dreary picture of the state of his mind. Soon after his return from the Continent, his health still decaying, he made a journey to Scotland, and renewed his attachment to his friends and relations. His constitution again requiring a more genial climate, and as he could ill support the expense of travelling, his friends tried, in vain, to obtain for him from ministers the situation of consul at Nice, Naples, or Leghorn. Smollett had written both for and against ministers, perhaps not always from independent motives ; but to find the man whose genius has given exhilaration to millions thus reduced to beg, and to be refused the means that might have smoothed the pillow of his death-bed in a foreign country, is a circumstance which fills the mind rather too strongly with the recollection of Cervantes. He set out, however, for Italy in 1770, and, though debilitated in body, was able to compose his novel of 'Humphrey Clinker.' After a few months' residence in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, he expired there in his fifty-first year.

The few poems which he has left have a portion of delicacy which is not to be found in his novels ; but they have not, like those prose fictions, the strength of a master's hand. Were he to live over again, we might wish him to write more poetry, in the belief that his poetical talent would improve by exercise ; but we should be glad to have more of his novels just as they are.*

GEORGE LORD LYTTTELTON.

[Born, 1709. Died, 1773.]

THIS nobleman's public and private virtues, and his merits as the

* [This passage is quoted by Sir Walter Scott in his 'Memoir of Smollett.' "The truth is," he adds, "that in these very novels are expended many of the ingredients both of grave and humorous poetry." *Misc. Works*, vol. iii. p. 176.]

historian of Henry II., will be remembered when his verses are forgotten. By a felicity very rare in his attempts at poetry, the kids and fawns of his 'Monody' do not entirely extinguish all appearance of that sincere feeling with which it must have been composed. Gray, in a letter to Horace Walpole, has justly remarked the beauty of the stanza beginning, "In vain I look around." "If it were all like this stanza," he continues, "I should be excessively pleased. Nature, and sorrow, and tenderness, are the true genius of such things (monodies), and something of these I find in several parts of it (not in the orange-tree). Poetical ornaments are foreign to the purpose, for they only show a man is not sorry; and devotion is worse, for it teaches him that he ought not to be sorry, which is all the pleasure of the thing."*

ROBERT FERGUSSON.

[Born, 1750. Died, 1774.]

THIS unfortunate young man, who died in a mad-house at the age of twenty-four, left some pieces of considerable humour and originality in the Scottish dialect. Burns, who took the hint of his 'Cotter's Saturday Night' from Fergusson's 'Farmer's Ingle,' seems to have esteemed him with an exaggerated partiality, which can only be accounted for by his having perused him in his youth. On his first visit to Edinburgh, Burns traced out the grave of Fergusson, and placed a headstone over it at his own expense, inscribed with verses of appropriate feeling.

Fergusson was born at Edinburgh, where his father held the office of accountant to the British Linen-hall. He was educated partly at the high-school of Edinburgh, and partly at the grammar-school of Dundee, after which a bursary, or exhibition, was obtained for him at the University of St. Andrew's, where he soon distinguished himself as a youth of promising genius. His eccentricity was, unfortunately, of equal growth with his talents; and on one occasion, having taken part in an affray among the students that broke out at the distribution of the prizes, he was selected as one of the leaders, and expelled from college, but

* [And in a letter to Wharton he says, "Have you seen Lyttelton's 'Monody' on his wife's death? There are parts of it too stiff and poetical, but others truly tender and elegiac as one would wish."—*Works by Mitford*, vol. iii. p. 49.]

was received back again upon promises of future good behaviour. On leaving college he found himself destitute by the death of his father; and after a fruitless attempt to obtain support from an uncle at Aberdeen, he returned on foot to his mother's house at Edinburgh, half dead with the fatigue of the journey, which brought on an illness that had nearly proved fatal to his delicate frame. On his recovery he was received as a clerk in the commissary clerk's office, where he did not continue long, but exchanged it for the same situation in the office of the sheriff clerk, and there he remained as long as his health and habits admitted of any application to business. Had he possessed ordinary prudence, he might have lived by the drudgery of copying papers; but the appearance of some of his poems having gained him a flattering notice, he was drawn into dissipated company, and became a wit, a songster, a mimic, and a free liver; and finally, after fits of penitence and religious despondency, went mad. When committed to the receptacle of the insane, a consciousness of his dreadful fate seemed to come over him. At the moment of his entrance he uttered a wild cry of despair, which was re-echoed by a shout from all the inmates of the dismal mansion, and left an impression of inexpressible horror on the friends who had the task of attending him. His mother, being in extreme poverty, had no other mode of disposing of him. A remittance, which she received a few days after, from a more fortunate son who was abroad, would have enabled her to support the expense of affording him attendance in her own house; but the aid did not arrive till the poor maniac had expired.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

[Born, Nov. 10, 1728. Died, 1774.]

OLIVER GOLDSMITH was born at a place called Pallas, in the parish of Forney, and county of Longford, in Ireland. His father held the living of Kilkenney West, in the county of Westmeath.* There was a tradition in the family that they were descended from Juan Romeiro, a Spanish gentleman, who had settled in Ireland in the sixteenth century, and had married a woman whose name of Goldsmith was adopted by their descend-

* [His mother, by name Ann Jones, was married to Charles Goldsmith on the 4th of May, 1718.—Prior, vol. i. p. 14.]

ants. Oliver was instructed in reading and writing by Thomas Byrne, a schoolmaster in his father's parish, who had been a quartermaster in the wars of Queen Anne; and who, being fond of relating his adventures, is supposed to have communicated to the young mind of his pupil the romantic and wandering disposition which showed itself in his future years. He was next placed * under the Rev. Mr. Griffin, schoolmaster of Elphin, and was received into the house of his father's brother, Mr. Goldsmith, of Ballyoughter. Some relations and friends of his uncle, who were met on a social party, happening to be struck with the sprightliness of Oliver's abilities, and knowing the narrow circumstances of his father, offered to join in defraying the expense of giving him a liberal education. The chief contributor was the Rev. Thomas Contarine, who had married our poet's aunt. He was accordingly sent for some time to the school of Athlone, and afterwards to an academy at Edgeworthstown, where he was fitted for the university. He was admitted a sizer or servitor of Trinity College, Dublin, in his sixteenth year [11th June, 1745], a circumstance which denoted considerable proficiency; and three years afterwards was elected one of the exhibitioners on the foundation of Erasmus Smith.† But though he occasionally distinguished himself by his translations from the classics, his general appearance at the university corresponded neither with the former promises nor future development of his talents. He was, like Johnson, a loungee at the college-gate. He gained neither premiums nor a scholarship, and was not admitted to the degree of bachelor of arts till two years after the regular time. His backwardness, it would appear, was the effect of despair more than of wilful negligence.‡ He had been placed under a savage tutor, named Theaker Wilder, who used to insult him at public examinations, and to treat his delinquencies with a ferocity that broke his spirit. On one occasion poor Oliver

* [An attack of confluent small-pox, which had nearly deprived him of life, and left traces of its ravages in his face ever after, first caused him to be taken from under the care of Byrne.—Prior, vol. i. p. 28.]

† [Out of nineteen elected on the occasion, his name stands seventeenth on the list. The emolument was trifling, being no more than about thirty shillings; but the credit something, for it was the first distinction he had obtained in his college career.—Prior, vol. i. p. 87.]

‡ [Mr. Prior discovered several notices of Goldsmith in the college books. On the 9th of May, 1718, he was *turned down*; twice he was *cautioned* for neglecting a Greek lecture, and thrice *commended* for diligence in attending it.]

was so imprudent as to invite a company of young people, of both sexes, to a dance and supper in his rooms; on receiving intelligence of which, Theaker grimly repaired to the place of revelry, belaboured him before his guests, and rudely broke up the assembly. The disgrace of this inhuman treatment drove him for a time from the university. He set out from Dublin, intending to sail from Cork for some other country, he knew not whither; but, after wandering about till he was reduced to such famine that he thought a handful of gray peas, which a girl gave him at a wake, the sweetest repast he had ever tasted, he returned home, like the prodigal son, and matters were adjusted for his being received again at college.

About the time of his finally leaving the university his father died.* His uncle Contarine, from whom he experienced the kindness of a father, wished him to have taken orders, and Oliver is said to have applied for them, but to have been rejected, though for what reason is not sufficiently known.† He then accepted the situation of private tutor in a gentleman's family, and retained it long enough to save about 30*l.*, with which he bought a tolerable horse, and went forth upon his adventures. At the end of six weeks his friends, having heard nothing of him, concluded that he had left the kingdom, when he returned to his mother's house, without a penny, upon a poor little horse which he called Fiddleback, and which was not worth more than twenty shillings. The account which he gave of himself was, that he had been at Cork, where he had sold his former horse, and paid his passage to America; but the ship happening to sail whilst he was reviewing the curiosities of the city, he had just money enough left to purchase Fiddleback, and to reach the house of an old acquaintance on the road. This nominal friend, however, had received him very coldly; and, in order to evade his application for pecuniary relief, had advised him to sell his diminutive steed, and promised him another in his place, which should cost him nothing either for price or provender. To confirm this promise, he pulled out an oaken staff from beneath a bed. Just as this generous offer had been made, a neighbouring gentleman

* [His father died early in 1747, before he had become an exhibitor on Smith's foundation. On the 27th of February, 1749, after a residence of four years, he was admitted to the degree of bachelor of arts.]

† [The story is told in various ways, and it is hard to get at the truth. The rejection is the only certainty.—Forster, p. 32.]

came in, and invited both the miser and Goldsmith to dine with him. Upon a short acquaintance, Oliver communicated his situation to the stranger, and was enabled, by his liberality, to proceed upon his journey. This was his story. His mother, it may be supposed, was looking rather gravely upon her prudent child, who had such adventures to relate, when he concluded them by saying, "and now, my dear mother, having struggled so hard to come home to you, I wonder that you are not more rejoiced to see me." Mr. Contarine next resolved to send him to the Temple; but on his way to London he was fleeced of all his money in gaming, and returned once more to his mother's house in disgrace and affliction. Again was his good uncle reconciled to him, and equipped him for Edinburgh, that he might pursue the study of medicine.

On his arrival at Edinburgh, in the autumn of 1752, he took lodgings, and sallied forth to take a view of the city; but, at a late hour, he recollected that he had omitted to inform himself of the name and address of his landlady; and would not have found his way back if he had not fortunately met with the porter who had carried his luggage. After attending two winter courses of medical lectures at Edinburgh, he was permitted by his uncle to repair to Leyden, for the sake of finishing his studies, when his departure was accelerated by a debt, which he had contracted by becoming security for an acquaintance, and from the arrest attending which he was only saved by the interference of a friend. If Leyden, however, was his object, he, with the usual eccentricity of his motions, set out to reach it by way of Bordeaux, and embarked in a ship which was bound thither from Leith, but which was driven, by stress of weather, into Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His fellow-passengers were some Scotchmen, who had been employed in raising men in their own country for the service of the King of France. They were arrested, by orders from government, at Newcastle; and Goldsmith, who had been committed to prison with them, was not liberated till after a fortnight's confinement. By this accident, however, he was eventually saved from an early death. This vessel sailed during his imprisonment, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, where every soul on board perished.

On being released he took shipping for Holland, and arrived at Leyden, where he continued about a twelvemonth, and studied

chemistry and anatomy. At the end of that time, having exhausted his last farthing at the gaming-table, and expended the greater part of a supply which a friend lent him in purchasing some costly Dutch flower-roots, which he intended for a present to his uncle, he set out to make the tour of Europe on foot, unencumbered at least by the weight of his money. The manner in which he occasionally subsisted during his travels, by playing his flute among the peasantry, and by disputing at the different universities, has been innumerable times repeated. In the last and most authentic account of his life,* the circumstance of his having ever been a travelling tutor is called in question. Assistance from his uncle must have reached him, as he remained for six months at Padua, after having traversed parts of Flanders, France, Germany, and Switzerland, in the last of which countries he wrote the first sketch of his 'Traveller.'

His uncle having died while he was in Italy, he was obliged to travel on foot through France to England, and arrived [1756] in London in extreme distress. He was for a short time usher in an academy, and was afterwards found and relieved by his old friend Dr. Sleigh, in the situation of journeyman to a chemist.† By his friend's assistance he was enabled to take lodgings in the city, and endeavoured to establish himself in medical practice. In this attempt he was unsuccessful; but, through the interest of Dr. Milner, a dissenting clergyman, he obtained the appointment of a physician to one of the factories in India; and, in order to defray the expense of getting thither, prepared to publish, by subscription, his 'Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Literature in Europe.' For some unknown reason his appointment to India was dropped;‡ and we find him, in April 1757,

* [Since Mr. Campbell wrote, the Life of Goldsmith has been written by Mr. Prior in two octavo volumes, full of new facts and new matter, that attest what unwearied research and well-directed diligence may achieve; and still more recently by Mr. Forster, in 'The Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith,' one of the most readable biographies in the English language.]

† [Named Jacob, and residing at the corner of Monument or Bell-yard, on Fish-street-hill.]

‡ [On the 21st of December, 1758, he presented himself at Surgeons' Hall, London, for examination as an hospital-mate, but was found not qualified. Mr. Prior, who discovered this curious fact, supposes that his India physicianship was too expensive an outfit for his purse, and as a last resource he had tried to pass as an hospital-mate. "Honour to that court of examiners, I say, to the end of time! They found him not qualified to be a surgeon's mate, and left him qualified to heal the wounds and abridge the sufferings of all the world."—Forster, p. 140.]

writing in Dr. Griffiths' 'Monthly Review,' for a salary, and his board and lodging in the proprietor's house. Leaving this employment, he went into private lodgings, and finished his 'Inquiry into the State of Literature,' which was published in 1759. The rest of his history from this period becomes chiefly that of his well-known works. His principal literary employments, previous to his raising himself into notice by his poetry, were—conducting 'The Lady's Magazine,' writing a volume of essays called 'The Bee,' 'Letters on English History,' 'Letters of a Citizen of the World,' and 'The Vicar of Wakefield.' Boswell has related the affecting circumstances in which Dr. Johnson found poor Goldsmith in lodgings at Wine-office-court, Fleet-street, where he had finished 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' immured by bailiffs from without, and threatened with expulsion by his landlady from within. The sale of the novel for 60*l.* brought him present relief; and within a few years from that time he emerged from his obscurity to the best society and literary distinction. But whatever change of public estimation he experienced, the man was not to be altered; and he continued to exhibit a personal character which was neither much reformed by experience, nor dignified by reputation. It is but too well known, that, with all his original and refined faculties, he was often the butt of wittings, and the dupe of impostors. He threw away his money at the gaming-table, and might also be said to be a losing gambler in conversation, for he aimed in all societies at being brilliant and argumentative; but generally chose to dispute on the subjects which he least understood, and contrived to forfeit as much credit for common sense as could be got rid of in colloquial intercourse. After losing his appointment to India, he applied to Lord Bute for a salary to be enabled to travel into the interior of Asia. The petition was neglected because he was then unknown. The same boon, however, or some adequate provision, might have been obtained for him afterwards, when he was recommended to the Earl of Northumberland, at that time Lord-lieutenant of Ireland. But, when he waited on the Earl, he threw away his prepared compliments on his lordship's steward, and then retrieved the mistake by telling the nobleman, for whom he had meditated a courtly speech, that he had no confidence in the patronage of the great, but would rather rely upon the booksellers. There must have been something, however, with

all his peculiarities, still endearing in his personal character. Burke was known to recall his memory with tears of affection in his eyes. It cannot be believed that the better genius of his writings was always absent from his conversation. One may conceive graces of his spirit to have been drawn forth by Burke or Reynolds, which neither Johnson nor Garrick had the sensibility to appreciate.

For the last ten years of his life he lived in the Temple. He was one of the earliest members of the Literary Club. At the institution of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds procured for him the honorary appointment of Professor of Ancient History. Many tributes, both of envy and respect, were paid to his celebrity; among the latter an address is preserved, which was sent to him as a public character by the since celebrated Thomas Paine. Paine was at that time an officer of excise, and was the principal promoter of an application to parliament for increasing the salaries of excisemen. He had written a pamphlet on the subject, which he sent to Goldsmith, and solicited an interview for the sake of interesting him further in the scheme. In the year 1770 he visited France; but there is nothing in his correspondence to authenticate any interesting particulars of his journey.

The three important eras of his literary life were those of his appearance as a novelist, a poet, and a dramatic writer. 'The Vicar of Wakefield' was finished in 1763, but was not printed till three years after, when his 'Traveller,' in 1764, had established his fame. The ballad of 'Edwin and Angelina' came out in the following year; and in 1768 the appearance of his 'Good-Natured Man' made a bold and happy change in the reigning fashion of comedy, by substituting merriment for insipid sentiment. His 'Deserted Village' appeared in 1770; and his second comedy, 'She Stoops to Conquer,' in 1773. At intervals between those works he wrote his Roman and English Histories, besides biographies and introductions to books. These were all executed as tasks for the booksellers, but with a grace which no other man could give to task-work. His 'History of the Earth and Animated Nature' was the last and most amusing of these prose undertakings. In the mean time he had consumed more than the gains of all his labours by imprudent management, and had injured his health by occasional excesses of application.

His debts amounted to 4000*l.* "Was ever poet," said Dr. Johnson, "so trusted before?" To retrieve his finances he contracted for new works to the booksellers, engaged to write comedies for both the theatres, and projected a 'Universal Dictionary of the Sciences.' But his labours were terminated by a death not wholly unimputable to the imprudence which had pervaded his life. In a fever, induced by strangury and distress of mind, he made use of Dr. James's powders, under circumstances which he was warned would render them dangerous. The symptoms of his disease grew immediately more alarming, and he expired at the end of a few days, in his forty-sixth year.

Goldsmith's poetry enjoys a calm and steady popularity. It inspires us, indeed, with no admiration of daring design, or of fertile invention; but it presents, within its narrow limits, a distinct and unbroken view of poetical delightfulness. His descriptions and sentiments have the pure zest of nature. He is refined without false delicacy, and correct without insipidity. Perhaps there is an intellectual composure in his manner, which may, in some passages, be said to approach to the reserved and prosaic; but he unbends from this graver strain of reflection to tenderness, and even to playfulness, with an ease and grace almost exclusively his own; and connects extensive views of the happiness and interests of society with pictures of life that touch the heart by their familiarity. His language is certainly simple, though it is not cast in a rugged or careless mould. He is no disciple of the gaunt and famished school of simplicity. Deliberately as he wrote, he cannot be accused of wanting natural and idiomatic expression; but still it is select and refined expression. He uses the ornaments which must always distinguish true poetry from prose; and when he adopts colloquial plainness, it is with the utmost care and skill to avoid a vulgar humility. There is more of this sustained simplicity, of this chaste economy and choice of words, in Goldsmith than in any modern poet, or, perhaps, than would be attainable or desirable as a standard for every writer of rhyme. In extensive narrative poems such a style would be too difficult. There is a noble propriety even in the careless strength of great poems, as in the roughness of castle walls; and, generally speaking, where there is a long course of story or observation of life to be pursued, such exquisite touches as those of Goldsmith would be too costly materials for sustaining it. But

let us not imagine that the serene graces of this poet were not admirably adapted to his subjects. His poetry is not that of impetuous, but of contemplative sensibility; of a spirit breathing its regrets and recollections in a tone that has no dissonance with the calm of philosophical reflection. He takes rather elevated speculative views of the causes of good and evil in society; at the same time the objects which are most endeared to his imagination are those of familiar and simple interest; and the domestic affections may be said to be the only genii of his romance. The tendency towards abstracted observation in his poetry agrees peculiarly with the compendious form of expression which he studied;* whilst the homefelt joys, on which his fancy loved to repose, required at once the chastest and sweetest colours of language to make them harmonise with the dignity of a philosophical poem. His whole manner has a still depth of feeling and reflection, which gives back the image of nature unruffled and minutely. He has no redundant thoughts or false transports; but seems, on every occasion, to have weighed the impulse to which he surrendered himself. Whatever ardour or casual felicities he may have thus sacrificed, he gained a high degree of purity and self-possession. His chaste pathos makes him an insinuating moralist, and throws a charm of Claude-like softness over his descriptions of homely objects that would seem only fit to be the subjects of Dutch painting. But his quiet enthusiasm leads the affections to humble things without a vulgar association; and he inspires us with a fondness to trace the simplest recollections of Auburn, till we count the furniture of its alehouse and listen to

“The varnish’d clock that clicked behind the door.”

He betrays so little effort to make us visionary by the usual and palpable fictions of his art; he keeps apparently so close to realities, and draws certain conclusions respecting the radical interests of man so boldly and decidedly, that we pay him a compliment not always extended to the tuneful tribe—that of judging his sentiments by their strict and logical interpretation. In thus judging him by the test of his philosophical spirit, I am

* There is, perhaps, no couplet in English rhyme more perspicuously condensed than those two lines of ‘The Traveller,’ in which he describes the once flattering, vain, and happy character of the French:—

“They please, are pleased, they give to get esteem,
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.”

not prepared to say that he is a purely impartial theorist. He advances general positions respecting the happiness of society, founded on limited views of truth, and under the bias of local feelings. He contemplates only one side of the question. It must be always thus in poetry. Let the mind be ever so tranquilly disposed to reflection, yet, if it retains poetical sensation, it will embrace only those speculative opinions that fall in with the tone of the imagination. Yet I am not disposed to consider his principles as absurd, or his representations of life as the mere reveries of fancy.

In 'The Deserted Village' he is an advocate for the agricultural in preference to the commercial prosperity of a nation; and he pleads for the blessings of the simpler state, not with the vague predilection for the country which is common to poets, but with an earnestness that professes to challenge our soberest belief. Between Rousseau's celebrated letter on the influence of the sciences, and this popular poem, it will not be difficult to discover some resemblance of principles. They arrive at the same conclusions against luxury—the one from contemplating the ruins of a village, and the other from reviewing the downfall of empires. But the English poet is more moderate in his sentiments than the philosopher of Geneva; he neither stretches them to such obvious paradox, nor involves them in so many details of sophistry; nor does he blaspheme all philosophy and knowledge in pronouncing a malediction on luxury. Rousseau is the advocate of savageness, Goldsmith only of simplicity. Still, however, his theory is adverse to trade, and wealth, and arts. He delineates their evils, and disdains their vaunted benefits. This is certainly not philosophical neutrality; but a neutral balancing of arguments would have frozen the spirit of poetry. We must consider him as a pleader on that side of the question which accorded with the predominant state of his heart; and, considered in that light, he is the poetical advocate of many truths. He revisits a spot consecrated by his earliest and tenderest recollections; he misses the bloomy flush of life which had marked its once busy, but now depopulated scenes; he beholds the inroads of monopolising wealth, which had driven the peasant to emigration; and, tracing the sources of the evil to "Trade's proud empire," which has so often proved a transient glory and an enervating good, he laments the state of society "where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Undoubtedly, counter views of the subject might have presented themselves, both to the poet and philosopher. The imagination of either might have contemplated, in remote perspective, the replenishing of empires beyond the deep, and the diffusion of civilised existence, as eventual consolations of futurity for the present sufferings of emigration. But those distant and cold calculations of optimism would have been wholly foreign to the tone and subject of the poem. It was meant to fix our patriotic sympathy on an innocent and suffering class of the community, to refresh our recollections of the simple joys, the sacred and strong local attachments, and all the manly virtues of rustic life. Of such virtues the very remembrance is by degrees obliterated in the breasts of a commercial people. It was meant to rebuke the luxurious and selfish spirit of opulence, which, imitating the pomp and solitude of feudal abodes, without their hospitality and protection, surrounded itself with monotonous pleasure-grounds, which indignantly "spurned the cottage from the green."

On the subject of those misnamed improvements, by the way, in which

"Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose,"

the possessors themselves of those places have not been always destitute of compunctions similar to the sentiments of the poet. Mr. Potter, in his 'Observations on the Poor Laws,' has recorded an instance of it. "When the late Earl of Leicester was complimented upon the completion of his great design at Holkham, he replied, 'It is a melancholy thing to stand alone in one's country. I look round, not a house is to be seen but mine. I am the Giant of Giant Castle, and have eat up all my neighbours.'"

Although Goldsmith has not examined all the points and bearings of the question suggested by the changes in society which were passing before his eyes, he has strongly and affectingly pointed out the immediate evils with which those changes were pregnant. Nor, while the picture of Auburn delights the fancy, does it make a useless appeal to our moral sentiments. It may be well sometimes that society, in the very pride and triumph of its improvement, should be taught to pause and look back upon its former steps—to count the virtues that have been lost, or the victims that have been sacrificed, by its changes. Whatever may be the calculations of the political economist as to ultimate effects,

the circumstance of agricultural wealth being thrown into large masses, and of the small farmer exiled from his scanty domain, foreboded a baneful influence on the independent character of the peasantry, which it is by no means clear that subsequent events have proved to be either slight or imaginary.

Pleasing as Goldsmith is, it is impossible to ascribe variety to his poetical character; and Dr. Johnson has justly remarked something of an echoing resemblance of tone and sentiment between 'The Traveller' and 'The Deserted Village.' But the latter is certainly an improvement on its predecessor. The field of contemplation in 'The Traveller' is rather desultory. The other poem has an endearing locality, and introduces us to beings with whom the imagination contracts an intimate friendship. Fiction in poetry is not the reverse of Truth, but her soft and enchanted resemblance; and this ideal beauty of nature has been seldom united with so much sober fidelity as in the groups and scenery of 'The Deserted Village.'*

PAUL WHITEHEAD.

[Born, 1710. Died, 1774.]

PAUL WHITEHEAD was the son of a tailor in London, and, after a slender education, was placed as an apprentice to a woolleu-draper. He afterwards went to the Temple, in order to study law. Several years of his life (it is not quite clear at what period) were spent in the Fleet prison, owing to a debt which he foolishly contracted, by putting his name to a joint security for 3000*l.* at the request of his friend Fleetwood, the theatrical manager, who persuaded him that his signature was a mere matter of form. How he obtained his liberation we are not informed.

In the year 1735 he married a Miss Anne Dyer, with whom he obtained 10,000*l.* She was homely in her person, and very weak in intellect; but Whitehead, it appears, always treated her with respect and tenderness.

He became, in the same year, a satirical rhymer against the

* [Where is the poetry of which one-half is good? Is it 'The Æneid'? is it Milton's? is it Dryden's? is it any one's except Pope's and Goldsmith's? of which *all* is good.—Byron's *Works*, vol. iv. p. 306.]

ministry of Walpole; and having published his 'State Dunces,' a weak echo of the manner of 'The Dunciad,' he was patronised by the opposition, and particularly by Bubb Dodington. In 1739 he published 'The Manners,' a satire, in which, Mr. Chalmers says, he attacks everything venerable in the constitution. The poem is not worth disputing about; but it is certainly a mere personal lampoon, and no attack on the constitution. For this invective he was summoned to appear at the bar of the House of Lords, but concealed himself for a time, and the affair was dropped. The threat of prosecuting him, it was suspected, was meant as a hint to Pope, that those who satirised the great might bring themselves into danger; and Pope (it is pretended) became more cautious. There would seem, however, to be nothing very terrific in the example of a prosecution that must have been dropped either from clemency or conscious weakness. The ministerial journals took another sort of revenge, by accusing him of irreligion; and the evidence, which they candidly and consistently brought to substantiate the charge, was the letter of a student from Cambridge, who had been himself expelled from the university for atheism.

In 1744 he published another satire, entitled 'The Gymnasiad,' on the most renowned 'boxers of the day. It had at least the merit of being harmless.

By the interest of Lord Despensers he obtained a place under government, that of deputy-treasurer of the chamber; and, retiring to a handsome cottage which he purchased at Twickenham, he lived in comfort and hospitality, and suffered his small satire and politics to be equally forgotten. Churchill attacked him in a couplet:—

" May I (can worse disgrace on manhood fall?)
Be born a Whitehead, and baptized a Paul."

But though a libertine like Churchill, he seems not to have been the worse man of the two. Sir John Hawkins gives him the character of being good-hearted, even to simplicity; and says that he was esteemed at Twickenham for his kind offices, and for composing quarrels among his neighbours.

WALTER HARTE.

[Born about 1707. Died, 1774.]

THE father of this writer was a fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, prebendary of Wells, and vicar of St. Mary's at Taunton, in Somersetshire. When Judge Jefferies came to the assizes at Taunton, to execute vengeance on the sharers of Monmouth's rebellion, Mr. Harte waited upon him in private, and remonstrated against his severities. The judge listened to him attentively, though he had never seen him before. It was not in Jefferies' nature to practise humanity; but, in this solitary instance, he showed a respect for its advocate, and in a few months advanced the vicar to a prebendal stall in the cathedral of Bristol. At the Revolution the aged clergyman resigned his preferments, rather than take the oath of allegiance to King William; an action which raises our esteem of his intercession with Jefferies, while it adds to the unsalutary examples of men supporting tyrants, who have had the virtue to hate their tyranny.

The accounts that are preserved of his son, the poet, are not very minute or interesting. The date of his birth has not even been settled. A writer in 'The Gentleman's Magazine' fixes it about 1707; but, by the date of his degrees at the university, this supposition is utterly inadmissible; and, all circumstances considered, it is impossible to suppose that he was born later than 1700. He was educated at Marlborough College, and took his degree of Master of Arts at Oxford in 1720.* He was introduced to Pope at an early period of his life; and, in return for the abundant adulation which he offered to that poet, was rewarded with his encouragement, and even his occasional assistance in versification. Yet, admirer as he was of Pope, his manner leans more to the imitation of Dryden. In 1727 he published by subscription a volume of poems, which he dedicated to the Earl of Peterborough, who, as the author acknowledges, was the first patron of his Muse. In the preface it is boasted that the

* [This, according to Mr. Croker's showing ('Boswell,' vol. i. p. 378), is not the case. The Walter Harte who took his degree of A.M. at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1720, was not the poet; for he was of St. Mary's Hall, and made A.M. on the 21st of January, 1730. This one fact removes Mr. Campbell's after difficulties.]

poems had been chiefly written under the age of nineteen. As he must have been several years turned of twenty when he made this boast, it exposes either his sense or veracity to some suspicion. He either concealed what improvements he had made in the poems, or showed a bad judgment in not having improved them.

His next publications, in 1730 and 1735, were an 'Essay on Satire,' and another on 'Reason,' to both of which Pope is supposed to have contributed many lines. Two sermons, which he printed, were so popular as to run through five editions. He therefore rose, with some degree of clerical reputation, to be Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford; and was so much esteemed, that Lord Lyttelton recommended him to the Earl of Chesterfield, as the most proper tutor and travelling companion to his son. Harte had, indeed, every requisite for the preceptorship of Mr. Stanhope that a Grævius or Gronovius could have possessed, but none of those for which we should have supposed his father to have been most anxious. He was profoundly learned, but ignorant of the world, and awkward in his person and address. His pupil and he, however, after having travelled together for four years, parted with mutual regret; and Lord Chesterfield showed his regard for Harte by procuring for him a canoury of Windsor.

During his connexion with Lord Peterborough, that nobleman had frequently recommended to him to write the life of Gustavus Adolphus. For this historical work he collected, during his travels, much authentic and original information. It employed him for many years, and was published in 1759; but either from a vicious taste, or from his having studied the idioms of foreign languages till he had forgotten those of his own, he wrote his history in a style so obscure and uncouth, that its merits as a work of research were overlooked, and its reception from the public was cold and mortifying. Lord Chesterfield, in speaking of its being translated into German, piously wishes "that its author had translated it into English, as it was full of Germanisms, Latinisms, and all *isms* but Anglicisms." All the time, poor Harte thought he was writing a style less laboured and ornate than that of his contemporaries; and when George Hawkins, the bookseller, objected to some of his most violent phrases, he used to say, "George, that is what we call writing." This infatuation is the more surprising, that his sermons, already

mentioned, are marked by no such affectation of manner; and he published in 1764 'Essays on Husbandry,' which are said to be remarkable for their elegance and perspicuity.

Dr. Johnson, according to Boswell, said, "that Harte was excessively vain: that he left London on the day his 'Life of Gustavus' was published, to avoid the great praise he was to receive; but Robertson's 'History of Scotland' having come out the same day, he was ashamed to return to the scene of his mortification." This sarcastic anecdote comes in the suspicious company of a blunder as to dates, for Robertson's 'History of Scotland' was published a month after [before?] Harte's 'Life of Gustavus;' and it is besides rather an odd proof of a man's vanity that he should have run away from expected compliments.*

The failure of his historical work is alleged to have mortified him so deeply as to have affected his health. All the evidence of this, however, is deduced from some expressions in his letters, in which he complains of frequent indisposition. His biographers, first of all, take it for granted that a man of threescore could not possibly be indisposed from any other cause than from reading harsh reviews of his 'Life of Gustavus;' and then, very consistently, show the folly of his being grieved at the fate of his history, by proving that his work was reviewed, on the whole, rather in a friendly and laudatory manner. Harte, however, was so far from being a martyr, either to the justice or injustice of criticism, that he prepared a second edition of 'The Life of Gustavus' for the press; and announced, in a note, that he had finished the 'History of the Thirty Years' War in Germany.' His servant Dore, afterwards an innkeeper at Bath, got possession of his MSS., and this work is supposed to be irrecoverably lost. In the mean time he was struck with a palsy in 1766, which attacked him again in 1769, and put a period to his life five

* [Harte's 'Life of Gustavus Adolphus,' Mr. Chalmers tells us, was "a very unfortunate publication. Hume's 'House of Tudor' came out the same week, and Robertson's 'History of Scotland' only a month before; and, after perusing these, poor Harte's style could not certainly be endured." Mr. Chalmers, perhaps, may require to be told that industry in collecting, examining, and arranging the materials of history, and fidelity in using them, are the first qualities of an historian; that in those qualities Harte has not been surpassed; that in the opinion of military men Harte's is the best military history in our language; and that it is rising and will continue to rise in repute.—Southey, *Quar. Rev.* vol. xi. p. 497.]

years after. At the time of his death he was vicar of St. Austell and Blazy in Cornwall.

His poetry is little read ; and I am aware of hazarding the appearance of no great elegance of taste in professing myself amused and interested by several parts of it, particularly by his ‘Amaranth.’ In spite of pedantry and grotesqueness, he appears, in numerous passages, to have condensed the reflection and information of no ordinary mind.

JOHN ARMSTRONG.

[Born, 1709. Died, 1779.]

JOHN ARMSTRONG was born in Roxburghshire, in the parish of Castleton, of which his father was the clergyman. He completed his education, and took a medical degree, at the university of Edinburgh, with much reputation, in the year 1732. Amidst his scientific pursuits he also cultivated literature and poetry. One of his earliest productions in verse was an ‘Imitation of the Style of Shakspeare,’ which received the approbation of the poets Young and Thomson ; although humbler judges will perhaps be at a loss to perceive in it any striking likeness to his great original. Two other sketches, also purporting to be imitations of Shakspeare, are found among his works. They are the fragments of an unfinished tragedy. One of them, ‘The Dream of Progne,’ is not displeasing. In the other he begins the description of a storm by saying that

“The sun went down in wrath, the skies foam’d brass.”

It is uncertain in what year he came to London ; but in 1735 he published an anonymous pamphlet, severely ridiculing the quackery of untaught practitioners. He dedicated this performance to Joshua Ward, John Moore, and others, whom he styles “the Antacademic philosophers, and the generous despisers of the schools.” As a physician he never obtained extensive practice. This he himself imputed to his contempt of the little artifices which, he alleges, were necessary to popularity ; by others the failure was ascribed to his indolence and literary avocations ; and there was probably truth in both accounts. A disgraceful poem, entitled ‘The Œconomy of Love,’ which he published

after coming to London, might have also had its share in impeding his professional career. He corrected the nefarious production at a later period of his life, betraying at once a consciousness of its impurity and a hankering after its reputation. So unflattering were his prospects, after several years' residence in the metropolis, that he applied (it would seem without success) to be put on the medical staff of the forces then going out to the West Indies. His 'Art of Preserving Health' appeared in 1744, and justly fixed his poetical reputation. In 1746 he was appointed physician to the hospital for sick soldiers, behind Buckingham House. In 1751 he published his poem on 'Benevolence;' in 1753 his 'Epistle on Taste;' and in 1758 his prose 'Sketches by Launcelot Temple.' Certainly none of these productions exalted the literary character which he had raised to himself by his 'Art of Preserving Health.' The poems 'Taste' and 'Benevolence' are very insipid. His 'Sketches' have been censured more than they seem to deserve for "oaths and exclamations, and for a constant struggle to say smart things."* They contain indeed some expressions which might be wished away, but these are very few in number; and several of his essays are plain and sensible, without any effort at humour.

In 1760 he was appointed physician to the forces that went over to Germany. It is at this era of his life that we should expect its history to be the most amusing, and to have furnished the most important relics of observation, from his having visited a foreign country which was the scene of war, and where he was placed, by his situation, in the midst of interesting events. It may be pleasing to follow heroes into retirement; but we are also fond of seeing men of literary genius amidst the action and business of life. Of Dr. Armstrong in Germany, however, we have no other information than what is afforded by his epistle to Wilkes, entitled 'Day,' which is by no means a bright production, and chiefly devoted to subjects of eating. With Wilkes he was at that time on terms of friendship, but their cordiality was afterwards dissolved by politics. Churchill took a share in the quarrel, and denounced our author as a monster of ingratitude towards Wilkes, who had been his benefactor; and Wilkes, by subsequently attacking Armstrong in 'The Daily Advertiser,' showed that he did not disapprove of the satirist's reproaches.

* Chalmers's 'Biographical Dictionary.'

To such personalities Armstrong might have replied in the words of Prior,

“ To John I owed great obligation,
 But John unhappily thought fit
 To publish it to all the nation ;
 Sure John and I are more than quit.”

But though his temper was none of the mildest, he had the candour to speak with gratitude of Wilkes's former kindness, and acknowledged that he was indebted to him for his appointment in the army.

After the peace he returned to London, where his practice as well as acquaintance was confined to a small circle of friends, but among whom he was esteemed as a man of genius. From the originality of his mind, as well as from his reading and more than ordinary taste in the fine arts, his conversation is said to have been richly entertaining. Yet if the character which is supposed to apply to him in ‘The Castle of Indolence’* describe him justly, his colloquial delightfulness must have been intermittent. In 1770 he published a collection of his Miscellanies, containing a new prose piece, ‘The Universal Almanack,’ and ‘The Forced Marriage,’ a tragedy which had been offered to Garrick, but refused. The whole was ushered in by a preface, full of arrogant defiance to public opinion. “He had never courted the public,” he said ; “and if it was true what he had been told, that the best judges were on his side, he desired no more in the article of fame as a writer.” There was a good deal of matter in this collection that ought to have rendered its author more modest. ‘The Universal Almanack’ is a wretched production, to which the objections of his propensity to swearing and abortive efforts at humour apply more justly than to his ‘Sketches ;’ and his tragedy, ‘The Forced Marriage,’ is a *mortuum caput* of insipidity. In the following year he visited France and Italy, and published a short but splenetic account of his tour, under his old assumed name of Launcelot Temple. His last production was a volume of ‘Professional Essays,’ in which he took more trouble to abuse quacks than became his dignity,

* Armstrong's character is said to have been painted in the stanza of ‘The Castle of Indolence’ beginning

“ With him was sometimes join'd in silent walk
 (Profoundly silent, for they never spoke)
 One shier still, who quite detested talk,” &c.

and showed himself a man to whom the relish of life was not improving as its feast drew towards a close. He died in September, 1779,* of a hurt which he accidentally received in stepping out of a carriage; and, to the no small surprise of his friends, left behind him more than 3000*l.*, saved out of a very moderate income, arising principally from his half-pay.

His 'Art of Preserving Health' is the most successful attempt in our language to incorporate material science with poetry. Its subject had the advantage of being generally interesting; for there are few things that we shall be more willing to learn, either in prose or verse, than the means of preserving the outward bulwark of all other blessings. At the same time the difficulty of poetically treating a subject which presented disease in all its associations is one of the most just and ordinary topics of his praise. Of the triumphs of poetry over such difficulty he had no doubt high precedents, to show that strong and true delineations of physical evil are not without an attraction of fearful interest and curiosity to the human mind; and that the enjoyment which the fancy derives from conceptions of the bloom and beauty of healthful nature may be heightened by contrasting them with the opposite pictures of her mortality and decay. Milton had turned disease itself into a subject of sublimity, in the vision of Adam, with that intensity of the fire of genius which converts whatever materials it meets with into its aliment; and Armstrong, though his powers were not Miltonic, had the courage to attempt what would have repelled a more timid taste. His Muse might be said to show a professional intrepidity in choosing the subject; and, like the physician who braves contagion (if allowed to prolong the simile), we may add that she escaped, on the whole, with little injury from the trial. By the title of the poem the author judiciously gave his theme a moral as well as a medical interest. He makes the influence of the passions an entire part of it. By professing to describe only how health is to be preserved, and not how it is to be restored, he avoids the unmanageable horrors of clinical detail; and, though he paints the disease, wisely spares us its pharmaceutical treatment. His course through the poem is sustained with lucid management and propriety. What is explained of the animal economy is obscured

* [He died without a will, and was buried in the church of St. Paul, Covent-garden.]

by no pedantic jargon, but made distinct, and, to a certain degree, picturesque to the conception. We need not indeed be reminded how small a portion of science can be communicated in poetry; but the practical maxims of science, which the Muse has stamped with imagery and attuned to harmony, have so far an advantage over those which are delivered in prose, that they become more agreeable and permanent acquisitions of the memory. If the didactic path of his poetry is, from its nature, rather level, he rises above it, on several occasions, with a considerable strength of poetical feeling. Thus, in recommending the vicinity of woods around a dwelling, that may shelter us from the winds whilst it enables us to hear their music, he introduces the following pleasing lines:—

“ Oh! when the growling winds contend, and all
The sounding forest fluctuates in the storm,
To sink in warm repose, and hear the din
Howl o'er the steady battlements, delights
Above the luxury of vulgar sleep.”

In treating of diet he seems to have felt the full difficulty of an humble subject, and to have sought to relieve his precepts and physiological descriptions with all the wealth of allusion and imagery which his fancy could introduce. The appearance of a forced effort is not wholly avoided, even where he aims at superior strains, in order to garnish the meaner topics, as when he solemnly addresses the Naiads of all the rivers in the world in rehearsing the praises of a cup of water. But he closes the book in a strain of genuine dignity. After contemplating the effects of Time on the human body, his view of its influence dilates, with easy and majestic extension, to the universal structure of nature; and he rises from great to greater objects with a climax of sublimity:—

“ What does not fade? the tower that long had stood
The crush of thunder and the warring winds,
Shook by the slow, but sure destroyer, Time,
Now hangs in doubtful ruins o'er its base.
And flinty pyramids, and walls of brass,
Descend: the Babylonian spires are sunk;
Achaia, Rome, and Egypt moulder down.
Time shakes the stable tyranny of thrones,
And tottering empires rush by their own weight.
This huge rotundity we tread grows old;
And all those worlds that roll around the sun,
The sun himself, shall die.”

He may, in some points, be compared advantageously with the

best blank-verse writers of the age; and he will be found free from their most striking defects. He has not the ambition of Akenside nor the verbosity of Thomson. On the other hand, shall we say that he is equal in genius to either of those poets? Certainly, his originality is nothing like Thomson's; and the rapture of his heroic sentiments is unequal to that of the author of 'The Pleasures of Imagination.' For, in spite of the too frequently false pomp of Akenside, we still feel that he has a devoted moral impulse, not to be mistaken for the cant of morality—a zeal in the worship of Virtue, which places her image in a high and hallowed light. Neither has his versification the nervous harmony of Akenside's, for his habit of pausing almost uniformly at the close of the line gives an air of formality to his numbers. His vein has less mixture than Thomson's; but its ore is not so fine. Sometimes we find him trying his strength with that author in the same walk of description, where, though correct and concise, he falls beneath the poet of 'The Seasons' in rich and graphic observation. He also contributed to 'The Castle of Indolence' some stanzas, describing the diseases arising from sloth, which form rather an useful background to the luxuriant picture of the Castle than a prominent part of its enchantment.

On the whole he is likely to be remembered as a poet of judicious thoughts and correct expression; and, as far as the rarely successful application of verse to subjects of science can be admired, an additional merit must be ascribed to the hand which has reared poetical flowers on the dry and difficult ground of philosophy.

JOHN LANGHORNE.

[Born, 1735. Died, 1779.]

JOHN LANGHORNE was the son of a beneficed clergyman in Lincolnshire. He was born at Kirkby Steven, in Westmoreland. His father dying when he was only four years old, the charge of giving him his earliest instruction devolved upon his mother, and she fulfilled the task with so much tenderness and care as to leave an indelible impression of gratitude upon his memory. He recorded the virtues of this parent on her tomb, as well as in an affectionate monody. Having finished his

classical education at the school of Appleby, in his eighteenth year, he engaged himself as private tutor in a family near Rippon. His next employment was that of assistant to the free-school of Wakefield. While in that situation he took deacon's orders; and, though he was still very young, gave indications of popular attraction as a preacher. He soon afterwards went as preceptor into the family of Mr. Cracroft, of Hackthorn, where he remained for a couple of years, and during that time entered his name at Clare Hall, Cambridge, though he never resided at his college, and consequently never obtained any degree. He had at Hackthorn a numerous charge of pupils, and, as he has not been accused of neglecting them, his time must have been pretty well occupied in tuition; but he found leisure enough to write and publish a great many pieces of verse, and to devote so much of his attention to a fair daughter of the family, Miss Anne Cracroft, as to obtain the young lady's partiality, and ultimately her hand. He had given her some instructions in the Italian, and, probably trusting that she was sufficiently a convert to the sentiment of that language, which pronounces that "all time is lost which is not spent in love," he proposed immediate marriage to her. She had the prudence, however, though secretly attached to him, to give him a firm refusal for the present; and our poet, struck with despondency at the disappointment, felt it necessary to quit the scene, and accepted of a curacy in the parish of Dagenham. The cares of love, it appeared, had no bad effect on his diligence as an author. He allayed his despair by an apposite ode to 'Hope;' and continued to pour out numerous productions in verse and prose, with that florid facility which always distinguished his pen. Among these, his 'Letters of Theodosius and Constantia' made him, perhaps, best known as a prose-writer. His 'Letters on Religious Retirement' were dedicated to Bishop Warburton, who returned him a most encouraging letter on his just sentiments in matters of religion; and, what was coming nearer to the author's purpose, took an interest in his worldly concerns. He was much less fortunate in addressing a poem, entitled 'The Viceroy,' to the Earl of Halifax, who was then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. This heartless piece of adulation was written with the view of obtaining his Lordship's patronage; but the viceroy was either too busy or too insensible to praise to take any notice of Langhorne.

In his poetry of this period we find his 'Visions of Fancy,' his first part of 'The Enlargement of the Mind,' and his pastoral 'Valour and Genius,' written in answer to Churchill's 'Prophecy of Famine.' In consequence of the gratitude of the Scotch for this last poem, he was presented with the diploma of doctor in divinity by the University of Edinburgh. His profession and religious writings gave an appearance of propriety to this compliment, which otherwise would not have been discoverable from any striking connexion of ideas between a doctorship of divinity and an eclogue on 'Valour and Genius.'

He came to reside permanently in London in 1764, having obtained the curacy and lectureship of St. John's, Clerkenwell. Being soon afterwards called to be assistant-preacher at Lincoln's-inn Chapel, he had there to preach before an audience which comprehended a much greater number of learned and intelligent persons than are collected in ordinary congregations; and his pulpit oratory was put to what is commonly reckoned a severe test. It proved to be also an honourable test. He continued in London for many years, with the reputation of a popular preacher and a ready writer. His productions in prose, besides those already named, were his 'Sermons,' 'Effusions of Fancy and Friendship,' 'Frederick and Pharamond, or the Consolations of Human Life,' 'Letters between St. Evremond and Waller,' a translation of Plutarch's 'Lives,' written in conjunction with his brother, which might be reckoned a real service to the bulk of the reading community,* 'Memoirs of Collins,' and a translation of Denina's 'Dissertation on the Ancient Republics of Italy.' He also wrote for several years in 'The Monthly Review.' An attempt which he made in tragedy, entitled 'The Fatal Prophecy,' proved completely unsuccessful; and he so far acquiesced in the public decision as never to print it more than once. In an humbler walk of poetry he composed 'The Country Justice' and 'The Fables of Flora.' The 'Fables' are very garish. 'The Country Justice' was written from observations on the miseries of the poor, which came home to his own heart; and it has at least the merit of drawing our attention to the substantial interests of humanity.†

* The translation of Plutarch has been since corrected and improved by Mr. Wrangham.

† [Perhaps on some inhospitable shore
The houseless wretch a widow'd parent bore;

In 1767, after a courtship of several years, he obtained Miss Cracroft in marriage, having corresponded with her from the time he had left her father's house; and her family procured for him the living of Blagden, in Somersetshire; but his domestic happiness with her was of short continuance, as she died of her first child—the son who lived to publish Dr. Langhorne's works. In 1772 he married another lady, of the name of Thomson, the daughter of a country gentleman, near Brough, in Westmoreland; and shortly after their marriage he made a tour with his bride through some part of France and Flanders. At the end of a few years he had the misfortune to lose her, by the same fatal cause which had deprived him of his former partner. Otherwise his prosperity increased. In 1777 he was promoted to a prebend in the cathedral of Wells; and in the same year was enabled to extend his practical usefulness and humanity by being put in the commission of the peace in his own parish of Blagden. From his insight into the abuses of parochial office he was led at this time to compose the poem of 'The Country Justice,' already mentioned. The tale of 'Owen of Carron' was the last of his

Who then, no more by golden prospects led,
Of the poor Indian begg'd a leafy bed.
Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that parent mourn'd her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops, mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery, baptized in tears."

Langhorne, *The Country Justice*.

This passage, beautiful in itself, has an associated interest beyond its beauty. "The only thing I remember," says Sir Walter Scott, "which was remarkable in Burns' manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow; his dog sitting in misery on one side; on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:—

'Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,' &c.

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure."—Lockhart's *Life of Burns*, 8vo. ed., p. 151.

Burns, it is said, foretold the future fame of Scott: "That boy will be heard of yet:—"

"'Tis certainly mysterious that the name
Of prophets and of poets is the same.]"

works. It will not be much to the advantage of this story to compare it with the simple and affecting ballad of 'Gill Morrice,' from which it was drawn. Yet, having read 'Owen of Carron' with delight when I was a boy, I am still so far a slave to early associations as to retain some predilection for it.

The particular cause of Dr. Langhorne's death, at the age of forty-four, is not mentioned by his biographers, further than by a surmise that it was accelerated by intemperance. From the general decency of his character, it may be presumed that his indulgences were neither gross nor notorious, though habits short of such excess might undermine his constitution.

It is but a cheerless task of criticism to pass with a cold look and irreverent step over the literary memories of men who, though they may rank low in the roll of absolute genius, have yet possessed refinement, information, and powers of amusement, above the level of their species, and such as would interest and attach us in private life. Of this description was Langhorne; an elegant scholar and an amiable man. He gave delight to thousands from the press and the pulpit; and had sufficient attraction, in his day, to sustain his spirit and credit as a writer, in the face of even Churchill's envenomed satire. Yet, as a prose writer, it is impossible to deny that his rapidity was the effect of lightness more than vigour; and, as a poet, there is no ascribing to him either fervour or simplicity. His Muse is elegantly languid. She is a fine lady, whose complexion is rather indebted to art than to the healthful bloom of nature. It would be unfair not to except from this observation several plain and manly sentiments which are expressed in his poem 'On the Enlargement of the Mind,' and some passages in his 'Country Justice,' which are written with genuine feeling.

THOMAS PENROSE.

[Born, 1743. Died, 1779.]

THE history of Penrose displays a dash of warlike adventure, which has seldom enlivened the biography of our poets. He was not led to the profession of arms, like Gascoigne, by his poverty, or like Quarles, Davenant, and Waller, by political circumstances; but, in a mere fit of juvenile ardour, gave up his

studies at Oxford, where he was preparing to become a clergyman, and left the banners of the church for those of the battle. This was in the summer of 1762, when the unfortunate expedition against Buenos Ayres sailed under the command of Captain Macnamara. It consisted of three ships:—the Lord Clive, of 64 guns; the Ambuscade, of 40, on board of which Penrose acted as lieutenant of marines; the Gloria, of 38—and some inferior vessels. Preparatory to an attack on Buenos Ayres, it was deemed necessary to begin with the capture of Nova Colonia, and the ships approached closely to the fortress of that settlement. The men were in high spirits; military music sounded on board; while the new uniforms and polished arms of the marines gave a splendid appearance to the scene. Penrose, the night before, had written and despatched to his mistress in England a poetical address, which evinced at once the affection and serenity of his heart on the eve of danger. The gay preparative was followed by a heavy fire of several hours, at the end of which, when the Spanish batteries were almost silenced, and our countrymen in immediate expectation of seeing the enemy strike his colours, the Lord Clive was found to be on fire; and the same moment which discovered the flames showed the impossibility of extinguishing them. A dreadful spectacle was then exhibited. Men who had, the instant before, assured themselves of wealth and conquest, were seen crowding to the sides of the ship, with the dreadful alternative of perishing by fire or water. The enemy's fire was redoubled at the sight of their calamity. Out of Macnamara's crew of 340 men, only 78 were saved. Penrose escaped with his life on board the Ambuscade, but received a wound in the action; and the subsequent hardships which he underwent, in a prize-sloop in which he was stationed, ruined the strength of his constitution. He returned to England, resumed his studies at Oxford, and, having taken orders, accepted of the curacy of Newbury, in Berkshire, of which his father was the rector. He resided there for nine years, having married the lady already alluded to, whose name was Mary Sloccock. A friend at last rescued him from this obscure situation, by presenting him with the rectory of Beckington and Standerwick, in Somersetshire, worth about 500*l.* a-year. But he came to his preferment too late to enjoy it. His health, having never recovered from the shock of his American service, obliged him, as a last remedy,

to try the hot wells at Bristol, at which place he expired in his thirty-sixth year.

HENRY BROOKE.

[Born, 1706. Died, 1783.]

HENRY BROOKE was born in the county of Cavan, in Ireland, where his father was a clergyman. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin, and was a pupil of Dr. Sheridan; but he was taken from the university at the age of seventeen, and sent to England to study the law at the Temple. On his coming to London he brought letters of introduction (probably from Dr. Sheridan) to Pope and Swift, both of whom noticed him as a youth of promising talents. At the end of a few years he returned to Dublin, and endeavoured to practise as a chamber counsel; but, without having obtained much business, involved himself in the cares of a family by marrying a beautiful cousin of his own, who had been consigned to his guardianship. It is related, not much to his credit, that he espoused her in her thirteenth year. The union, however, proved to be as happy as mutual affection could make it. Having paid another visit to London, he renewed his acquaintance with Pope; and, with his encouragement, published his poem entitled 'Universal Beauty.' This poem forms a curious but unacknowledged prototype of Darwin's 'Botanic Garden.' It has a resemblance to that work in manner, in scientific spirit, and in volant geographical allusion, too striking to be supposed accidental; although Darwin has gone beyond his original in prominent and ostentatious imagery.

After publishing his poem he returned to Ireland, and applied to his profession; but his heart was not in it, and he came once more to England to try his fortune as a man of letters. In that character he was cordially received by the Prince of Wales and his friends, as an accession to their phalanx; and this patronage was the more flattering to Brooke, as the maintenance of patriotic principles was the declared bond of union at the Prince's court. He had begun to translate the 'Jerusalem' of Tasso, and had proceeded as far as the fourth book; but it is said that he was invited to quit this task, that he might write a tragedy in the cause of Freedom, which should inspirit the people of England. Glover, it was pretended, was the epic champion of Liberty, who had

pointed her spear at Walpole ; and Brooke was now to turn the arm of Tragedy against him, by describing a tyrannic minister, in his play of 'Gustavus Vasa.' With regard to Glover, this was certainly untrue. His poetry breathed the spirit of liberty, but he was above the wretched taste of making a venerable antique subject the channel of grotesque allusion to modern parties or living characters. If Brooke's *Trollio* was really meant for Walpole, the minister's friends need not have been much alarmed at the genius of a tragic poet who could descend to double meanings. They might have felt secure, one would think, that the artifice of poets could not raise any dangerous zeal in Englishmen against their malt or excise bills, by the most cunning hints about Thermopylæ or Dalecarlia. But, as if they had been in collusion with Brooke to identify Walpole with *Trollio*, they interdicted the representation of the play. The author therefore published it, and got, it is said, 800*l.* by the sale.

He lived for some time very comfortably on this acquisition, at Twickenham, in the neighbourhood of Pope, till the state of his health obliged him to seek the benefit of his native air ; when, to the surprise of those who knew him, he determined to remain in Ireland. This resolution was owing to the influence of his wife, who apprehended that his political zeal among his English friends might lead him to some intemperate publication. Brooke, however, had too much of the politician to lose it by returning to his native soil. In the year of the rebellion he addressed his 'Farmer's Letters' to his countrymen, and they were supposed to have had a beneficial influence on their temper at a critical period. He was also, to his honour, one of the earliest advocates for alleviating the penal laws against the Catholics. Their pacific behaviour in 1745 had certainly furnished him with a powerful argument in their behalf.

He wrote thirteen dramatic pieces, of which 'Gustavus Vasa' and 'The Earl of Essex' were the only two that ever reached the English stage. The rest were not heard of in England till his collected works were published in 1778 ; but his novel, 'The Fool of Quality,' gave some popularity to his name. In Ireland Lord Chesterfield gave him the appointment of a barrack-master, which he held till his death. The accounts of his private circumstances, in that kingdom, are given rather confusedly by his biographers ; but it appears, upon the whole, that they were

unfortunate. He supported an only brother in his house, with a family as numerous as his own, and ruined himself by his generosity. At last, the loss of his wife, after a union of fifty years, the death of many of his children, and his other misfortunes, overwhelmed his intellects. Of this imbecility there were, indeed, some manifestations in the latest productions of his pen.

JOHN SCOTT.

[Born, 1730. Died, 1783.]

THIS worthy and poetical Quaker was the son of a draper in London, and was born in the borough of Southwark. His father retired to Amwell, in Hertfordshire, when our poet was only ten years old; and this removal, together with the circumstance of his never having been inoculated for the small-pox, proved an unfortunate impediment to his education. He was put to a day-school in the neighbouring town of Ware, where not much instruction was to be had; and from that little he was called away upon the first alarm of infection. Such, indeed, was his constant apprehension of the disease, that he lived for twenty years within twenty miles of London, without visiting it more than once. About the age of seventeen, however, he betook himself to reading. His family, from their cast of opinions and society, were not likely to abound either in books or conversation relating to literature; but he happened to form an acquaintance and friendship with a neighbour of the name of Frogley, a master bricklayer, who, though an uneducated man, was an admirer of poetry, and by his intercourse with this friend he strengthened his literary propensity. His first poetical essays were transmitted to 'The Gentleman's Magazine.' In his thirtieth year he published four elegies, which were favourably received. His poems entitled 'The Garden' and 'Amwell,' and his volume of collected poetical pieces, appeared after considerable intervals; and his 'Critical Essays on the English Poets' two years after his death. These, with his 'Remarks on the Poems of Rowley,' are all that can be called his literary productions. He published also two political tracts, in answer to Dr. Johnson's 'Patriot' and 'False Alarm.' His critical essays contain some judicious remarks on Denham and Dyer; but his verbal strictures on Collins and Goldsmith

discover a miserable insensibility to the soul of those poets. His own verses are chiefly interesting where they breathe the pacific principles of the Quaker; while his personal character engages respect, from exhibiting a public spirit and liberal taste beyond the habits of his brethren. He was well informed in the laws of his country; and, though prevented by his tenets from becoming a magistrate, he made himself useful to the inhabitants of Amwell by his offices of arbitration, and by promoting schemes of local improvement. He was constant in his attendance at turnpike meetings, navigation trusts, and commissions of land-tax. Ware and Hertford were indebted to him for the plan of opening a spacious road between those two towns. His treatises on the highway and parochial laws were the result of long and laudable attention to those subjects.

His verses, and his amiable character, gained him by degrees a large circle of literary acquaintance, which included Dr. Johnson, Sir William Jones, Mrs. Montague, and many other distinguished individuals; and having submitted to inoculation in his thirty-sixth year, he was from that period more frequently in London. In his retirement he was fond of gardening; and, in amusing himself with the improvement of his grounds, had excavated a grotto in the side of a hill, which his biographer, Mr. Hoole, writing in 1785, says, was still shown as a curiosity in that part of the country. He was twice married. His first wife was the daughter of his friend Frogley. He died at a house in Radcliff, of a putrid fever, and was interred there in the burying ground of the Friends.

GEORGE ALEXANDER STEVENS.

[Born, 17—. Died, 1784.]

IF Fletcher of Saltoun's maxim be true, "that the popular songs of a country are of more importance than its laws," Stevens must be regarded as an important criminal in literature. But the songs of a country rather record than influence the state of popular morality. Stevens celebrated hard drinking, because it was the fashion; and his songs are now seldom vociferated, because that fashion is gone by. George was a leading member of all the great bacchanalian clubs of his day—the Choice Spirits, Comus' Court, and others of similar importance and utility.

Before the scheme of his lecture brought him a fortune, he had frequently to do penance in jail for the debts of the tavern; and, on one of those occasions, wrote a poem entitled 'Religion,' expressing a penitence for his past life; which was probably sincere while his confinement lasted. He was also author of 'Tom Fool,' a novel; 'The Birthday of Folly,' a satire; and several dramatic pieces of slender consequence.

WILLIAM WHITEHEAD.

[Born, 1715. Died, 1785.]

WILLIAM WHITEHEAD was born in Cambridge. "It would be vain," says his biographer, Mason, the poet, "to conceal that he was of low extraction; because the secret has been more than once divulged by those who gain what they think an honest livelihood by publishing the lives of the living; and it would be injurious to his memory, because his having risen much above the level of his origin bespeaks an intrinsic merit, which mere ancestry can never confer. Let it then be rather boasted than whispered that he was the son of a baker." This is really making too much of a small thing. Every day certainly witnesses more wonderful events than the son of a tradesman rising to the honours of a poet laureate and the post of a travelling tutor. Why Mason should speak of the secret of his extraction being divulged is difficult to conceive, unless we suppose that Whitehead was weak enough to have wished to conceal it; a suspicion, however, which it is not fair to indulge, when we look to the general respectability of his personal character, and to the honest pride which he evinced in voluntarily discharging his father's debts. But, with all respect for Whitehead, be it observed that the annals of "*baking*" can boast of much more illustrious individuals having sprung from the loins of its professors.

His father, however, was a man of taste and expenditure much above the pitch of a baker. He spent most of his time in ornamenting a piece of ground, near Grantchester, which still goes by the name of *Whitehead's Folly*; and he left debts behind him at his death that would have done honour to the prodigality of a poet. In consequence of his father dying in such circumstances, young Whitehead's education was accomplished with great difficulty, by the strictest economy on his own part, and

the assistance of his mother, whose discharge of duty to him he has gratefully recorded. At the age of fourteen he was put to Winchester School, upon the foundation. He was there distinguished by his love of reading, and by his facility in the production of English verse; and before he was sixteen he had written an entire comedy. When the Earl of Peterborough, accompanied by Pope, visited Winchester School, in the year 1733, he gave ten guineas to be distributed in prizes among the boys. Pope prescribed the subject, which was "Peterborough," and young Whitehead was one of the six who shared the prize-money. It would appear that Pope had distinguished him on this occasion, as the reputation of his notice was afterwards of advantage to Whitehead when he went to the university. He also gained some applause at Winchester for his powers of acting, in the part of Marcia, in 'Cato.' He was a graceful reciter, and is said to have been very handsome in his youth. Even his likeness, which is given in Mason's edition of his works, though it was taken when he was advanced in years, has an elegant and prepossessing countenance. It was observed that his school friendships were usually contracted with youths superior to himself in station. Without knowing his individual associates, it is impossible to say whether vanity, worldly prudence, or a taste for refined manners, predominated in this choice; but it is observable that he made his way to prosperity by such friendships, and he seems to have early felt that he had the power of acquiring them. At Winchester he was school-tutor to Mr. Wallop, afterwards Lord Lyvington, son to the Earl of Portsmouth.

At the election to New College in 1735 he was treated with some injustice, being placed too low in the roll of candidates; and was obliged to leave Winchester without obtaining from thence a presentation to either university. He, however, obtained a scholarship at Clare Hall, Cambridge, from the very circumstance of that low extraction for which Mason apologises. Being the orphan son of a baker in Cambridge, he was thought the best entitled to be put on the foundation of Pyke, who had been of that trade and town. His scholarship was worth only four shillings a-week, and he was admitted as a sizer; but the inferiority of his station did not prevent his introduction to the best society; and, before he left the university, he made himself known by several publications, particularly by his 'Essay on the

Danger of writing Verse.' Having obtained a fellowship and a master's degree, he was on the point of taking orders, when his intention was prevented, in consequence of his being invited by the Earl of Jersey to be the domestic tutor of his son, Viscount Villiers. This situation was made peculiarly agreeable to him by the kindness of the Jersey family, and by the abundant leisure which it afforded him to pursue his studies, as well as to enjoy public amusements. From frequenting the theatre, he was led to attempt dramatic composition. His first effort was a little farce on the subject of the Pretender, which has never been published. In 1750 he brought upon the stage a regular tragedy, 'The Roman Father,' an imitation of Corneille's 'Horace.' Mason has employed a good deal of criticism on this drama to prove something analogous to the connoisseur's remark in Goldsmith, "that the piece would have been better if the artist had bestowed more pains upon it." It is acknowledged, at the same time, by his biographer, that 'The Roman Father' was long enough in its author's hands to receive many alterations; but these had not been for the better. It was put through the mangle of Garrick's criticism; and he, according to Mason, was a lover of no beauties in a play but those which gave an opportunity for the display of his own powers of representing sudden and strong effects of passion. This remark of Mason accords with Johnson's complaint of Garrick's projected innovations in his own tragedy: "That fellow," he said, "wants me to make Mahomet mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels." For the faults of the piece, however, it is but circuitous and conjectural justice to make Garrick responsible; and, among those faults, the mode of the heroine's death is not the slightest. After Corneille's heroine has been stabbed by her brother, she appears no more upon the stage. The piece, to be sure, drags heavily after this event; for, in fact, its interest is concluded. Whitehead endeavours to conquer this difficulty by keeping her alive, after she has been wounded, in order to have a conference with her father, which she terminates by tearing the bandages off her wounds, and then expires. But the effect of her death by this process is more disagreeable than even the tedium of Corneille's fifth act. It inspires us with a sore physical shuddering, instead of tragic commiseration.*

* The directions for tearing off the bandages are given in Mason's edition

In 1754 he brought out at Drury Lane his tragedy of 'Creusa,' a play which, though seldom read and never acted, is by no means destitute of dramatic feeling and conception. The subject is taken from the 'Ion' of Euripides; but with bold, and sometimes interesting, alterations. In the Greek story, Creusa, Princess of Athens, who had been violated by Apollo, had concealed her shame by exposing her infant. She had afterwards married Xuthus, a military stranger, who at her father's death succeeded, in her right, to the throne of Athens. But their marriage-bed having proved fruitless, they arrive at Delphi, to consult the oracle for an heir. The oracle pronounces that the first whom Xuthus shall meet in going out of the temple is his son. He meets with Ion, a youth of unknown parentage, who had been reared as a servant in the holy place, and who, in fact, is the child of Creusa, whom she had exposed. Xuthus embraces Ion for his son; and, comparing his age with the date of a love adventure, which he recollected in former times, concludes that Ion is the offspring of that amour. It is no sooner known that Xuthus has found a son of his own blood, than the tutor of Creusa exhorts the queen to resent this indignity on her childless state, and to rid herself of a stepson who may embitter and endanger her future days. The tutor attempts to poison Ion, but fails; Creusa is pursued to the altar by her own son, who is with difficulty prevented from putting her to death. But a discovery of their consanguinity takes place; Minerva descends from heaven to confirm the proofs of it; and having predicted that Ion shall reign in Athens, and prudently admonished the mother and son to let King Xuthus remain in the old belief of his being father to Ion, leaves the piece to conclude triumphantly. Such is the bare outline of the ancient drama. Whitehead's story is entirely tragical, and stripped of miraculous agency. He gives a human father (Nicander) to (Ilyssus) the secret child of Creusa. This Nicander, the first lover of the lady, had, on the discovery of their attachment, been driven into banishment by Creusa's father, but had carried with him their new-born offspring; and both he and the infant were supposed to have been murdered in their flight from Athens. Nicander, however, had made his way to

of Whitehead's Works. I observe that in later editions of the play they are omitted; but still, with this improved attention to humanity, the heroine protracts her dying scene too long.

Delphi, had intrusted his child to the temple, and, living in the neighbourhood, passed (under the name of Aletes) for the tutor of the mysterious orphan. Having obtained a high character for sagacity, he was consulted by the priestess Pythia herself; and he is represented as having an influence upon her *responses* (it is an English poet, we must recollect, and not a Greek one, who is telling the story). Meanwhile, Creusa, having been forced to give her hand, without her heart, to Xuthus, is still a mourner, like Lady Randolph,* when, at the end of eighteen years from the birth of Ilyssus, she comes to consult the oracle. Struck, at the first sight of Ilyssus, by his likeness to Nicander, she conceives an instinctive fondness for the youth. The oracle declares him heir to the throne of Athens; but this is accompanied with a rumour of bitter intelligence to Creusa, that he is really the son of Xuthus. Her Athenians are indignant at the suspicion of Xuthus's collusion with the oracle to entail the sceptre of their kingdom on his foreign offspring. Her confidant (like the tutor in Euripides) rouses her pride as a queen, and her jealousy as a mother, against this intruder. He tries every artifice to turn her heart against Ilyssus; still she retains a partiality for him, and resists the proposal of attempting his life. At length, however, her husband insults her with expressing his triumph in his new-found heir, and reproaches her with the plebeian grave of the first object of her affection. In the first transport of her wrath she meets the Athenian enemy of Ion, and a guilty assent is wrung from her that Ilyssus shall be poisoned at the banquet. Aletes, ignorant of the plot, had hitherto dreaded to disclose himself to Creusa, lest her agitation should prematurely interfere with his project of placing his son on the throne of Athens. He meets her, however, at last, and she swoons at recognising him to be Nicander. When he tells her that Ilyssus is her son, she has in turn to unfold the dreadful confession of having consented to his death. She flies to the banquet, if possible, to avert his fate; and arrives in time to snatch the poisoned chalice from his hand. But though she is thus rescued from remorse, she is not extricated from despair. To Nicander she has to say, "Am I not Xuthus' wife? and what

* If any recollection of Home's tragedy should occur to the reader of Whitehead's, it is but fair to remind him that the play of 'Creusa' was produced a year or two earlier than that of 'Douglas.'

art thou?" She anticipates that the kingdom of Athens must be involved in bloodshed for her sake: one victim she deems would suffice, and determines that it shall be herself. Having therefore exacted an oath from Xuthus and the Athenians that Ilyssus shall succeed to the throne of her fathers, she drinks of the fatal goblet.

The piece contains some strong situations; its language is unaffected; and it fixes the attention (if I may judge from my own experience) from the first to the last scene. The pure and holy character of the young Ilyssus is brought out, I have no hesitation to say, more interestingly than in Euripides, by the display of his reverential gratitude to the queen upon the first tenderness which she shows him, and by the agony of his ingenuous spirit on beholding it withdrawn. And, though Creusa's character is not unspotted, she draws our sympathy to some of the deepest conceivable agonies of human nature. I by no means wish to deny that the tragedy has many defects, or to speak of it as a great production; but it does not deserve to be consigned to oblivion.

The exhibition of Creusa was hardly over when Whitehead was called upon to attend his pupil and Viscount Nuneham, son to Earl Harcourt, upon their travels. The two young noblemen were nearly of an age, and had been intimate from their childhood. They were both so much attached to Whitehead as to congratulate each other on his being appointed their common tutor. They continued abroad for about two years, during which they visited France, Italy, and Germany. In his absence Lady Jersey made interest enough to obtain for him the offices of secretary and registrar of the order of the Bath. On his return to England he was pressed by Lord Jersey to remain with the family; and he continued to reside with them for fourteen years, except during his visits to the seat of Lord Harcourt. His pupils, who had now sunk the idea of their governor in the more agreeable one of their friend, showed him through life unremitted marks of affection.

Upon the death of Cibber, in 1757, he succeeded to the place of poet laureate. The appointment had been offered to Gray as a sinecure, but it was not so when it was given to Whitehead. Mason wonders why this was the case, when George II. had no taste for poetry. His wonder is quite misplaced. If the king had had a taste for poetry, he would have abolished the laureate odes; as he had not, they were continued. Our author's official

lyrics are said by Mason to contain no fulsome panegyric, a fact for which I hope his word may be taken; for to ascertain it by perusing the strains themselves would be an alarming undertaking. But the laurel was to Whitehead no very enviable distinction. He had something more to pay for it than

“*His quit-rent ode, his peppercorn of praise.*” *

At first he was assailed by the hostility of all the petty tribe, among whom it is lamentable, as Gray remarks, to find beings capable of envying even a poet laureate. He stood their attacks for some time without a sensible diminution of character; and his comedy of ‘The School for Lovers,’ which was brought out in 1762, before it was the fashion to despise him, was pretty well received, as an easy and chaste imitation of the manners of well-bred life. But in the same year the rabid satire of Churchill sorely smote his reputation. Poor Whitehead made no reply. Those who, with Mason, consider his silence as the effect of a pacific disposition, and not of imbecility, will esteem him the more for his forbearance, and will apply to it the maxim, *Rarum est eloquenter loqui varias eloquenter tacere*. Among his unpublished MSS. there were even found verses expressing a compliment to Churchill’s talents. There is something no doubt very amiable in a good and candid man taking the trouble to cement rhymes upon the genius of a blackguard who had abused him; but the effect of all this candour upon his own generation reminds us how much more important it is, for a man’s own advantage, that he should be formidable than harmless. His candour could not prevent his poetical character from being completely killed by Churchill. Justly, some will say; he was too stupid to resist his adversary. I have a different opinion, both as to the justice of his fate and the cause of his abstaining from retaliation. He certainly wrote too many insipid things; but a tolerable selection might be made from his works that would discover his talents to be no legitimate object of contempt; and there is not a trait of arrogance or vanity in any one of his compositions that deserved to be publicly humiliated. He was not a satirist; but he wanted rather the gall than the ingenuity that is requisite for the character. If his heart had been full of spleen, he was not so wholly destitute of humour as not to have been able to deal some hard blows at Churchill, whose private cha-

* [Cowper, *Table Talk.*]

racter was a broad mark, and even whose writings had many rapid parts that were easily assailable. Had Whitehead done so, the world would probably have liked him the better for his pugnacity. As it was, his name sank into such a byword of contempt that Garrick would not admit his 'Trip to Scotland' on the stage unless its author was concealed. He also found it convenient to publish his pleasing tale, entitled 'Variety,' anonymously. The public applauded both his farce and his poem, because it was not known that they were Whitehead's.

In 1769 he obtained an unwilling permission from Lord Jersey to remove to private lodgings, though he was still a daily expected guest at his lordship's table in town; and he divided his summers between the country residences of the Jersey and Harcourt families. His health began to decline about his seventieth year, and in 1785 he was carried off by a complaint in his chest. His death was sudden, and his peaceable life was closed without a groan.

RICHARD GLOVER.

[Born, 1712. Died, 1785.]

RICHARD GLOVER was the son of a Hamburg merchant in London, and was born in St. Martin's-lane, Cannon-street. He was educated at the school of Cheam, in Surrey; but, being intended for trade, was never sent to the university. This circumstance did not prevent him from applying assiduously to classical learning; and he was, in the competent opinion of Dr. Warton, one of the best Greek scholars of his time. This fact is worth mentioning, as it exhibits how far a determined mind may connect the pursuits, and even distinctions of literature, with an active employment. His first poetical effort was a poem to the memory of Sir Isaac Newton, which was written at the age of sixteen; and which his friend, Dr. Pemberton, thought fit to prefix to 'A View of the Newtonian Philosophy,' which he published. Dr. Pemberton, who was a man of more science than taste, on this and on some other occasions addressed the public with critical eulogies on the genius of Glover, written with an excess of admiration which could be pardoned only for its sincerity. It gives us a higher idea of the youthful promises of his mind to find that the intelligent poet Green had the same prepossession in his favour. Green says of him in the 'Spleen,'

“ But there’s a youth, that you can name,
 Who needs no leading-strings to fame ;
 Whose quick maturity of brain
 The birth of Pallas may explain.”

At the age of twenty-five he published nine books of his ‘Leonidas.’ The poem was immediately taken up with ardour by Lord Cobham, to whom it was inscribed, and by all the readers of verse and leaders of politics who professed the strongest attachment to liberty. It ran rapidly through three editions, and was publicly extolled by the pen of Fielding and by the lips of Chatham. Even Swift, in one of his letters from Ireland, drily inquires of Pope, “ *Who is this Mr. Glover, who writ ‘Leonidas,’ which is reprinting here, and hath great vogue?*” * Overrated as ‘Leonidas’ might be, Glover stands acquitted of all attempts or artifice to promote its popularity by false means. He betrayed no irritation in the disputes which were raised about its merit ; and his personal character appears as respectable in the ebb as in the flow of his poetical reputation.

In the year 1739 he published his poem ‘London, or the Progress of Commerce,’ in which, instead of selecting some of those interesting views of the progress of social life and civilization which the subject might have afforded, he confined himself to exciting the national spirit against the Spaniards. This purpose was better effected by his nearly contemporary ballad of ‘Hosier’s Ghost.’

His talents and politics introduced him to the notice and favour of Frederick Prince of Wales, whilst he maintained an intimate friendship with the chiefs of the opposition. In the mean time he pursued the business of a merchant in the city, and was an able auxiliary to his party, by his eloquence at public meetings, and by his influence with the mercantile body. Such was the confidence in his knowledge and talents, that in 1743 the merchants of London deputed him to plead, in behalf of their neglected rights, at the bar of the House of Commons, a duty which he fulfilled with great ability. In 1744 he was offered an employment of a very different kind, being left a bequest of 500*l.* by the Duchess of Marlborough, on condition of his

* [Pope’s answer does not appear. “ It would have been curious,” says Dr. Warton, “ to have known his opinion concerning a poem that is written in a taste and manner so different from his own, in a style formed on the Grecian school, and with the simplicity of the ancient.”]

writing the Duke's Life, in' conjunction with Mallet. He renounced this legacy, while Mallet accepted it, but never fulfilled the terms. Glover's rejection of the offer was the more honourable, as it came at a time when his own affairs were so embarrassed as to oblige him to retire from business for several years, and to lead a life of the strictest economy. During his distresses he is said to have received from the Prince of Wales a present of 500*l*. In the year 1751 his friends in the city made an attempt to obtain for him the office of city chamberlain ; but he was unfortunately not named as a candidate till the majority of votes had been engaged to Sir Thomas Harrison. The speech which he made to the livery on this occasion did him much honour, both for the liberality with which he spoke of his successful opponent, and for the manly but unassuming manner in which he expressed the consciousness of his own integrity amidst his private misfortunes, and asserted the merit of his public conduct as a citizen. The name of Guildhall is certainly not apt to inspire us with high ideas either of oratory or of personal sympathy ; yet there is something in the history of this transaction which increases our respect, not only for Glover, but for the scene itself, in which his eloquence is said to have warmly touched his audience with a feeling of his worth as an individual, of his spirit as a politician, and of his powers as an accomplished speaker. He carried the sentiments and endowments of a polished scholar into the most popular meetings of trading life, and showed that they could be welcomed there. Such men elevate the character of a mercantile country.

During his retirement from business he finished his tragedy of 'Boadicea,' which was brought out at Drury-lane in 1753, and was acted for nine nights, it is said, "successfully," perhaps a misprint for successively. 'Boadicea' is certainly not a contemptible drama : it has some scenes of tender interest between Venusia and Dumnorix ; but the defectiveness of its incidents, and the frenzied character of the British queen, render it, upon the whole, unpleasing. Beaumont and Fletcher, in their play on the same subject, have left Boadicea, with all her rashness and revengeful disposition, still a heroine ; but Glover makes her a beldam and a fury, whom we could scarcely condemn the Romans for having carted. The disgusting novelty of this impression is at variance with the traditionary regard for her name,

from which the mind is unwilling to part. It is told of an eminent portrait-painter that the picture of each individual which he took had some resemblance to the last sitter: when he painted a comic actress, she resembled a doctor of divinity, because his imagination had not yet been delivered of the doctor. The converse of this seems to have happened to Glover. He anticipated the hideous traits of Medea when he produced the British queen. With a singular degree of poetical injustice, he leans to the side of compassion in delineating Medea, a monster of infanticide, and prepossesses us against a high-spirited woman, who avenged the wrongs of her country and the violation of her daughters. His tragedy of 'Medea' appeared in 1761, and the spirited acting of Mrs. Yates gave it considerable effect.

In his later years his circumstances were greatly improved, though we are not informed from what causes. He returned again to public life; was elected to parliament; and there distinguished himself, whenever mercantile prosperity was concerned, by his knowledge of commerce and his attention to its interests. In 1770 he enlarged his 'Leonidas' from nine to twelve books, and afterwards wrote its sequel, 'The Athenaid,' and a sequel to 'Medea.' The latter was never acted, and the former seldom read. The close of his life was spent in retirement from business, but amidst the intimacy of the most eminent scholars of his time.

Some contemporary writers, calling themselves critics, preferred 'Leonidas' in its day to 'Paradise Lost,' because it had smoother versification and fewer hard words of learning. The reaction of popular opinion, against a work that has been once overrated, is apt to depress it beneath its just estimation. It is due to 'Leonidas' to say, that its narrative, descriptions, and imagery, have a general and chaste congruity with the Grecism of its subject. It is far, indeed, from being a vivid or arresting picture of antiquity; but it has an air of classical taste and propriety in its design; and it sometimes places the religion and manners of Greece in a pleasing and impressive light. The poet's description of Dithyrambus making his way from the cave of Ceta, by a secret ascent, to the temple of the Muses, and bursting unexpectedly into the hallowed presence of their priestess Melissa, is a passage fraught with a considerable degree of the fanciful and beautiful in superstition. The abode

of Oileus is also traced with a suavity of local description which is not unusual to Glover; and the speech of Melissa, when she first receives the tidings of her venerable father's death, supports a fine consistency with the august and poetical character which is ascribed to her:—

“ A sigh

Broke from her heart, these accents from her lips:
 The full of days and honours through the gate
 Of painless slumber is retired. His tomb
 Shall stand among his fathers, in the shade
 Of his own trophies. Placid were his days,
 Which flow'd through blessings. As a river pure,
 Whose sides are flow'ry, and whose meadows fair,
 Meets in his course a subterranean void,
 There dips his silver head, again to rise,
 And, rising, glide through flowers and meadows new;
 So shall Oileus in those happier fields,
 Where never gloom of trouble shades the mind.”

The undeniable fault of the entire poem is, that it wants impetuosity of progress, and that its characters are without warm and interesting individuality. What a great genius might have made of the subject, it may be difficult to pronounce by supposition; for it is the very character of genius to produce effects which cannot be calculated. But, imposing as the names of Leonidas and Thermopylæ may appear, the subject which they formed for an epic poem was such, that we cannot wonder at its baffling the powers of Glover. A poet, with such a theme, was furnished indeed with a grand outline of actions and sentiments; but how difficult was it, after all that books could teach him, to give the close and veracious appearance of life to characters and manners beheld so remotely on the verge of the horizon of history! What difficulty to avoid coldness and generality on the one hand, if he delineated his human beings only with the manners which history could authenticate; and to shun grotesqueness and inconsistency on the other, if he filled up the vague outline of the antique with the particular and familiar traits of modern life! Neither Fenelon, with all his genius, nor Barthelemy, with all his learning, have kept entirely free of this latter fault of incongruity in modernising the aspect of ancient manners. The characters of Barthelemy, in particular, often remind us of statues in modern clothes. Glover has not fallen into this impurity; but his purity is cold: his heroes are like outlines of Grecian faces, with no distinct or

minute physiognomy. They are not so much poetical characters as historical recollections. There are, indeed, some touches of spirit in Artemisia's character, and of pathos in the episode of Teribazus; but Leonidas is too good a Spartan, and Xerxes too bad a Persian, to be pitied; and most of the subordinate agents that fall or triumph in battle only load our memories with their names. The local descriptions of 'Leonidas,' however, its pure sentiments, and the classical images which it recalls, render it interesting, as the monument of an accomplished and amiable mind.*

EDWARD THOMPSON.

[Born, 1738. Died, 1786.]

CAPTAIN EDWARD THOMPSON was a native of Hull, and went to sea so early in life as to be precluded from the advantages of a liberal education.

A few of his sea songs are entitled to remembrance.

HENRY HEADLEY.

[Born, 1766. Died, 1788.]

HENRY HEADLEY, whose uncommon talents were lost to the world at the age of twenty-two, was born at Irstead, in Norfolk. He received his education at the grammar-school of Norwich, under Dr. Parr; and, at the age of sixteen, was admitted a member of Trinity College, Oxford. There the example of Thomas Warton, the senior of his college, led him to explore the beauties of our elder poets. About the age of twenty he published some pieces of verse, which exhibit no very remarkable promise; but his 'Select Beauties of the Ancient English Poets,' which appeared in the following year, were accompanied with critical

* [Glover's 'Leonidas,' though only party spirit could have extolled it as a work of genius, obtained no inconsiderable sale, and a reputation which flourished for half a century. It has now a place in the two great general collections, and deserves to hold it. The author has the merit of having departed from bad models, rejected all false ornaments and tricks of style, and trusted to the dignity of his subject. And though the poem is cold and bald, stately rather than strong in its best parts, and in general rather stiff than stately, there is in its very nakedness a sort of Spartan severity that commands respect."—Southey, *Life of Cowper*, vol. ii. p. 176.]

observations that showed an unparalleled ripeness of mind for his years. On leaving the university, after a residence of four years, he married, and retired to Matlock, in Derbyshire. His matrimonial choice is said to have been hastily formed, amidst the anguish of disappointment in a previous attachment. But, short as his life was, he survived the lady whom he married.

The symptoms of consumption having appeared in his constitution, he was advised to try the benefit of a warmer climate; and he took the resolution of repairing to Lisbon, unattended by a single friend. On landing at Lisbon, far from feeling any relief from the climate, he found himself oppressed by its sultriness; and in this forlorn state was on the point of expiring, when Mr. De Vismes, to whom he had received a letter of introduction from the late Mr. Windham, conveyed him to his healthful villa near Cintra, allotted spacious apartments for his use, procured for him the ablest medical assistance, and treated him with every kindness and amusement that could console his sickly existence. But his malady proved incurable; and, returning to England at the end of a few months, he expired at Norwich.

JOHN LOGAN.

[Born, 1748. Died, 1788.]

JOHN LOGAN was the son of a farmer, in the parish of Fala, and county of Mid-Lothian, Scotland. He was educated for the church, at the University of Edinburgh. There he contracted an intimacy with Dr. Robertson, who was then a student of his own standing; and he was indebted to that eminent character for many friendly offices in the course of his life. After finishing his theological studies, he lived for some time in the family of Mr. Sinclair, of Ulbster, as tutor to the late Sir John Sinclair. In his twenty-fifth year he was ordained one of the ministers of Leith, and had a principal share in the scheme for revising the psalmody of the Scottish church, under the authority of the General Assembly. He contributed to this undertaking several scriptural translations and paraphrases of his own composition. About the same time he delivered, during two successive seasons, in Edinburgh, lectures on history, which were attended with so much approbation, that he was brought

forward as a candidate for the professorship of history in the university ; but, as the chair had been always filled by one of the members of the faculty of advocates, the choice fell upon another competitor, who possessed that qualification. When disappointed in this object, he published the substance of his lectures in a work entitled 'Elements of the Philosophy of History,' and in a separate essay 'On the Manners of Asia.'

His poems, which had hitherto been only circulated in MS. or printed in a desultory manner, were collected and published in 1781. The favourable reception which they met with encouraged him to attempt the composition of a tragedy, and he chose the charter of Runnymede for his subject. This innocent drama was sent to the manager of Covent Garden, by whom it was accepted, and even put into rehearsal ; but, on some groundless rumour of its containing dangerous political matter, the Lord Chamberlain thought fit to prohibit its representation. It was, however, acted on the Edinburgh boards, and afterwards published, though without exhibiting in its contents anything calculated to agitate either poetical or political feelings.

In the mean time our author unhappily drew on himself the displeasure of his parishioners. His connexion with the stage was deemed improper in a clergyman. His literary pursuits interfered with his pastoral diligence ; and, what was worse, he was constitutionally subject to fits of depression, from which he took refuge in inebriety. Whatever his irregularities were (for they have been differently described), he was obliged to compound for them by resigning his flock and retiring upon a small annuity. He came to London, where his principal literary employments were, furnishing articles for 'The English Review,' and writing in vindication of Warren Hastings. He died at the age of forty, at his lodgings in Marlborough-street. His Sermons, which were published two years after his death, have obtained considerable popularity.

His 'Ode to the Cuckoo' is the most agreeable effusion of his fancy. Burke was so much pleased with it, that, when he came to Edinburgh, he made himself acquainted with its author. His claim to this piece has indeed been disputed by the relatives of Michael Bruce ; and it is certain that, when Bruce's poems were sent to Logan, he published them intermixed with his own, without any marks to discriminate the respective authors. He is further

accused of having refused to restore the MSS. But as the charge of stealing the 'Cuckoo' from Bruce was not brought against Logan in his lifetime, it cannot, in charity, stand against his memory on the bare assertion of his accusers.*

ROBERT NUGENT, EARL NUGENT.

[Born, 1709. Died, 1788.]

ROBERT NUGENT was descended from the Nugents of Carlans-town, in the county of Westmeath, and was a younger son of Michael Nugent, by the daughter of Robert Lord Trimlestown.

His political character was neither independent nor eminent, except for such honours as the court could bestow ; but we are told that in some instances he stood forth as an advocate for the interests of Ireland. His zeal for the manufactures of his native island induced him, on one occasion, to present the Queen with a New-year's gift of Irish grogram, accompanied with a copy of verses ; and it was wickedly alleged, that her Majesty had returned her thanks to the noble author for *both his pieces of stuff*.

A volume of his poems was published, anonymously, by Dodsley, in 1739. Lord Orford remarks, that " he was one of those men of parts whose dawn was the brightest moment of a long life." He was first known by a very spirited ode on his conversion from Popery ; yet he relapsed to the faith which he had abjured. On the circumstance of his re-conversion it is uncharitable to lay much stress against his memory. There have been instances of it in men whom either church would have been proud to appropriate. But it cannot be denied that his poem on Faith formed, at a late period of his life, an anticlimax to the first promise of his literary talents ; and though he possessed abilities, and turned them to his private account, he rose to no public confidence as a statesman.†

* [Because some pieces which are printed among the remains of poor Michael Bruce have been ascribed to Logan, Mr. Chalmers has not thought it proper to admit Bruce's poems into his collection.—Southey, *Quar. Rev.*, vol. xi. p. 501.]

† [Goldsmith, who admitted his ' Epistle to a Lady ' among his ' Beauties of British Poetry,' addressed his ' Haunch of Venison ' to him.

" Mr. Nugent sure did not write his own Ode."—Gray to Walpole. This

WILLIAM JULIUS MICKLE.

[Born, 1734. Died, 1788.]

WILLIAM JULIUS MICKLE was born at Langholm, in Dumfriesshire. His father, who was a clergyman of the Scottish church, had lived for some time in London, and had preached in the dissenting meeting-house of the celebrated Dr. Watts. He returned to Scotland, on being presented to the living of Langholm, the duties of which he fulfilled for many years; and, in consideration of his long services, was permitted to retain the stipend after he had removed to Edinburgh for the better education of his children. His brother-in-law was a brewer in Edinburgh, on whose death the old clergyman unfortunately embarked his property, in order to continue his business, under the name of his eldest son. William, who was a younger son, was taken from the high-school at Edinburgh, and placed as a clerk in the concern; and, on coming of age, took the whole responsibility of it upon himself. When it is mentioned that Mickle had, from his boyish years, been an enthusiastic reader of Spenser, and that, before he was twenty, he had composed two tragedies and half an epic poem, which were in due time consigned to the flames, it may be easily conceived that his habits of mind were not peculiarly fitted for close and minute attention to a trade which required incessant superintendence. He was, besides, unfortunate in becoming security for an insolvent acquaintance. In the year 1763 he became a bankrupt; and, being apprehensive of the severity of one of his creditors, he repaired to London, feeling the misery of his own circumstances aggravated by those of the relations whom he had left behind him.

Before leaving Scotland he had corresponded with Lord Lytton, to whom he had submitted some of his poems in MS.,

was the 'Ode to William Pulteney, Esq.' Mallet, it was universally believed, had trimmed and doctored it up.

“What though the good, the brave, the wise,
 With adverse force undaunted rise,
 To break the eternal doom!
 Though Cato lived, though Tully spoke,
 Though Brutus dealt the godlike stroke,
 Yet perish'd fated Rome.”

This very fine verse is quoted by Gibbon in his character of Brutus—an honour it deserves.]

and one, entitled 'Providence,' which he had printed in 1762. Lord Lyttelton patronized his Muse rather than his fortune. He undertook (to use his lordship's own phrase) to be his "schoolmaster in poetry;" but his fastidious blottings could be of no service to any man who had a particle of genius; and the only personal benefit which he attempted to render him was to write to his brother, the Governor of Jamaica, in Mickle's behalf, when our poet had thoughts of going out to that island. Mickle, however, always spoke with becoming liberality of this connexion. He was pleased with the suavity of Lord Lyttelton's manners, and knew that his means of patronage were very slender. In the mean time, he lived nearly two years in London, upon remittances from his friends in Scotland, and by writing for the daily papers.

After having fluctuated between several schemes for subsistence, he at length accepted of the situation of corrector to the Clarendon Press at Oxford. Whilst he retained that office he published a poem, which he at first named 'The Concubine;' but on finding that the title alarmed delicate ears, and suggested a false idea of its spirit and contents, he changed it to 'Syr Martyn.*' At Oxford he also engaged in polemical divinity, and published some severe animadversions on Dr. Harwood's recent translation of the New Testament. He also showed his fidelity to the cause of religion in a tract entitled 'Voltaire in the Shades; or Dialogues on the Deistical Controversy.'

His greatest poetical undertaking was the translation of 'The Lusiad,' which he began in 1770, and finished in five years. For the sake of leisure and retirement, he gave up his situation at the Clarendon Press, and resided at the house of a Mr. Tomkins, a farmer, at Forest Hill, near Oxford. The English 'Lusiad' was dedicated, by permission, to the Duke of Buccleuch; but his Grace returned not the slightest notice or kindness to his ingenious countryman. Whatever might be the Duke's reasons, good or bad, for this neglect, he was a man fully capable of acting on his own judgment; and there was no necessity for making any other person responsible for his conduct. But

* [Mickle's facility of versification was so great, that, being a printer by profession, he frequently put his lines into type without taking the trouble previously to put them into writing; thus uniting the composition of the author with the mechanical operation which typographers call by the same name.—Sir Walter Scott, *Poet. Works*, vol. i. p. 70.]

Mickle, or his friends, suspected that Adam Smith and David Hume had maliciously stood between him and the Buccleuch patronage. This was a mere suspicion, which our author and his friends ought either to have proved or suppressed. Mickle was indeed the declared antagonist of Hume; he had written against him, and could not hear his name mentioned with temper: but there is not the slightest evidence that the hatred was mutual. That Adam Smith should have done him a mean injury no one will believe probable who is acquainted with the traditional private character of that philosopher. But Mickle was also the antagonist of Smith's doctrines on political economy, as may be seen in his 'Dissertation on the Charter of the East India Company.' The author of 'The Wealth of Nations,' forsooth, was jealous of his opinions on monopolies! Even this paltry supposition is contradicted by dates, for Mickle's tract upon the subject of monopolies was published several years after the preface to 'The Lusiad.' Upon the whole, the suspicion of his philosophical enemies having poisoned the ear of the Duke of Buccleuch seems to have proceeded from the same irritable vanity which made him threaten to celebrate Garrick as the hero of a second 'Dunciad' when he refused to accept of his tragedy 'The Siege of Marseilles.'

Though 'The Lusiad' had a tolerable sale, his circumstances still made his friends solicitous that he should obtain some settled provision. Dr. Lowth offered to provide for him in the church. He refused the offer with honourable delicacy, lest his former writings in favour of religion should be attributed to the prospect of reward. At length the friendship of his kinsman, Commodore Johnstone, relieved him from unsettled prospects. Being appointed to the command of a squadron destined for the coast of Portugal, he took out the translator of Camoens as his private secretary. Mickle was received with distinguished honours at Lisbon. The Duke of Braganza, in admitting him a member of the Royal Academy of Lisbon, presented him with his own picture.

He returned to England in 1780, with a considerable acquisition of prize-money, and was appointed an agent for the distribution of the prize profits of the cruise. His fortune now enabled him to discharge the debts of his early and mercantile life. He married the daughter of Mr. Tomkins, with whom he had

resided while translating 'The Lusiad;' and, with every prospect of spending the remainder of his life in affluence and tranquillity, purchased a house and settled at Wheatley, near Oxford. So far his circumstances have almost the agreeable air of a concluding novel; but the failure of a banker with whom he was connected as prize-agent, and a Chancery suit in which he was involved, greatly diminished his finances, and disturbed the peace of his latter years. He died at Forest Hill, after a short illness.

His reputation principally rests upon the translation of 'The Lusiad,' which no Englishman had attempted before him, except Sir Richard Fanshawe. Sir Richard's version is quaint, flat, and harsh; and he has interwoven many ridiculously conceited expressions which are foreign both to the spirit and style of his original; but in general it is closer than the modern translation to the literal meaning of Camoens. Altogether, Fanshawe's representation of the Portuguese poem may be compared to the wrong side of the tapestry. Mickle, on the other hand, is free, flowery, and periphrastical; he is incomparably more spirited than Fanshawe; but still he departs from the majestic simplicity of Camoens' diction as widely as Pope has done from that of Homer.* The sonorous and simple language of the Lusitanian epic is like the sound of a trumpet; and Mickle's imitation like the shakes and flourishes of the flute.

* A happy example of this occurs in the description of De Gama's fleet anchoring by moonlight in the harbour of Mozambique:—

“The moon, full orb'd, forsakes her watery cave,
 And lifts her lovely head above the wave;
 The snowy splendours of her modest ray
 Stream o'er the glistening waves, and glistening play:
 Around her, glittering on the heaven's arch'd brow,
 Unnumber'd stars enclosed in azure glow,
 Thick as the dewdrops in the April dawn,
 Or May flowers crowding o'er the daisy lawn.
 The canvas whitens in the silvery beam,
 And with a mild pale-red the pendants gleam;
 The masts' tall shadows tremble o'er the deep,
 The peaceful lines a holy silence keep;
 The watchman's carol, echoed from the prows,
 Alone, at times, awakes the still repose.”

In this beautiful sea-piece the circumstance of “the mast's tall shadow trembling o'er the deep,” and of the “carol of the watchman echoed from the prows,” are touches of the translator's addition. Mickle has, however, got more credit for improving 'The Lusiad' than he deserves.

Although he was not responsible for the faults of the original, he has taken abundance of pains to defend them in his notes and preface. In this he has not been successful. The long lecture on geography and Portuguese history which Gama delivers to the King of Melinda is a wearisome interruption to the narrative; and the use of Pagan mythology is a radical and unanswerable defect. Mickle informs us as an apology for the latter circumstance that all this Pagan machinery was allegorical, and that the gods and goddesses of Homer were allegorical also; an assertion which would require to be proved before it can be admitted. Camoens himself has said something about his concealment of a moral meaning under his Pagan deities; but if he has any such morality it is so well hidden that it is impossible to discover it. The Venus of 'The Lusiad,' we are told, is Divine Love; and how is this Divine Love employed? For no other end than to give the poet an opportunity of displaying a scene of sensual gratification, an island is purposely raised up in the ocean; Venus conducts De Gama and his followers to this blessed spot, where a bevy of the nymphs of Venus are very good-naturedly prepared to treat them to their favours, not as a trial, but as a reward for their virtues! Voltaire was certainly justified in pronouncing this episode a piece of gratuitous indecency. In the same allegorical spirit, no doubt, Bacchus, who opposes the Portuguese discoverers in the councils of Heaven, disguises himself as a Popish priest, and celebrates the rites of the Catholic religion. The imagination is somewhat puzzled to discover why Bacchus should be an enemy to the natives of a country the soil of which is so productive of his beverage, and a friend to the Mahometans, who forbid the use of it; although there is something amusing in the idea of the jolly god officiating as a Romish clergyman.

Mickle's story of 'Syr Martyn' is the most pleasing of his original pieces. The object of the narrative is to exhibit the degrading effects of concubinage, in the history of an amiable man, who is reduced to despondency and sottishness under the dominion of a beldam and a slattern. The defect of the moral is, that the same evils might have happened to Syr Martyn in a state of matrimony. The simplicity of the tale is also, unhappily, overlaid by a weight of allegory and of obsolete phraseology which it has not importance to sustain. Such a style, applied to the history

of a man and his housekeeper, is like building a diminutive dwelling in all the pomp of Gothic architecture.*

TIMOTHY DWIGHT.

OF this American poet I am sorry to be able to give the British reader no account. I believe his personal history is as little known as his poetry on this side of the Atlantic.

THOMAS WARTON.

[Born, 1728. Died, 1790.]

THOMAS WARTON was descended from an ancient family, whose residence was at Beverley, in Yorkshire. One of his ancestors was knighted in the civil wars for his adherence to Charles I.; but by the failure of the same cause the estate of the family was confiscated, and they were unable to maintain the rank of gentry. The Toryism of the historian of English poetry was, therefore, hereditary. His father was fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford; professor of poetry in that university; and vicar of Basingstoke, in Hants, and of Cobham, in Surrey. At the age of sixteen our author was admitted a commoner of Trinity College, Oxford, of which he continued a member, and an ornament, for forty-seven years. His first poetical appearance in print has been traced to five eclogues in blank verse, the scenes of which are laid among the shepherds oppressed by the wars in Germany. They appeared in Pearch's 'Supplement to Dodsley's Collection of Fugitive Pieces.' Warton disavowed those eclogues in his riper years. They are not discreditable to him as the verses of a boy; but it was a superfluous offering to the public to subjoin them to his other works in Mr. Chalmers' edition of 'The British Poets.'†

* [Mickle was the author of that very beautiful song, 'There's nae luck about the house,' and on his ballad of 'Cumnor Hall' Scott founded his romance of 'Kenilworth.']

† [Mr. Southey, in his review of Chalmers' collection, is of a different opinion. "A valuable addition is made," he says, "to T. Warton's works, by the discovery of five pastoral eclogues, the scenes of which are laid among the shepherds oppressed by the war in Germany. They were published in 1745, and ascribed to him on the competent authority of Isaac Reed. They are certainly remarkable productions for a youth of eighteen."—*Quar. Rev.*, vol. xi. p. 501.]

His poem, 'The Pleasures of Melancholy,' was written not long after. As the composition of a youth, it is entitled to a very indulgent consideration; and perhaps it gives promise of a sensibility which his subsequent poetry did not fulfil. It was professedly written in his seventeenth, but published in his nineteenth year, so that it must be considered as testifying the state of his genius at the latter period, for until his work had passed through the press he would continue to improve it. In the year 1749 he published his 'Triumph of Isis,' in answer to Mason's poetical attack on the loyalty of Oxford. The best passage in this piece, beginning with the lines,

"Ye fretted pinnacles, ye fanes sublime,
Ye towers, that wear the mossy vest of time,"

discovers that fondness for the beauties of architecture which was an absolute passion in the breast of Warton. Joseph Warton relates, that, at an early period of their youth, his brother and he were taken by their father to see Windsor Castle. Old Dr. Warton complained, that, whilst the rest of the party expressed delight at the magnificent spectacle, Thomas made no remarks; but Joseph Warton justly observes, that the silence of his brother was only a proof of the depth of his pleasure; that he was really absorbed in the enjoyment of the sight; and that his subsequent fondness for "*castle imagery*," he believed, might be traced to the impression which he then received from Windsor Castle.

In 1750 he took the degree of a master of arts, and in the following year succeeded to a fellowship. In 1754 he published his 'Observations on Spenser's Faëry Queen,' in a single volume, which he afterwards expanded into two volumes in the edition of 1762. In this work he minutely analyses the classic and romantic sources of Spenser's fiction; and so far enables us to estimate the power of the poet's genius that we can compare the scattered ore of his fanciful materials with their transmuted appearance in the 'Faëry Queen.' This work probably contributed to his appointment to the professorship of poetry in the university in 1757, which he held, according to custom, for ten years. While possessed of that chair, he delivered a course of lectures on poetry, in which he introduced his translations from the Greek Anthology, as well as the substance of his remarks on the Bucolic poetry of the Greeks, which were afterwards pub-

lished in his edition of 'Theocritus.' In 1758 he assisted Dr. Johnson in 'The Idler,' with Nos. 33, 93, and 96. About the same time he published, without name or date, 'A Description of the City, College, and Cathedral of Winchester;' and a humorous account of Oxford, intended to burlesque the popular description of that place, entitled 'A Companion to the Guide, or a Guide to the Companion.' He also published anonymously, in 1758, 'A Selection of Latin Metrical Inscriptions.'

Warton's clerical profession forms no very prominent part of his history. He had an indistinct and hurried articulation, which was peculiarly unfavourable to his pulpit oratory. His ambition was directed to other objects than preferment in the church, and he was above solicitation. After having served the curacy of Woodstock for nine years as well as his avocations would permit, he was appointed in 1744 to the small living of Kiddington, in Oxfordshire, and in 1785 to the donative of Hill Farrance, in Somersetshire, by his own college.

The great work to which the studies of his life were subservient was his 'History of English Poetry,' an undertaking which had been successively projected by Pope and Gray. Those writers had suggested the imposing plan of arranging the British poets, not by their chronological succession, but by their different schools. Warton deliberately relinquished this scheme, because he felt that it was impracticable, except in a very vague and general manner. Poetry is of too spiritual a nature to admit of its authors being exactly grouped by a Linnæan system of classification. Striking resemblances and distinctions will, no doubt, be found among poets; but the shades of variety and gradation are so infinite, that to bring every composer within a given line of resemblance would require a new language in the philosophy of taste. Warton therefore adopted the simpler idea of tracing our poetry by its chronological progress. The work is certainly provokingly digressive in many places, and those who have subsequently examined the same subject have often complained of its inaccuracies; but the chief cause of those inaccuracies was that boldness and extent of research which makes the work so useful and entertaining. Those who detected his mistakes have been, in no small degree, indebted to him for their power of detecting them. The first volume of his 'History' appeared in 1774, the second in 1778, and the third in 1781. Of the fourth volume

only a few sheets were printed ; and the account of our poetry, which he meant to have extended to the last century, was continued only to the reign of Elizabeth.

In the year 1785 he was appointed to the Camden Professorship of History, in which situation he delivered only one inaugural dissertation. In the same year, upon the death of Whitehead, he received the laureateship. His odes were subjected to the ridicule of 'The Rolliad;' but his head filled the laurel with more learning than it had encompassed for a hundred years.

In his sixty-second year, after a life of uninterrupted good health, he was attacked by the gout, went to Bath for a cure, and returned, as he imagined, perfectly recovered ; but his appearance betrayed that his constitution had received a fatal shock. At the close of an evening which he had spent with more than ordinary cheerfulness, in the common-hall of his college, he was seized with a paralytic stroke, and expired on the following day.

Some amusing eccentricities of his character are mentioned by the writer of his life (Dr. Mant), which the last editor of 'The British Poets' * blames that biographer for introducing. I am far from joining in this censure. It is a miserable system of biography that would never allow us to smile at the foibles and peculiarities of its subject. The historian of English poetry would sometimes forget his own dignity so far as to drink ale and smoke tobacco with men of vulgar condition ; either wishing, as some have gravely alleged, to study undisguised and unlettered human nature, or, which is more probable, to enjoy a heartier laugh and broader humour than could be found in polite society. He was also passionately fond (not of critical, but) of military reviews, and delighted in martial music. The same strength of association which made him enjoy the sound of "*the spirit-stirring drum*" led him to be a constant and curious explorer of the architectural monuments of chivalrous times ; and during his summer excursions into the country he always committed to paper the remarks which he had made on ancient buildings. During his visits to his brother, Dr. J. Warton, the reverend professor became an associate

* [The late Alexander Chalmers. Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Campbell were to have edited this collection, which fell, as many a noble project has done, into the hands of a mere hack in literature, not destitute of knowledge, but without the means of using it properly, and without taste.—See Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vol. ii. p. 240, 2nd ed.]

and confidant in all the sports of the schoolboys. When engaged with them in some culinary occupation, and when alarmed by the sudden approach of the master, he has been known to hide himself in a dark corner of the kitchen, and has been dragged from thence by the doctor, who had taken him for some great boy. He also used to help the boys in their exercises, generally putting in as many faults as would disguise the assistance.

Every Englishman who values the literature of his country must feel himself obliged to Warton as a poetical antiquary. As a poet, he is ranked by his brother Joseph in the school of Spenser and Milton; but this classification can only be admitted with a full understanding of the immense distance between him and his great masters. He had, indeed, "spelt the fabled rhyme;" he abounds in allusions to the romantic subjects of Spenser, and he is a sedulous imitator of the rich lyrical manner of Milton: but of the tenderness and peculiar harmony of Spenser he has caught nothing; and in his resemblance to Milton he is the heir of his phraseology more than his spirit. His imitation of manner, however, is not confined to Milton. His style often exhibits a very composite order of poetical architecture. In his 'Verses to Sir Joshua Reynolds,' for instance, he blends the point and succinctness of Pope with the richness of the elder and more fanciful school. It is one of his happiest compositions; and in this case the intermixture of styles has no displeasing effect. In others he often tastelessly and elaborately unites his affectation of antiquity with the case-hardened graces of modern polish.

If we judge of him by the character of the majority of his pieces, I believe that fifty out of sixty of them are such that we should not be anxious to give them a second perusal. From that proportion of his works I conceive that an unprejudiced reader would pronounce him a florid, unaffecting describer, whose images are plentifully scattered, but without selection or relief. To confine our view, however, to some seven or eight of his happier pieces, we shall find in these a considerable degree of graphic power, of fancy, and animation. His 'Verses to Sir Joshua Reynolds' are splendid and spirited. There is also a softness and sweetness in his ode entitled 'The Hamlet,' which is the more welcome for being rare in his productions; and his 'Crusade' and 'Grave of Arthur' have a genuine air of martial and minstrel enthusiasm. Those pieces exhibit, to the best advan-

tage, the most striking feature of his poetical character, which was a fondness for the recollections of chivalry, and a minute intimacy of imagination with its gorgeous residences and imposing spectacles. The spirit of chivalry he may indeed be said to have revived in the poetry of modern times. His memory was richly stored with all the materials for description that can be got from books; and he seems not to have been without an original enthusiasm for those objects which excite strong associations of regard and wonder. Whether he would have ever looked with interest on a shepherd's cottage if he had not found it described by Virgil or Theocritus may be fairly doubted; but objects of terror, splendour, and magnificence are evidently congenial to his fancy. He is very impressive in sketching the appearance of an ancient Gothic castle in the following lines:—

“ High o'er the trackless heath, at midnight seen,
 No more the windows, ranged in long array
 (Where the tall shaft and fretted nook between
 Thick ivy twines), the taper'd rites betray.”

His memory was stored with an uncommon portion of that knowledge which supplies materials for picturesque description; and his universal acquaintance with our poets supplied him with expression, so as to answer the full demand of his original ideas. Of his poetic invention in the fair sense of the word, of his depth of sensibility, or of his powers of reflection, it is not so easy to say anything favourable.*

THOMAS BLACKLOCK.

[Born, 1721. Died, 1791.]

THOMAS BLACKLOCK was born at Annan, in Dumfriesshire, where his father was a bricklayer. Before he was six months old he was totally deprived of sight by the small-pox. From an early age he discovered a fondness for listening to books, especially to those in poetry; and by the kindness of his friends and relations he acquired a slight acquaintance with the Latin tongue, and with some of the popular English classics. He began also, when very young, to compose verses; and some of these having

* [In the best of Warton's poems there is a stiffness which too often gives them the appearance of imitations from the Greek.—Coleridge.

Thomas Warton has sent me his 'Inscriptions,' which are rather too simple for my taste —Shenstone.]

been shown to Dr. Stevenson, an eminent physician of the Scottish capital, the doctor benevolently took him to Edinburgh, where Blacklock improved his knowledge of Latin, and completed his studies at the university. The publication of his poems excited a general interest in his favour, and Professor Spence, of Oxford, having prefixed to them an account of his life and character, a second edition of them was liberally encouraged in London. In 1759 he was licensed as a preacher of the Scottish church. He soon afterwards married a Miss Johnston, a very worthy but homely woman; whose beauty, however, he was accustomed to extol with an ecstasy that made his friends regard his blindness as, in one instance, no misfortune. By the patronage of the Earl of Selkirk he was presented to the living of Kirkcudbright; but in consequence of the violent objections that were made by the parishioners to having a blind man for their clergyman, he resigned the living, and accepted of a small annuity in its stead. With this slender provision he returned to Edinburgh, and subsisted for the rest of his life by taking young gentlemen as boarders in his house, whom he occasionally assisted in their studies.

He published an interesting article on Blindness in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' and a work entitled 'Paraclesis, or Consolations of Religion,' in two dissertations, the one original, the other translated from a work which has been sometimes ascribed to Cicero, but which is more generally believed to have been written by Vigonius of Padua. He died of a nervous fever, at the age of seventy.

Blacklock was a gentle and social being, but prone to melancholy; probably more from constitution than from the circumstance of his blindness, which he so often and so deeply deploras. From this despondent disposition he sought refuge in conversation and music. He was a tolerable performer on the flute, and used to carry a flageolet in his pocket, on which he was not displeased to be solicited for a tune.

His verses are extraordinary for a man blind from his infancy; but Mr. Henry Mackenzie, in his elegant biographical account of him, has certainly overrated his genius: and when Mr. Spence, of Oxford, submitted Blacklock's descriptive powers as a problem for metaphysicians to resolve, he attributed to his writings a degree of descriptive strength which they do not possess. De-

nina * carried exaggeration to the utmost when he declared that Blacklock would seem a fable to posterity as he had been a prodigy to his contemporaries. It is no doubt curious that his memory should have retained so many forms of expression for things which he had never seen ; but those who have conversed with intelligent persons who have been blind from their infancy must have often remarked in them a familiarity of language respecting the objects of vision which, though not easy to be accounted for, will be found sufficiently common to make the rhymes of Blacklock appear far short of marvellous. Blacklock, on more than one occasion, betrays something like marks of blindness. †

WILLIAM HAYWARD ROBERTS.

[Born, 1745. Died, 1791.]

HE was educated at Eton, and from thence was elected to King's College, Cambridge, where he took the degree of master of arts, and of doctor in divinity. From being an under master at Eton he finally rose to be provost of the college, in the year 1781. He was also chaplain to the King, and rector of Farnham Royal, in Buckinghamshire. In 1771 he published, in three parts, 'A Poetical Essay on the Attributes and Providence of the Deity ;' two years afterwards, 'A Poetical Epistle to Christopher Anstey,' on the English poets, chiefly those who had written in blank verse ; and in 1774 his poem of 'Judah Restored,' a work of no common merit. ‡

* In his 'Discorso della Litteratura.'

† [Blacklock's poetry sleeps secure in undisturbed mediocrity, and Blacklock himself is best remembered from Johnson's *reverential look* and the influence a letter of his had upon the fate and fortunes of Burns.]

‡ [Dr. Roberts's 'Judah Restored' was one of the first books that I ever possessed. It was given me by a lady whom I must ever gratefully remember as the kindest friend of my boyhood. I read it often then, and can still recur to it with satisfaction ; and perhaps I owe something to the plain dignity of its style, which is suited to the subject, and everywhere bears the stamp of good sense and careful erudition. To acknowledge obligations of this kind is both a pleasure and a duty.—Southey, *Life of Cowper*, iii. 32.

The Editor possesses Southey's copy of the 'Judah,' with the following inscription in it in the poet's neat handwriting:—"Robert Southey: given me by Mrs. Dolignon, 1784.]

SIR WILLIAM JONES.

[Born, 1746. Died, 1794.]

SIR WILLIAM JONES is not a great poet ; but his name recalls such associations of worth, intellect, and accomplishments, that, if these sketches were not necessarily and designedly only miniatures of biography, I should feel it a sort of sacrilege to consign to scanty and inadequate bounds the life of a scholar who, in feeding the lamp of knowledge, may be truly said to have prematurely exhausted the lamp of life.

He was born in London. His father, who it is said could trace his descent from the ancient princes of North Wales, and who, like his son, was no discredit to his lineage, was so eminent a mathematician as to be distinguished by the esteem of Newton and Halley. His first employment had been that of a schoolmaster on board a man-of-war ; and in that situation he attracted the notice and friendship of Lord Anson. An anecdote is told of him, that at the siege of Vigo he was one of the party who had the liberty of pillaging the captured town. With no very rapacious views, he selected a bookseller's shop for his share ; but, finding no book worth taking away, he carried off a pair of scissors, which he used to show his friends, as a trophy of his military success. On his return to England he established himself as a teacher of mathematics, and published several scientific works, which were remarkable for their neatness of illustration and brevity of style. By his labours as a teacher he acquired a small fortune, but lost it through the failure of a banker. His friend, Lord Macclesfield, however, in some degree indemnified him for the loss, by procuring for him a sinecure place under government. Sir William Jones lost this valuable parent when he was only three years old ; so that the care of his first education devolved upon his mother. She also was a person of superior endowments, and cultivated his dawning powers with a sagacious assiduity which undoubtedly contributed to their quick and surprising growth. We may judge of what a pupil she had, when we are told that, at five years of age, one morning, in turning over the leaves of a Bible, he fixed his attention with the strongest admiration on a sublime passage in the Revelation. Human nature perhaps presents no authentic picture of its felicity more

pure or satisfactory than that of such a pupil superintended by a mother capable of directing him.

At the age of seven he went to Harrow school, where his progress was at first interrupted by an accident which he met with in having his thigh-bone broken, and he was obliged to be taken home for about a twelvemonth. But after his return his abilities were so distinguished, that before he left Harrow he was shown to strangers as an ornament to the seminary. Before he had reached this eminence at school, it is a fact, disgraceful to one of his teachers, that, in consequence of the ground which he had lost by the accident already mentioned, he was frequently subjected to punishment for exertions which he could not make, or, to use his own expression, for not being able to soar before he had been taught to fly. The system of severity must have been merciless indeed when it applied to Jones, of whom his master, Dr. Thackery, used to say that he was a boy of so active a spirit, that, if left friendless and naked on Salisbury Plain, he would make his way to fame and fortune. It is related of him, that while at Harrow, his fellow-scholars having determined to act the play of 'The Tempest,' they were at a loss for a copy, and that young Jones wrote out the whole from memory. Such miracles of human recollection are certainly on record, but it is not easy to conceive the boys at Harrow, when permitted by their masters to act a play, to have been at a loss for a copy of Shakspeare, and some mistake or exaggeration may be suspected in the anecdote. He possibly abridged the play for the particular occasion. Before leaving Harrow school he learned the Arabic characters, and studied the Hebrew language so as to enable him to read some of the original Psalms. What would have been labour to others was Jones's amusement. He used to *relax* his mind with Phillidor's 'Lessons at Chess,' and with studying botany and fossils.

In his eighteenth year he was entered of University College, Oxford, where his residence was rendered more agreeable by his mother taking up her abode in the town. He was also, fortunately, permitted by his teachers to forsake the study of dialectic logic, which still haunted the college, for that of Oriental literature; and he was so zealous in this pursuit that he brought from London to Oxford a native of Aleppo, whom he maintained at his own expense, for the benefit of his instructions in Arabic.

He also began the study of modern Persic, and found his exertions rewarded with rapid success. His vacations were spent in London, where he attended schools for riding and fencing, and studied Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. He pursued in theory, and even exceeded in practice, the plan of education projected by Milton; and boasted that with the fortune of a peasant he could give himself the education of a prince. He obtained a fellowship at Oxford; but before he obtained it, whilst he was yet fearful of his success, and of burthèning the slender finances of an affectionate mother for his support, he accepted the situation of tutor to Lord Althorp, the son of Earl Spencer. In the summer of 1765 he repaired to Wimbledon Park, to take upon himself the charge of his young pupil. He had not been long in Lord Spencer's family when he was flattered by an offer from the Duke of Grafton of the place of interpreter of Eastern languages. This situation, though it might not have interfered with his other pursuits, he thought fit to decline; but earnestly requested that it might be given to his Syrian teacher, Mirza, whose character he wrote. The solicitation was, however, unnoticed; and the event only gave him an opportunity of regretting his own ignorance of the world in not accepting the proffered office, that he might consign its emoluments to Mirza. At Wimbledon he first formed his acquaintance with the daughter of Dr. Shipley, the Dean of Winchester, to which he owed the future happiness of his life. The ensuing winter, 1766, he removed with Lord Spencer's family to London, where he renewed his pursuit of external as well as intellectual accomplishments, and received lessons from Gallini as well as Angelo. It is amusing to find his biographer add that he took lessons at the broadsword from an old Chelsea pensioner, seamed with scars, to whose military narrations he used to listen with delight.

In 1767 he made a short trip with the family of his pupil to the Continent, where, at Spa, he pursued the study of German, and availed himself of the opportunity of finding an incomparable teacher of dancing, whose name was Janson. In the following year he was requested by the secretary of the Duke of Grafton to undertake a task in which no other scholar in England was found willing to engage, namely, in furnishing a version of an Eastern MS., a life of Nadir Shaw, which the King of Denmark had brought with him to England, and which his Danish Majesty

was anxious to have translated into French. Mr. Jones undertook the translation from a laudable reluctance to allow the MS. to be carried out of the country for want of a translator, although the subject was dry, and the style of the original difficult, and although it obliged him to submit his translation to a native of France, in order to give it the idioms of a French style. He was at this time only twenty-one years of age. The only reward which he obtained for his labour was a diploma from the Royal Society of Copenhagen, and a recommendation from the court of Denmark to his own sovereign. To 'The History of Nadir Shaw' he added a treatise of his own on Oriental poetry, in the language of the translation. In the same year he began the study of music, and took some lessons on the Welsh harp.

In 1770 he again visited the Continent with the Spencer family, and travelled into Italy. The genius which interests us at home redoubles its interest on foreign ground; but it would appear, from Jones's letters, that in this instance he was too assiduous a scholar to be an amusing traveller. His mind, during this visit to the Continent, was less intent on men and manners than on objects which he might have studied with equal advantage at home. We find him deciphering Chinese, and composing a tragedy. The tragedy has been irrecoverably lost. Its subject was the death of Mustapha, the son of Soliman; the same on which Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, composed a drama.

On his return to England he determined to embrace the law as a profession, the study of which he commenced in 1771, being then in his twenty-fourth year. His motives for choosing this profession are best explained in his own words. In a letter to his friend Schultens he avows at once the public ambition and personal pride which had now grown up with the maturity of his character. "The die," he says, "is cast. All my books and MSS., with the exception of those only which relate to law and oratory, are locked up at Oxford; and I have determined, for the next twenty years at least, to renounce all studies but those which are connected with my profession. It is needless to trouble you with my reasons at length for this determination. I will only say that, if I had lived at Rome or Athens, I should have preferred the labours, studies, and dangers of their orators and illustrious citizens, connected as they were with banishment and even death, to the groves of the poets, or the gardens of the

philosophers. Here I adopt the same resolution. * * * *
 If the study of the law were really unpleasant and disgusting, which is far from the truth, the example of the wisest of the ancients and of Minerva would justify me in preferring the useful olive to the barren laurel. To tell you my mind freely, I am not of a disposition to bear the arrogance of men of rank, to which poets and men of letters are so often obliged to submit."

This letter was written some years after he had resigned his situation in Lord Spencer's family, and entered himself of the Middle Temple. In the mean time, though the motives which guided him to the choice of a profession undoubtedly made him in earnest with his legal studies, he still found spare hours to devote to literature. He finished his tragedy of 'Mustapha,' and sketched two very ambitious plans—the one of an epic poem, the other of a Turkish history. That he could have written a useful and amusing history of Turkey is easy to suppose; but the outline and the few specimens of his intended epic leave little room for regret that it was not finished. Its subject was the discovery of Britain; the characters Tyrian, and the machinery allegorical, in the manner of Spenser. More unpromising symptoms of a poem could hardly be announced.

In 1772 he published his French Letter to Du Perron, the French traveller, who, in his account of his travels in India, had treated the University of Oxford, and some of its members, with disrespect. In this publication he corrected the French writer, perhaps, with more asperity than his maturer judgment would have approved. In the same year he published a small volume of poems, with two dissertations—one on Oriental literature, and another on the arts commonly called imitative. In his 'Essay on the Arts,' he objects, on very fair grounds, to the Aristotelian doctrine of the universal object of poetry being imitation. Certainly, no species of poetry can strictly be said to be imitative of nature except that which is dramatic. Mr. Twining, the translator of the 'Poetics,' has, however, explained this theory of Aristotle pretty satisfactorily, by showing that, when he spoke of poetry as imitative, he alluded to what he conceived to be the highest department of the art, namely, the drama; or to the dramatic part of epic poetry, the dialogue, which, in recitation, afforded an actual imitation of the passions which were described.

When Mr. Jones had been called to the bar, he found that no human industry could effectively unite the pursuits of literature with the practice of the profession. He therefore took the resolution, already alluded to in one of his letters, of abstaining from all study but that of the science and eloquence of the bar. He thought, however, that, consistently with this resolution, he might translate 'The Greek Orations of Isæus, in cases relating to Succession to doubtful Property.' This translation appeared in 1778. In the interval his practice became considerable, and he was made, in 1776, a commissioner of bankrupts. He was at this time a member of the Royal Society, and maintained an epistolary correspondence with several eminent foreign scholars. Among those correspondents, his favourite seems to have been Reviczki, an Oriental scholar, whom he met in England, and who was afterwards the Imperial minister at Warsaw.

From the commencement of the American war, and during its whole progress, Mr. Jones's political principles led him to a decided disapprobation of the measures of government which were pursued in that contest. But though politically opposed to Lord North, he possessed so much of the personal favour of that minister as to have some hopes of obtaining, by his influence, a seat on the Bench of Fort William, in Bengal, which became vacant in the year 1780. While this matter was in suspense, he was advised to stand as a candidate for the representation of the University of Oxford; but finding there was no chance of success, he declined the contest before the day of election; his political principles, and an 'Ode to Liberty' which he had published, having offended the majority of the academic voters. During the riots of 1780 he published a plan for security against insurrection, and for defence against invasion, which has since been realised in the volunteer system. During the same year he paid a short visit to Paris; and at one time intended to have proceeded to America, for a professional object, namely, to procure for a client and friend the restitution of an estate which the government of the United States had confiscated. The indisposition of his friend, however, prevented him from crossing the Atlantic. On his return to England he recurred to his favourite Oriental studies, and completed a translation of the seven ancient Arabian poems, famous for having been once suspended in the Temple of Mecca; as well as another poem, in

the same language, more curious than inviting in its subject, which was the Mahomedan law of succession to intestates. The latter work had but few charms to reward his labour; but it gave him an opportunity for displaying his literary and legal fitness for the station in India to which he still aspired.

Besides retracing his favourite studies with the Eastern Muses, we find him at this period warmly engaged in political as well as professional pursuits. An 'Essay on the Law of Bailments,' an 'Address to the Inhabitants of Westminster on Parliamentary Reform'—these publications, together with occasional pieces of poetry which he wrote within the last years of his residence in England, attest at once the vigour and elegance of his mind, and the variety of its application.

On the succession of the Shelburne administration he obtained, through the particular interest of Lord Ashburton, the judicial office in Bengal for which he had been hitherto an unsuccessful competitor. In March 1783 he received the honour of knighthood. In the April following he married Anna Maria Shipley, the daughter of the Bishop of St. Asaph, to whom he had been so many years attached. He immediately sailed for India, having secured, as his friend Lord Ashburton congratulated him, the two first objects of human pursuit, those of love and ambition. The joy with which he contemplated his situation is strongly testified in the descriptions of his feelings which he gives in his letters, and in the gigantic plans of literature which he sketched out. Happily married—still in the prime of life—leaving at home a reputation which had reached the hemisphere he was to visit—he bade adieu to the turbulence of party politics, which, though it had not dissolved any of his friendships, had made some of them irksome. The scenes which he had delighted to contemplate at a distance were now inviting his closest researches! He approached regions and manners which gave a living picture of antiquity; and, while his curiosity was heightened, he drew nearer to the means of its gratification.

In December 1783 he commenced the discharge of his duties as an Indian judge with his characteristic ardour. He also began the study of Sanscrit. He had been but a few years in India when his knowledge of that ancient language enabled him, under the auspices of the Governor, to commence a great plan for administering justice among the Indians, by compiling a

digest of Hindu and Mahomedan laws, similar to that which Justinian gave his Greek and Roman subjects. His part in the project was only to survey and arrange its materials. To that superintendence the Brahmins themselves submitted with perfect confidence. To detail his share in the labours of the Society of Calcutta, the earliest, or at least the most important, philosophical society established in British India, would be almost to abridge its 'Transactions' during his lifetime. He took the lead in founding it, and lived to see three volumes of its 'Transactions' appear. In 1789 he translated the ancient Hindu drama, 'Sactantala, or the Fatal Ring,' by Callidas, an author whom Sir William Jones calls the Shakspeare of India, and who lived about the time of Terence, in the first century before the Christian era. This antique picture of Hindu manners is certainly the greatest curiosity which the study of Oriental literature by Europeans has brought to light. In 1794 he published, also from the Sanscrit, a translation of the Ordinances of Menu, who is esteemed by the Hindoos to be the earliest of created beings, and the holiest of legislators; but who appears, by the English translator's confession, to have lived long after priests, statesmen, and metaphysicians had learned to combine their crafts.

While business required his daily attendance at Calcutta, his usual residence was on the banks of the Ganges, at the distance of five miles from the court. To this spot he returned every evening after sunset; and, in the morning, rose so early as to reach his apartments in time by setting out on foot at the first appearance of dawn. He passed the months of vacation at Chrishnagur, a country residence, sixty miles from Calcutta, remarkable for its beauty, and interesting from having been the seat of an ancient Hindu college. Here he added botany to the other pursuits of his indefatigable curiosity.

In the burning climate of Bengal it is not surprising that the strongest constitution should have sunk under the weight of his professional duties and of his extensive literary labours. The former alone occupied him seven hours during the session-time. His health, indeed, seems to have been early affected in India. In 1793 the indisposition of Lady Jones rendered it necessary that she should return to England. Sir William proposed to follow her in 1795, delaying only till he should complete the system of Indian legislation. But they parted to meet no more.

In 1794 he was attacked with an inflammation of the liver, which acted with uncommon rapidity, and, before a physician was called in, had advanced too far to yield to the efficacy of medicine. He expired in a composed attitude, without a groan, or the appearance of a pang; and retained an expression of complacency on his features to the last.

In the course of a short life Sir William Jones acquired a degree of knowledge which the ordinary faculties of men, if they were blessed with antediluvian longevity, could scarcely hope to surpass. His learning threw light on the laws of Greece and India, on the general literature of Asia, and on the history of the family of nations. He carried philosophy, eloquence, and philanthropy into his character of a lawyer and a judge. Amidst the driest toils of erudition, he retained a sensibility to the beauties of poetry, and a talent for transfusing them into his own language, which has seldom been united with the same degree of industry. Had he written nothing but the delightful ode from Hafiz—

“ Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,”

it would alone testify the harmony of his ear and the elegance of his taste. When he went abroad it was not to enrich himself with the spoils of avarice or ambition, but to search, amidst the ruins of Oriental literature, for treasures which he would not have exchanged

“ For all Bokhara’s vaunted gold,
Or all the gems of Samarcand.”

It is, nevertheless, impossible to avoid supposing that the activity of his mind spread itself in too many directions to be always employed to the best advantage. The impulse that carried him through so many pursuits has a look of something restless, inordinate, and ostentatious. Useful as he was, he would in all probability have been still more so, had his powers been concentrated to fewer objects. His poetry is sometimes elegant, but altogether it has too much of the florid luxury of the East. His taste would appear, in his latter years, to have fallen into a state of Brahminical idolatry, when he recommends to our particular admiration, and translates in pompous lyrical diction, the Indian description of Cumara, the daughter of Ocean, riding upon a peacock; and enjoins us to admire, as an allegory equally new and beautiful, the unimaginable conceit of Camdeo, the

Indian Cupid, having a bow that is made of flowers, and a bow-string which is a string of bees. Industrious as he was, his history is full of abandoned and half-executed projects. While his name reflects credit on poetical biography, his secondary fame as a composer shows that the palm of poetry is not likely to be won, even by great genius, without exclusive devotion to the pursuit.*—

“ Ἄλλὰ οὕτως ἅμα πάντα δυνήσεται αὐτὸς ἐλέσθαι ;

Ἄλλω μὲν γὰρ ἔδωκε θεὸς πολεμῆϊα ἔργα,

Ἄλλω δὲ ὀρχηστῆν, ἐτέρω κίθαριν καὶ αἰοιδῆν.”

Iliad, xiv. 729.

ROBERT BURNS.

[Born, 1758. Died, 1796.]

ROBERT BURNS was born near the town of Ayr, within a few hundred yards of “ Alloway’s auld haunted kirk,” in a clay cottage, which his father, who was a small farmer and gardener, had built with his own hands. A part of this humble edifice gave way when the poet was but a few days old ; and his mother and he were carried, at midnight, through the storm, to a neighbour’s house that gave them shelter. After having received some lessons in his childhood from the schoolmaster of the village of Alloway, he was, at seven years of age, put under a teacher of the name of Murdoch, who instructed him in reading and English grammar. This good man, who is still alive, and a teacher of languages in London, boasts, with a very natural triumph, of having accurately instructed Burns in the first principles of composition.† At such an age, Burns’s study of principles could not be very profound ; yet it is due to his early instructor to observe that his prose style is more accurate than we should expect even from the vigour of an untutored mind, and such as would lead us to suppose that he had been early initiated in the rules of grammar. His father’s removal to another farm in Ayrshire, at Mount Oliphant, unfortunately deprived him of the benefit of Murdoch as an instructor, after he had been about two years under his care ; and for a long time he received no other lessons

* [It is not Sir William Jones’s poetry that can perpetuate his name.—*Southey, Quar. Rev.*, vol. xi. p. 502.]

† [Murdoch died about the year 1822, respected and poor.]

than those which his father gave him in writing and arithmetic, when he instructed his family by the fireside of their cottage in winter evenings. About the age of thirteen he was sent, during a part of the summer, to the parish school in Dalrymple, in order to improve his handwriting. In the following year he had an opportunity of passing several weeks with his old friend Murdoch, with whose assistance he began to study French with intense ardour and assiduity. His proficiency in that language, though it was wonderful considering his opportunities, was necessarily slight; yet it was in showing this accomplishment alone that Burns's weakness ever took the shape of vanity. One of his friends, who carried him into the company of a French lady, remarked, with surprise, that he attempted to converse with her in her own tongue. Their French, however, was soon found to be almost mutually unintelligible. As far as Burns could make himself understood, he unfortunately offended the foreign lady. He meant to tell her that she was a charming person, and delightful in conversation; but expressed himself so as to appear to her to mean that she was fond of speaking: to which the Gallic dame indignantly replied, that it was quite as common for poets to be impertinent, as for women to be loquacious.*

At the age of nineteen he received a few months' instruction in land-surveying.—Such is the scanty history of his education, which is interesting simply because its opportunities were so few and precarious, and such as only a gifted mind could have turned to any account.

Of his early reading, he tells us, that a *Life of Hannibal*, which Murdoch gave him when a boy, raised the first stirrings of his enthusiasm; and he adds, with his own fervid expression, "that the *Life of Sir William Wallace* poured a tide of Scottish prejudices into his veins, which would boil along there till the flood-gates of life were shut in eternal rest."† In his sixteenth year he had read some of the plays of Shakspeare, the works of Pope and Addison, and of the Scottish poets Ramsay and Fergusson. From the volumes of Locke, Ray, Derham, and Stackhouse, he also imbibed a smattering of natural history and theology; but his brother assures us that, until the time of his being known as

* [This story is in no account of Burns's life that we have ever seen, before or since Mr. Campbell wrote.]

† From his letter to Dr. Moore.

an author, he continued to be but imperfectly acquainted with the most eminent of our English writers. Thanks to the songs and superstition of his native country, his genius had some fostering aliments, which perhaps the study of classical authors might have led him to neglect. His inspiration grew up like the flower, which owes to heaven, in a barren soil, a natural beauty and wildness of fragrance that would be spoiled by artificial culture. He learned an infinite number of old ballads, from hearing his mother sing them at her wheel; and he was instructed in all the venerable heraldry of devils and witches by an ancient woman in the neighbourhood, "*the Sybelline nurse of his Muse,*" who probably first imparted to him the story of 'Tam o'Shanter.' "Song was his favourite and first pursuit." "The song-book," he says, "was my Vade Mecum: I pored over it constantly, driving my cart, or walking to labour." It would be pleasing to dwell on this era of his youthful sensibility, if his life had been happy; but it was far otherwise. He was the eldest of a family buffeted by misfortunes, toiling beyond their strength, and living without the support of animal food. At thirteen years of age he used to thresh in his father's barn; and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm. After the toils of the day, he usually sank in the evening into dejection of spirits, and was afflicted with dull headaches, the joint result of anxiety, low diet, and fatigue. "This kind of life," he says, "the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year, when love made me a poet." The object of his first attachment was a Highland girl named Mary Campbell, who was his fellow-reaper in the same harvest-field.* She died very young; and when Burns heard of her death, he was thrown into an ecstasy of suffering much beyond what even *his* keen temperament was accustomed to feel. Nor does he seem ever to have forgotten her. His verses 'To Mary in Heaven;' his invocation to the star that rose on the anniversary of her death; his description of the landscape that was the scene of their day of love and parting vows, where "flowers sprang wanton to be press'd;" the whole luxury and exquisite passion of that strain, evince that her image had survived many important changes in himself.

* [Mr. Campbell is mistaken in this: Burns's first love was his handsome Nell; his Mary Campbell an after acquaintance.]

From his seventeenth to his twenty-fourth year he lived as an assistant to his father, on another farm in Ayrshire, at Lochlea, to which they had removed from Mount Oliphant. During that period his brother Gilbert and he, besides labouring for their father, took a part of the land on their own account, for the purpose of raising flax; and this speculation induced Robert to attempt establishing himself in the business of flax-dressing in the neighbouring town of Irvine. But the unhealthiness of the business, and the accidental misfortune of his shop taking fire, induced him at the end of six months to abandon it. Whilst his father's affairs were growing desperate at Lochlea, the poet and his brother had taken a different farm on their own account, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst; but from unfavourable seasons and a bad soil, this speculation proved also unfortunate, and was given up. By this time Burns had formed his connexion with Jean Armour, who was afterwards his wife, a connexion which could no longer be concealed at the moment when the ruinous state of his affairs had determined him to cross the Atlantic, and to seek his fortune in Jamaica. He had even engaged himself as assistant overseer to a plantation. He proposed, however, to legalise the private contract of marriage which he had made with Jean, and, though he anticipated the necessity of leaving her behind him, he trusted to better days for their being re-united. But the parents of Jean were unwilling to dispose of her to a husband who was thus to be separated from her, and persuaded her to renounce the informal marriage. Burns also agreed to dissolve the connexion, though deeply wounded at the apparent willingness of his mistress to give him up, and overwhelmed with feelings of the most distracting nature. He now [1786] prepared to embark for Jamaica, where his first situation would, in all probability, have been that of a negro-driver, when, before bidding a last adieu to his native country, he happily thought of publishing a collection of his poems. By this publication he gained about 20*l.*, which seasonably saved him from indenting himself as a servant for want of money to procure a passage. With nine guineas out of this sum he had taken a steerage passage in the Clyde for Jamaica; and to avoid the terrors of a jail he had been for some time skulking from covert to covert. He had taken a last leave of his friends, and had composed the last song which he thought

he should ever measure to Caledonia,* when the contents of a letter from Dr. Blacklock of Edinburgh to one of his friends, describing the encouragement which an edition of his poems would be likely to receive in the Scottish capital, suddenly lighted up all his prospects, and detained him from embarking. "I immediately posted," he says, "to Edinburgh, without a single acquaintance or letter of introduction. The baneful star which had so long shed its blasting influence on my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir."

Though he speaks of having had no acquaintance in Edinburgh, he had been previously introduced in Ayrshire to Lord Daer, to Dugald Stewart, and to several respectable individuals, by the reputation which the first edition of his poems had acquired. He arrived in Edinburgh in 1786, and his reception there was more like an agreeable change of fortune in a romance than like an event in ordinary life. His company was everywhere sought for; and it was soon found that the admiration which his poetry had excited was but a part of what was due to the general eminence of his mental faculties. His natural eloquence, and his warm and social heart expanding under the influence of prosperity—which with all the pride of genius retained a quick and versatile sympathy with every variety of human character—made him equally fascinating in the most refined and convivial societies. For a while he reigned the fashion and idol of his native capital.

The profits of his new edition enabled him in the succeeding year, 1787, to make a tour through a considerable extent both of the south and north of Scotland. The friend who accompanied him in this excursion gives a very interesting description of the impressions which he saw produced in Burns's mind from some of the romantic scenery which they visited. "When we came," he says, "to a rustic hut on the river Till, where the stream descends in a noble waterfall, and is surrounded by a woody precipice that commands a most beautiful view of its course, he threw himself on a heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous indulgence of imagination." It may be conceived with what enthusiasm he visited the field of Bannockburn.

After he had been caressed and distinguished so much in

* "The gloomy night is gathering fast."

Edinburgh, it was natural to anticipate that, among the many individuals of public influence and respectability who had countenanced his genius, some means might have been devised to secure to him a competent livelihood in a proper station of society. It was probably with this hope in his mind that he returned to Edinburgh after his summer excursion; and, unfortunately for his habits, spent the winter of 1788 in accepting a round of convivial invitations. The hospitality of the North was not then what it now is. Refinement had not yet banished to the tavern the custom of bumper-toasts and of pressing the bottle; and the master of the house was not thought very hospitable unless the majority of his male guests at a regular party were at least half intoxicated. Burns was invited and importuned to those scenes of dissipation; and beset at least as much by the desire of others to enjoy his society when he was exhilarated as by his own facility to lend it. He probably deluded his own reflections by imagining that in every fresh excess he was acquiring a new friend, or attaching one already acquired. But with all the admiration and declarations of personal friendship which were lavished on him, the only appointment that could be obtained for him was that of an officer of excise. In the mean time he had acquired a relish for a new and over-excited state of life. He had been expected to shine in every society; and, to use his own phrase, "had been too often obliged to give his company a slice of his constitution." At least he was so infatuated as to think so. He had now to go back to the sphere of society from which he had emerged, with every preparatory circumstance to render him discontented with it that the most ingenious cruelty could have devised.

After his appointment to the office of a gauger he took a farm at Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, and settled in conjugal union with his Jean. But here his unhappy distraction between two employments, and his mode of life as an exciseman, which made the public-house his frequent abode, and his fatigues a temptation to excesses, had so bad an influence on his affairs, that at the end of three years and a half he sold his stock and gave up his farm. By promotion in the excise his income had risen to 70*l.* a-year, and with only this income in immediate prospect he repaired to Dumfries, the new place of duty that was assigned to him by the board of commissioners. Here his intemperate

habits became confirmed, and his conduct and conversation grew daily more unguarded. Times of political rancour had also arrived, in which he was too ardent a spirit to preserve neutrality. He took the popular side, and became exposed to charges of disloyalty. He spurned, indeed, at those charges, and wrote a very spirited explanation of his principles. But his political conversations had been reported to the Board of Excise, and it required the interest of a powerful friend to support him in the humble situation which he held. It was at Dumfries that he wrote the finest of his songs for Thomson's 'Musical Collection,' and dated many of the most eloquent of his letters.

In the winter of 1796 his constitution, broken by cares, irregularities, and passions, fell into a rapid decline. The summer returned; but only to shine on his sickness and his grave. In July his mind wandered into delirium; and in the same month a fever, on the fourth day of its continuance, closed his life and sufferings in his thirty-eighth year.

Whatever were the faults of Burns, he lived unstained by a mean or dishonest action. To have died without debt after supporting a family on 70*l.* a-year bespeaks after all but little of the spendthrift. That income, on account of his incapacity to perform his duty, was even reduced to one-half of its amount at the period of his dying sickness; and humiliating threats of punishment, for opinions uttered in the confidence of private conversation, were among the last returns which the government of Scotland made to the man whose genius attaches agreeable associations to the name of his country.

His death seemed to efface the recollection of his faults, and of political differences, still harder to be forgotten. All the respectable inhabitants of Dumfries attended his funeral, whilst the volunteers of the city, and two regiments of native fencibles, attended with solemn music, and paid military honours at the grave of their illustrious countryman.

Burns has given an elixir of life to his native dialect. The Scottish 'Tam o' Shanter' will be read as long as any English production of the same century. The impression of his genius is deep and universal; and, viewing him merely as a poet, there is scarcely any other regret connected with his name, than that his productions, with all their merit, fall short of the talents which he possessed. That he never attempted any great work

of fiction or invention may be partly traced to the cast of his genius, and partly to his circumstances and defective education. His poetical temperament was that of fitful transports, rather than steady inspiration. Whatever he might have written was likely to have been fraught with passion. There is always enough of *interest* in life to cherish the feelings of a man of genius; but it requires knowledge to enlarge and enrich his *imagination*. Of that knowledge which unrolls the diversities of human manners, adventures, and characters to a poet's study, he could have no great share; although he stamped the little treasure which he possessed in the mintage of sovereign genius. It has been asserted that he received all the education which is requisite for a poet; he had learned reading, writing, and arithmetic, and he had dipped into French and geometry. To a poet, it must be owned, the three last of those acquisitions were quite superfluous. His education, it is also affirmed, was equal to Shakspeare's;* but, without intending to make any comparison between the genius of the two bards, it should be recollected that Shakspeare lived in an age within the verge of chivalry, an age overflowing with chivalrous and romantic reading; that he was led by his vocation to have daily recourse to that kind of reading; that he dwelt on a spot which gave him constant access to it; and was in habitual intercourse with men of genius. Burns, after growing up to manhood under toils which exhausted his physical frame, acquired a scanty knowledge of modern books, of books tending for the most part to regulate the judgment more than to exercise the fancy. In the whole tract of his reading there seems to be little that could cherish his inventive faculties. One material of poetry he certainly possessed, independent of books, in the legendary superstitions of his native country. But with all that he tells us of his early love of those superstitions, they seem to have come home to his mind with so many ludicrous associations of vulgar tradition, that it may be doubted if he could have turned them to account in an elevated work of fiction. Strongly and admirably as he paints the supernatural in 'Tam o' Shanter,' yet there, as everywhere else, he makes it subservient to comic effect. The fortuitous wildness and sweetness of his strains may, after all,

* [Even if Shakspeare's education was as humble as what Farmer supposed it to have been, it was beyond Burns's.]

set aside every regret that he did not attempt more superb and regular structures of fancy. He describes, as he says, the sentiments which he saw and felt in himself and his rustic compeers around him. His page is a lively image of the contemporary life and country from which he sprang. He brings back old Scotland to us with all her homefelt endearments, her simple customs, her festivities, her sturdy prejudices, and orthodox zeal, with a power that excites, alternately, the most tender and mirthful sensations. After the full account of his pieces which Dr. Currie has given, the English reader can have nothing new to learn respecting them.* On one powerfully comic piece Dr. Currie has not disserted, namely, 'The Holy Fair.' It is enough, however, to mention the humour of this production without recommending its subject. Burns, indeed, only laughs at the abuses of a sacred institution; but the theme was of unsafe approach, and he ought to have avoided it.

He meets us, in his compositions, undisguisedly as a peasant. At the same time his observations go extensively into life, like those of a man who felt the proper dignity of human nature in the character of a peasant. The writer of some of the severest strictures that ever have been passed upon his poetry† conceives that his beauties are considerably defaced by a portion of false taste and vulgar sentiment, which adhere to him from his low education. That Burns's education, or rather the want of it, excluded him from much knowledge which might have fostered his inventive ingenuity, seems to be clear; but his circumstances cannot be admitted to have communicated vulgarity to the tone of his sentiments. They have not the sordid taste of low condition. It is objected to him that he boasts too much of his own independence; but, in reality, this boast is neither frequent nor obtrusive; and it is in itself the expression of a manly and

* [Since this was written, much has been done to illustrate the life, writings, and genius of Burns; edition after edition has been called for of his works, and memoir after memoir. The Lives by Mr. Lockhart and Mr. Allan Cunningham are too well known for eulogy or quotation; the vigorous vindictory tone of the former, and the calm, clear, and earnest language of the latter, with the fulness of its information, leave little for succeeding writers to say by way of justification or illustration.]

† Critique on the character of Burns in 'The Edinburgh Review.' Article, *Cromek's Reliques of Burns*. [By Lord Jeffrey. Mr. Campbell's reply to Lord Jeffrey is thought by the Edinburgh Reviewer to be *substantially successful*. See 'Edinburgh Review,' vol. xxxi. p. 492.]

laudable feeling. So far from calling up disagreeable recollections of rusticity, his sentiments triumph, by their natural energy, over those false and fastidious distinctions which the mind is but too apt to form in allotting its sympathies to the sensibilities of the rich and poor. He carries us into the humble scenes of life, not to make us dole out our tribute of charitable compassion to paupers and cottagers, but to make us feel with them on equal terms, to make us enter into their passions and interests, and share our hearts with them as with brothers and sisters of the human species.

He is taxed, in the same place, with perpetually affecting to deride the virtues of prudence, regularity, and decency; and with being imbued with the sentimentality of German novels. Anything more remote from German sentiment than Burns's poetry could not easily be mentioned. But is he depraved and licentious in a comprehensive view of the moral character of his pieces? The over-genial freedom of a few assuredly ought not to fix this character upon the whole of them. It is a charge which we should hardly expect to see preferred against the author of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.' He is the enemy, indeed, of that selfish and niggardly spirit which shelters itself under the name of prudence; but that pharisaical disposition has seldom been a favourite with poets. Nor should his maxims, which inculcate charity and candour in judging of human frailties, be interpreted as a serious defence of them, as when he says,

“Then gently scan your brother man,
 Still gentlier sister woman,
 Though they may gang a kennin wrang;
 To step aside is human.”

“Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
 Decidedly can try us;
 He knows each chord, its various tone,
 Each spring, its various bias.”

It is still more surprising that a critic, capable of so eloquently developing the traits of Burns's genius, should have found fault with his amatory strains for want of polish, and “of that chivalrous tone of gallantry which uniformly abases itself in the presence of the object of its devotion.” Every reader must recall abundance of thoughts in his love-songs, to which any attempt to superadd a tone of gallantry would not be

“ To gild refined gold, to paint the rose,
Or add fresh perfume to the violet ;”*

but to debase the metal, and to take the odour and colour from the flower. It is exactly this superiority to “ abasement ” and polish which is the charm that distinguishes Burns from the herd of erotic songsters, from the days of the troubadours to the present time. He wrote from impulses more sincere than the spirit of chivalry ; and even Lord Surrey and Sir Philip Sidney are cold and uninteresting lovers in comparison with the rustic Burns.

The praises of his best pieces I have abstained from re-echoing, as there is no epithet of admiration which they deserve which has not been bestowed upon them. One point must be conceded to the strictures on his poetry to which I have already alluded,—that his personal satire was fierce and acrimonious. I am not, however, disposed to consider his attacks on Rumble John and Holy Willie as destitute of wit ; and his poem on the clerical settlements at Kilmarnock blends a good deal of ingenious metaphor with his accustomed humour. Even viewing him as a satirist, the last and humblest light in which he can be regarded as a poet, it may still be said of him,

“ His style was witty, though it had some gall ;
Something he might have mended—so may all.”

WILLIAM MASON.

[Born, 1725. Died, 1797.]

WILLIAM MASON was the son of the vicar of St. Trinity, in the East Riding of Yorkshire. He was entered of St. John’s College, Cambridge, in his eighteenth year, having already, as he informs us, blended some attention to painting and poetry with his youthful studies :—

“ ——— Soon my hand the mimic colours spread,
And vainly strove to snatch a double wreath
From Fame’s unfading laurels.”—*English Garden*, b. i.

At the university he distinguished himself by his Monody on

* [This version by no means improves the original, which is as follows :—

To gild refined gold, to paint the *lily*,
To throw a perfume on the violet.

King John, act iv. scene ii.

A great poet quoting another should be correct.—Byron, *Works*, vol. xvi. p. 124.]

the death of Pope, which was published in 1747.* Two years afterwards he obtained his degree of master of arts, and a fellowship of Pembroke Hall. For his fellowship he was indebted to the interest of Gray, whose acquaintance with him was intimate and lasting, and who describes him, at Cambridge, as a young man of much fancy, little judgment, and a good deal of modesty; in simplicity a child, a little vain, but sincere, inoffensive, and indolent. At a later period of his life, Thomas Warton gave him the very opposite character of a "*buckram man*."

He was early attached to Whig principles, and wrote his poem of 'Isis,' as an attack on the Jacobitism of Oxford. When Thomas Warton produced his 'Triumph of Isis,' in reply, the two poets had the liberality to compliment the productions of each other; nor were their rival strains much worthy of mutual envy. But Mason, though he was above envy, could not detach his vanity from the subject. One evening, on entering Oxford with a friend, he expressed his happiness that it was dark. His friend not perceiving any advantage in the circumstance, "What!" said Mason, "don't you remember my 'Isis'?"

In 1753 he published his 'Elfrida,' in which the chorus is introduced after the model of the Greek drama. The general unsuitableness of that venerable appendage of the ancient theatre for the modern stage seems to be little disputed.† The two predominant features of the Greek chorus were, its music and its abstract morality. Its musical character could not be revived, unless the science of music were by some miracle to be made a thousand years younger, and unless modern ears were restored to a taste for its youthful simplicity. If music were as freely mixed with our tragedy as with that of Greece, the effect would speedily be, to make harmony predominate over words, sound over sense, as

* [In one of his first poems Mason had, in a puerile fiction, ranked Chaucer and Spenser and Milton below Pope, which is like comparing a garden shrub with the oaks of the forest. But he would have maintained no such absurdity in his riper years, for Mason lived to perceive and correct both his errors of opinion and his faults of style.—Southey, *Cowper*, vol. ii. p. 177.]

† [The ancients were perpetually confined and hampered by the necessity of using the chorus: and if they have done wonders notwithstanding this clog, sure I am they would have performed still greater wonders without it.—Gray. *Remarks on 'Elfrida.'* *Works by Mitford*, vol. iv. p. 2.

It is impossible to conceive that Phædra trusted her incestuous passion, or Medea her murderous revenge, to a whole troop of attendants.—Hor. *Walpole*. *Royal and Noble Authors*.]

in modern operas, and the result would be, not a resemblance to the drama of Greece, but a thing as opposite to it as possible. The moral use of the ancient chorus is also superseded by the nature of modern dramatic imitation, which incorporates sentiment and reflection so freely with the speeches of the represented characters as to need no suspension of the dialogue for the sake of lyrical bursts of morality or religious invocation.

The chorus was the oldest part of Greek tragedy; and though Mr. Schlegel has rejected the idea of its having owed its preservation on the Greek stage to its antiquity, I cannot help thinking that that circumstance was partly the cause of its preservation.* Certainly the Greek drama, having sprung from a choral origin, would always retain a character congenial with the chorus. The Greek drama preserved a religious and highly rhythmical character. It took its rise from a popular solemnity, and continued to exhibit the public, as it were, personified in a distinct character upon the stage. In this circumstance we may perhaps recognise a trait of the democratic spirit of Athenian manners, which delighted to give the impartial spectators a sort of image and representative voice upon the stage. Music was then simple; the dramatic representation of character and action, though bold, was simple; and this simplicity left on the ancient stage a space for the chorus, which it could not obtain (permanently) on that of the moderns. Our music is so complicated, that when it is allied with words it overwhelms our attention to words. Again, the Greek drama gave strong and decisive outlines of character and passion, but not their minute shadings; our drama gives all the play of moral physiognomy. The great and awful characters of a Greek tragedy spoke in pithy texts, without commentaries of sentiment; while the flexible eloquence of the moderns supplies both text and commentary. Every moral feeling, calm or tumultuous, is expressed in our soliloquies

* Mr. Schlegel alludes to the tradition of Sophocles having written a prose defence of the chorus against the objections of contemporaries who blamed his continuance of it. Admitting this tradition, what does it prove? Sophocles found the chorus in his native drama, and no doubt found the genius of that drama congenial with the chorus from which it had sprung. In the opinion of the great German critic, he used the chorus, not from regard to habit, but principle. But have not many persons of the highest genius defended customs on the score of principle, to which they were secretly, perhaps unconsciously, attached from the power of habit? Custom is, in fact, stronger than principle.

or dialogues. The Greeks made up for the want of soliloquy, and for the short simplicity of their dialogue, which often consisted in interchanges of single lines, by choral speeches, which commented on the passing action, explained occurring motives, and soothed or deepened the moral impressions arising out of the piece. With us everything is different. The dramatic character is brought, both physically and morally, so much nearer to our perception, with all its fluctuating motives and feelings, as to render it as unnecessary to have interpreters of sentiment or motives, such as the chorus, to magnify, or soothe, or prolong our moral impressions, as to have buskins to increase the size, or brazen vases to reverberate the voice, of the speaker. Nor has the mind any preparation for such juries of reflectors, and processions of confidential advisers.

There is, however, no rule without a possible exception. To make the chorus an habitual part of the modern drama would be a chimerical attempt. There are few subjects in which every part of a plot may not be fulfilled by individuals. Yet it is easy to conceive a subject in which it may be required, or at least desirable, to incorporate a group of individuals under one common part. And where this grouping shall arise, not capriciously, but necessarily out of the nature of the subject, our minds will not be offended by the circumstance, but will thank the dramatist for an agreeable novelty. In order to reconcile us, however, to this plural personage, or chorus, it is necessary that the individuals composing it should be knit not only by a natural but dignified coalition. The group, in fact, will scarcely please or interest the imagination unless it has a solemn or interesting community of character. Such are the Druids in 'Caractacus;' and, perhaps, the chorus of Israelites in Racine's 'Esther.' In such a case even a modern audience would be likely to suspend their love of artificial harmony, and to listen with delight to simple music and choral poetry, where the words were not drowned in the music. At all events, there would exist a fair apology for introducing a chorus, from the natural and imposing bond of unity belonging to the group. . But this apology will by no means apply to the tragedy of 'Elfrida.' The chorus is there composed of persons who have no other community of character than their being the waiting-women of a baroness. They are too unimportant personages to be a chorus. They have no right

to form so important a ring around Elfrida in the dramatic hemisphere; and the imagination is puzzled to discover any propriety in those young ladies, who, according to history, ought to have been good Christians, striking up a hymn, in Harewood Forest, to the rising sun:—

“Hail to the living light,” &c.

In other respects the tragedy of ‘Elfrida’ is objectionable. It violates the traditional truth of history, without exhibiting a story sufficiently powerful to triumph over our historical belief. The whole concludes with Elfrida’s self-devotion to widowhood; but no circumstance is contrived to assure us, that, like many other afflicted widows, she may not marry again. An irreverend and ludicrous, but involuntary, recollection is apt to cross the mind respecting the fragility of widows’ vows—

“Vows made in pain, as violent and void.”

‘Elfrida’ was acted at Covent-garden in 1772 under the direction of Colman, who got it up with splendid scenery, and characteristic music composed by Dr. Arne; but he made some alterations in the text, which violently offended its author. Mason threatened the manager with an appeal to the public; and the manager, in turn, threatened the poet with introducing a chorus of Grecian washerwomen on the stage. At the distance of several years it was revived at the same theatre, with the author’s own alterations, but with no better success. The play, in spite of its theatrical failure, was still acknowledged to possess poetical beauties.*

In 1754 Mason went into orders, and, through the patronage of Lord Holderness, was appointed one of the chaplains to the King. He was also domestic chaplain to the nobleman now mentioned, and accompanied him to Germany, where he speaks of having met with his friend Whitehead, the future laureate, at Hanover, in the year 1755. About the same time he received

* [It was something in that sickly age of tragedy to produce two such dramas as ‘Elfrida’ and ‘Caractacus’; the success of which, when Colman (much to his honour) made the bold experiment of bringing them on the stage, proved that, although the public had long been dieted upon trash, they could relish something of a worthier kind than ‘Tamerlane,’ ‘The Revenge,’ and ‘The Grecian Daughter.’ Mason composed his plays upon an artificial model, and in a gorgeous diction, because he thought Shakspeare had precluded all hope of excellence in any other form of drama. Southey, *Cowper*, vol. ii. p. 177.]

the living of Aston. He again courted the attention of the public in 1756, with four Odes, the themes of which were 'Independence,' 'Memory,' 'Melancholy,' and 'The Fall of Tyranny.' Smollett and Shenstone, in their strains to 'Independence' and 'Memory,' have certainly outshone our poet, as well as anticipated him in those subjects. The glittering and alliterative style of those four Odes of Mason was severely parodied by Lloyd and Colman; and the public, it is said, were more entertained with the parodies than with the originals. On the death of Cibber he was proposed to succeed to the laurel; but he received an apology for its not being offered to him because he was a clergyman. The apology was certainly both an absurd and false one; for Warton, the succeeding laureate, was in orders.* There seems, however, to be no room for doubting the sincerity of Mason's declaration, that he was indifferent about the office.

His reputation was considerably raised by the appearance of 'Caractacus' in 1759. Many years after its publication it was performed at Covent-garden with applause; though the impression it produced was not sufficient to make it permanent on the stage. This *chef-d'œuvre* of Mason may not exhibit strong or minute delineation of human character; but it has enough of dramatic interest to support our admiration of virtue and our suspense and emotion in behalf of its cause; and it leads the imagination into scenes delightfully cast amidst the awfulness of superstition, the venerable antiquity of history, and the untamed grandeur of external nature. In this last respect it may be preferred to the tragedy of Beaumont and Fletcher on the same subject—that it brings forward the persons and abodes of the Druids with more magnificent effect. There is so much of the poet's eye displayed in the choice of his ground and in the outline of his structure, that Mason seems to challenge something like a generous prepossession of the mind in judging of his drama.

* [This is far from correct. Whitehead succeeded Cibber, who was succeeded by Warton. Whitehead was not in orders; but Eusden, a parson, and a drunken one, had worn the laurel. Mason, being in orders, was thought by the then Lord Chamberlain less eligible than a layman.]

Dryden was the last laureate appointed by the King; the successors of Charles II., with a noble regard for poetry, left the election to the Lord Chamberlain. To Gray and Sir Walter Scott the situation was offered as a sinecure, but refused, and by Mr. Southey was accepted conditionally—not to sing annually, but upon occasion, that is, when the subject was fit for song and the Muse consenting.]

It is the work of a man of genius, that calls for regret on its imperfections. Even in the lyrical passages, which are most of all loaded with superfluous ornament and alliteration, we meet with an enthusiasm that breaks out from amidst encumbering faults. The invocation of the Druids to Snowdon, for which the mind is so well prepared by the preceding scene, begins with peculiar harmony :—

“ Mona on Snowdon calls:
Hear, thou king of mountains, hear!”—

and the ode on which Gray bestowed so much approbation opens with a noble personification and an impetuous spirit :—

“ Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
That shook the earth with thundering tread?
’Twas Death. In haste the warrior pass’d,
High tower’d his helmed head.”

In 1764 he published a collection of his works in one volume, containing four Elegies, which had been written since the appearance of ‘Caractacus.’ The language of those elegies is certainly less stiffly embroidered than that of his odes; and they contain some agreeable passages, such as Dryden’s character in the first, the description of a friend’s happiness in country retirement in the second, and of Lady Coventry’s beauty in the fourth; but they are not altogether free from the “*buckram*,” and are studies of the head more than the heart.

In 1762 he was appointed by his friend Mr. Montagu to the canonry and prebend of Driffild, in the cathedral of York, and by Lord Holderness to the precentorship of the church; but his principal residence continued still to be at Aston, where he indulged his taste in adorning the grounds near his parsonage, and was still more honourably distinguished by an exemplary fulfilment of his clerical duties. In 1765 he married a Miss Sherman, the daughter of William Sherman, Esq., of Kingston-upon-Hull. From the time of his marriage with this amiable woman he had unhappily little intermission from anxiety in watching the progress of a consumption which carried her off at the end of two years at the early age of twenty-eight. He has commemorated her virtues in a well-known and elegant sepulchral inscription.

By the death of his beloved friend Gray, he was left a legacy of 500*l.*, together with the books and MSS. of the poet. His

‘Memoirs and Letters of Gray’ were published in 1775, upon a new plan of biography, which has since been followed in several instances.* The first book of his ‘English Garden’ made its appearance in 1772; the three subsequent parts came out in 1777, 1779, and 1782. The first book contains a few lines beautifully descriptive of woodland scenery:—

“ Many a glade is found,
The haunt of wood-gods only; where if Art
E'er dared to tread, 'twas with unsandall'd foot,
Printless, as if the place were holy ground.”

There may be other fine passages in this poem; but if there be I confess that the somniferous effect of the whole has occasioned to me the fault or misfortune of overlooking them. What value it may possess as an “Art of Ornamental Gardening,” I do not presume to judge; but if this be the perfection of didactic poetry, as Warton pronounced it, it would seem to be as difficult to teach art by poetry, as to teach poetry by art. He begins the poem by invoking Simplicity; but she never comes. Had her power condescended to visit him, I think she would have thrown a less “*dilettante*” air upon his principal episode, in which the tragic event of a woman expiring suddenly of a broken heart is introduced by a conversation between her rival lovers about “Palladian bridges, Panini’s pencil, and Piranesi’s hand.” At all events, Simplicity would not have allowed the hero of the story to construct his barns in imitation of a Norman fortress, and to give his dairy the resemblance of an ancient abbey; nor the poet himself to address a flock of sheep with as much solemnity as if he had been haranguing a senate.

During the whole progress of the American war, Mason continued unchanged in his Whig principles, and took an active share in the association for parliamentary reform, which began to be formed in the year 1779. Finding that his principles gave offence at court, he resigned his office of chaplainship to the King. His Muse was indebted to those politics for a new and lively change in her character. In the pieces which he wrote

* [Instead of melting down my materials into one mass, and constantly speaking in my own person, by which I might have appeared to have more merit in the execution of the work, I have resolved to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason in his *Memoirs of Gray*.—BOSWELL.

Mason’s plan has been further honoured by Hayley’s imitation of it in his *Life of Cowper*, by Mr. Moore in his *Life of Lord Byron*, and by Mr. Lockhart in his *Life of Sir Walter Scott*.]

under the name of Malcolm MacGregor there is a pleasantry that we should little expect from the solemn hand which had touched the harp of the Druids. Thomas Warton was the first to discover, or at least to announce, him as the author of the 'Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers;' and Mason's explanation left the suspicion uncontradicted.*

Among his accomplishments his critical knowledge of painting must have been considerable, for his translation of Du Fresnoy's poem on that art, which appeared in 1783, was finished at the particular suggestion of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who furnished it with illustrative notes. One of his last publications was 'An Ode on the Commemoration of the British Revolution.' It was his very last song in praise of liberty. Had Soame Jenyns, whom our poet rallies so facetiously for his Toryism, lived to read his palinode after the French Revolution, he might have retorted on him the lines which Mason put in the mouth of Dean Tucker in his 'Dialogue of the Dean and the Squire:—

"Squire Jenyns, since with like intent
We both have writ on government."

But he showed that his philanthropy had suffered no abatement from the change of his politics, by delivering and publishing an eloquent sermon against the slave-trade. In the same year that gave occasion to his 'Secular Ode' he condescended to be the biographer of his friend Whitehead, and the editor of his works.

Mason's learning in the arts was of no ordinary kind. He composed several devotional pieces of music for the choir of York cathedral; and Dr. Burney speaks of an 'Historical and Critical Essay on English Church Music,' which he published in 1795, in very respectful terms. It is singular, however, that the fault ascribed by the same authority to his musical theory should be that of Calvinistical plainness. In verse he was my Lord Peter—in his taste for sacred music Dr. Burney compares him to Jack—in the 'Tale of a Tub.'

His death was occasioned, in his seventy-second year, by an accidental hurt on his leg, which he received in stepping out of a carriage, and which produced an incurable mortification.

* [Mason's right to the poem is now put beyond all question by the collected edition of Walpole's Letters.]

JOSEPH WARTON.

[Born, 1722. Died, 1800.]

DOCTOR JOSEPH WARTON, son to the vicar of Basingstoke, and elder brother to the historian of English poetry, was born in the house of his maternal grandfather, the Rev. Joseph Richardson, rector of Dunsfold, in Surrey. He was chiefly educated at home by his father, Dr. Warton, till his fourteenth year, when he was admitted on the foundation of Winchester College. He was there the schoolfellow and intimate of Collins, the poet; and, in conjunction with him and another youth, whose name was Tomkyns, he sent to 'The Gentleman's Magazine' three pieces of poetry, which were highly commended in that miscellany. In 1740, being superannuated, he left Winchester School, and having missed a presentation to New College, Oxford, was entered a commoner at that of Oriel. At the university he composed his two poems, 'The Enthusiast' and 'The Dying Indian,' and a satirical prose sketch, in imitation of Le Sage, entitled 'Ranelagh,' which his editor, Mr. Wooll, has inserted in the volume that contains his life, letters, and poems. Having taken the degree of bachelor of arts at Oxford in 1744, he was ordained on his father's curacy at Basingstoke. At the end of two years he removed from thence to do duty at Chelsea, where he caught the small-pox. Having left that place for change of air, he did not return to it, on account of some disagreement with the parishioners, but officiated for a few months at Chawton and Droxford, and then resumed his residence at Basingstoke. In the same year, 1746, he published a volume of his odes, in the preface to which he expressed a hope that they would be regarded as a fair attempt to bring poetry back from the moralizing and didactic taste of the age, to the truer channels of fancy and description. Collins, our author's immortal contemporary, also published his odes in the same month of the same year. He realised, with the hand of genius, that idea of highly personified and picturesque composition which Warton contemplated with the eye of taste. But Collins's works were ushered in with no manifesto of a design to regenerate the taste of the age, with no pretensions of erecting a new or recovered standard of excellence.

In 1748 our author was presented by the Duke of Bolton to the rectory of Winslade, when he immediately married a lady of that neighbourhood, Miss Daman, to whom he had been for some time attached. He had not been long settled in his living when he was invited by his patron to accompany him to the south of France. The Duchess of Bolton was then in a confirmed dropsy, and his Grace, anticipating her death, wished to have a Protestant clergyman with him on the Continent, who might marry him, on the first intelligence of his consort's death, to the lady with whom he lived, and who was universally known by the name of Polly Peachum. Dr. Warton complied with this proposal, to which (as his circumstances were narrow) it must be hoped that his poverty consented rather than his will. "To those," says Mr. Wooll, "who have enjoyed the rich and varied treasures of Dr. Warton's conversation, who have been dazzled by the brilliancy of his wit, and instructed by the acuteness of his understanding, I need not suggest how truly enviable was the journey which his fellow-travellers accomplished through the French provinces to Montauban." It may be doubted, however, if the French provinces were exactly the scene where his fellow-travellers were most likely to be instructed by the acuteness of Dr. Warton's observations, as he was unable to speak the language of the country, and could have no information from foreigners, except what he could now and then extort from the barbarous Latin of some Irish friar. He was himself so far from being delighted or edified by his pilgrimage, that for private reasons (as his biographer states), and from impatience of being restored to his family, he returned home without having accomplished the object for which the Duke had taken him abroad. He set out for Bordeaux in a courier's cart; but being dreadfully jolted in that vehicle, he quitted it, and, having joined some carriers in Brittany, came home by way of St. Maloes. A month after his return to England the Duchess of Bolton died; and our author, imagining that his patron would possibly have the decency to remain a widower for a few weeks, wrote to his Grace, offering to join him immediately. But the Duke had no mind to delay his nuptials; he was joined to Polly by a Protestant clergyman who was found upon the spot; and our author thus missed the reward of the only action of his life which can be said to throw a blemish on his respectable memory.

In the year 1748-9 he had begun, and in 1753 he finished and published, an edition of Virgil in English and Latin. To this work Warburton contributed a dissertation on the sixth book of 'The Æneid;' Atterbury furnished a commentary on the character of Iapis; and the laureate, Whitehead, another on the shield of Æneas. Many of the notes were taken from the best commentators on Virgil, particularly Catrou and Segrais; some were supplied by Mr. Spence; and others, relating to the soil, climate, and customs of Italy, by Mr. Holdsworth, who had resided for many years in that country. For the English of 'The Æneid' he adopted the translation by Pitt. The Life of Virgil, with three essays on pastoral,* didactic, and epic poetry, and a poetical version of the Eclogues and Georgics, constituted his own part of the work. This translation may, in many instances; be found more faithful and concise than Dryden's; but it wants that elastic and idiomatic freedom by which Dryden reconciles us to his faults, and exhibits rather the diligence of a scholar than the spirit of a poet. Dr. Harewood, in his view of the classics, accuses the Latin text of incorrectness.† Shortly after the appearance of his 'Virgil' he took a share in the periodical paper 'The Adventurer,' and contributed twenty-four numbers, which have been generally esteemed the most valuable in the work.

In 1754 he was instituted to the living of Tunworth, on the presentation of the Jervoise family, and in 1755 was elected second master of Winchester School, with the management and advantage of a boarding-house. In the following year Lord Lyttelton, who had submitted a part of his 'History of Henry II.' to his revision, bestowed a scarf upon him. He found leisure at this period to commence his 'Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope,' which he dedicated to Young without subscribing his name. But he was soon, and it would appear with his own tacit

* His reflections on pastoral poetry are limited to a few sentences; but he subjoins an essay on the subject, by Dr. Johnson, from 'The Rambler.'

† With what justice I will not pretend to say; but after comparing a few pages of his edition with Maittaire, he seems to me to be less attentive to punctuation than the editor of the 'Corpus Poetarum,' and sometimes to omit the marks by which it is customary to distinguish adverbs from pronouns. I dislike his interpretation of one line in the first Eclogue of Virgil, which seems to me peculiarly tasteless; namely, where he translates "*Post aliquot aristas*" "after a few years." The picture of Melibæus's cottage "behind a few ears of corn," so simply and exquisitely touched, is thus exchanged for a forced phrase with regard to time.

permission, generally pronounced to be its author. Twenty-six years, however, elapsed before he ventured to complete it. Dr. Johnson said that this was owing to his not having been able to bring the public to be of his opinion as to Pope. Another reason has been assigned for his inactivity.* Warburton, the guardian of Pope's fame, was still alive; and he was the zealous and useful friend of our author's brother. The prelate died in 1779, and in 1782 Dr. Warton published his extended and finished Essay. If the supposition that he abstained from embroiling himself by the question about Pope with Warburton be true, it will at least impress us with an idea of his patience; for it was no secret that Ruffhead was supplied by Warburton with materials for a Life of Pope, in which he attacked Dr. Warton with abundant severity, but in which he entangled himself more than his adversary in the coarse-spun ropes of his special pleading. The Essay for a time raised up to him another enemy, to whom his conduct has even an air of submissiveness. In commenting on a line of Pope, he hazarded a remark on Hogarth's propensity to intermix the ludicrous with attempts at the sublime. Hogarth revengefully introduced Dr. Warton's works into one of his satirical pieces, and vowed to bear him eternal enmity. Their mutual friends, however, interfered, and the artist was pacified. Dr. Warton, in the next edition, altered his just animadversion on Hogarth into an ill-merited compliment.

By delaying to republish his Essay on Pope, he ultimately obtained a more dispassionate hearing from the public for the work in its finished state. In the mean time he enriched it with additions, digested from the reading of half a lifetime. The author of 'The Pursuits of Literature' has pronounced it a commonplace book; and Richardson, the novelist, used to call it a literary gossip: but a testimony in its favour, of more authority than any individual opinion, will be found in the popularity with which it continues to be read. It is very entertaining, and abounds with criticism of more research than Addison's, of more amenity than Hurd's or Warburton's, and of more insinuating tact than Johnson's. At the same time, while much ingenuity and many truths are scattered over the Essay, it is impossible to admire it as an entire theory, solid and consistent in all its parts. It is certainly setting out from unfortunate pre-

* Chalmers's Life of J. Warton, 'British Poets.'

mises to begin his Remarks on Pope with grouping Dryden and Addison in the same class of poets, and to form a scale for estimating poetical genius which would set Elijah Fenton in a higher sphere than Butler. He places Pope in the scale of our poets next to Milton, and above Dryden; yet he applies to him the exact character which Voltaire gives to the heartless Boileau—that of a writer “perhaps incapable of the sublime which elevates, or of the feeling which affects the soul.” With all this he tells us that our poetry and our language are everlastingly indebted to Pope: he attributes genuine tenderness to the ‘Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady;’ a strong degree of passion to the ‘Epistle of Eloise;’ invention and fancy to ‘The Rape of the Lock;’ and a picturesque conception to some parts of ‘Windsor Forest,’ which he pronounces worthy of the pencil of Rubens or Julio Romano. There is something like April weather in these transitions.

In May 1766 he was advanced to the head-mastership of Winchester School. In consequence of this promotion he once more visited Oxford, and proceeded to the degree of bachelor and doctor in divinity. After a union of twenty years he lost his first wife, by whom he had six children; but his family and his professional situation requiring a domestic partner, he had been only a year a widower when he married a Miss Nicholas, of Winchester.

He now visited London more frequently than before. The circle of his friends in the metropolis comprehended all the members of Burke’s and Johnson’s Literary Club. With Johnson himself he was for a long time on intimate terms; but their friendship suffered a breach which was never closed in consequence of an argument which took place between them during an evening spent at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds. The concluding words of their conversation are reported by one who was present to have been these: Johnson said, “Sir, I am not accustomed to be contradicted.” Warton replied, “Better, sir, for yourself and your friends, if you were: our respect could not be increased, but our love might.”

In 1782 he was indebted to his friend, Dr. Lowth, Bishop of London, for a prebend of St. Paul’s, and the living of Thorley in Hertfordshire, which, after some arrangements, he exchanged for that of Wickham. His ecclesiastical preferments came too

late in life to place him in that state of leisure and independence which might have enabled him to devote his best years to literature, instead of the drudgery of a school. One great project which he announced, but never fulfilled, namely, 'A General History of Learning,' was in all probability prevented by the pressure of his daily occupations. In 1788, through the interest of Lord Shannon, he obtained a prebend of Winchester, and, through the interest of Lord Malmsbury, was appointed to the rectory of Euston, which he was afterwards allowed to exchange for that of Upham. In 1793 he resigned the fatigues of his mastership of Winchester; and having received from the superintendents of the institution a vote of well-earned thanks for his long and meritorious services, he went to live at his rectory of Wickham.

During his retirement at that place he was induced by a liberal offer of the booksellers to superintend an edition of Pope, which he published in 1797. It was objected to this edition that it contained only his Essay on Pope, cut down into notes; his biographer, however, repels the objection, by alleging that it contains a considerable portion of new matter. In his zeal to present everything that could be traced to the pen of Pope, he introduced two pieces of indelicate humour, 'The Double Mistress,' and the second satire of Horace. For the insertion of those pieces he received a censure in 'The Pursuits of Literature,' which, considering his grey hairs and services in the literary world, was unbecoming, and which my individual partiality for Mr. Matthias makes me wish that I had not to record.

As a critic Dr. Warton is distinguished by his love of the fanciful and romantic. He examined our poetry at a period when it appeared to him that versified observations on familiar life and manners had usurped the honours which were exclusively due to the bold and inventive powers of imagination. He conceived, also, that the charm of description in poetry was not sufficiently appreciated in his own day: not that the age could be said to be without descriptive writers, but because, as he apprehended, the tyranny of Pope's reputation had placed moral and didactic verse in too pre-eminent a light. He therefore strongly urged the principle "that the most solid observations on life, expressed with the utmost brevity and elegance,

are morality, and not poetry.”* Without examining how far this principle applies exactly to the character of Pope, whom he himself owns not to have been without pathos and imagination, I think his proposition is so worded as to be liable to lead to a most unsound distinction between morality and poetry. If by “the most solid observations on life” are meant only those which relate to its prudential management and plain concerns, it is certainly true that these cannot be made poetical by the utmost brevity or elegance of expression. It is also true that even the nobler tenets of morality are comparatively less interesting in an insulated and didactic shape than when they are blended with strong imitations of life, where passion, character, and situation bring them deeply home to our attention. Fiction is on this account so far the soul of poetry, that, without its aid as a vehicle, poetry can only give us morality in an abstract and (comparatively) uninteresting shape. But why does Fiction please us? surely not because it is false, but because it seems to be true; because it spreads a wider field and a more brilliant crowd of objects to our moral perceptions than Reality affords. Morality (in a high sense of the term, and not speaking of it as a dry science) is the *essence of poetry*. We fly from the injustice of this world to the poetical justice of Fiction, where our sense of right and wrong is either satisfied, or where our sympathy at least reposes with less disappointment and distraction, than on the characters of life itself. Fiction, we may indeed be told,

* [Our English poets may, I think, be disposed in four different classes and degrees. In the first class I would place our only three sublime and pathetic poets, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton. In the second class should be ranked such as possessed the true poetical genius in a more moderate degree, but who had noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyric poetry. At the head of these are Dryden, Prior, Addison, Cowley, Waller, Garth, Fenton, Gay, Denham, Parnell. In the third class may be placed men of wit, of elegant taste, and lively fancy in describing familiar life, though not the higher scenes of poetry. Here may be numbered, Butler, Swift, Rochester, Donne, Dorset, Oldham. In the fourth class, the mere versifiers, however smooth and mellifluous some of them may be thought, should be disposed; such as Pitt, Sandys, Fairfax, Broome, Buckingham, Lausdowne. This enumeration is not intended as a complete catalogue of writers, but only to mark out briefly the different species of our celebrated authors. In which of these classes Pope deserves to be placed, the following work is intended to determine.—Joseph Warton, *Dedication to Dr. Young*.

The position of Pope among our poets, and the question generally of classification, Mr. Campbell has argued at some length in the Introductory Essay to this volume.]

carries us into "a *world of gayer tinct and grace*," the laws of which are not to be judged by solid observations on the real world.

But this is not the case, for moral truth is still the light of poetry, and fiction is only the refracting atmosphere which diffuses it; and the laws of moral truth are as essential to poetry as those of physical truth (Anatomy and Optics for instance) are to painting. Allegory, narration, and the drama, make their last appeal to the ethics of the human heart. It is therefore unsafe to draw a marked distinction between morality and poetry; or to speak of "*solid observations on life*" as of things in their nature unpoetical; for we *do* meet in poetry with observations on life which for the charm of their solid truth we should exchange with reluctance for the most ingenious touches of fancy.

The school of the Wartons, considering them as poets, was rather too studiously prone to description. The doctor, like his brother, certainly so far realised his own ideas of inspiration as to burthen his verse with few observations on life which oppress the mind by their solidity. To his brother he is obviously inferior in the graphic and romantic style of composition at which he aimed, but in which it must nevertheless be owned that in some parts of his 'Ode to Fancy' he has been pleasingly successful. Most of his poems are short and occasional, and (if I may venture to differ from the opinion of his amiable editor, Mr. Wooll) are by no means marked with originality. 'The Enthusiast' was written at too early a period of his life to be a fair object of criticism.



WILLIAM COWPER.

[Born, 1731. Died, 1800.]

WILLIAM COWPER was born at Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire. His grandfather was Spencer Cowper, a judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and a younger brother of the Lord Chancellor Cowper. His father was the rector of Great Berkhamstead, and chaplain to George II. At six years of age he was taken from the care of an indulgent mother, and placed at a school in Bed-

fordshire.* He there endured such hardships as embittered his opinion of public education for all his life. His chief affliction was, to be singled out, as a victim of secret cruelty, by a young monster, about fifteen years of age, whose barbarities were, however, at last detected, and punished by his expulsion. Cowper was also taken from the school. From the age of eight to nine he was boarded with a famous oculist,† on account of a complaint in his eyes, which, during his whole life, were subject to inflammation. He was sent from thence to Westminster, and continued there till the age of eighteen, when he went into the office of a London solicitor. His account of himself in this situation candidly acknowledges his extreme idleness. "I did actually live," he says, in a letter to Lady Hesketh, "three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor; that is to say, I slept three years in his house. I spent my days in Southampton-row, as you very well remember. There was I and the future Lord Chancellor Thurlow constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle." From the solicitor's house he went into chambers in the Temple; but seems to have made no application to the study of the law. "Here he rambled," says Mr. Hayley, "to use his own colloquial expression, from the thorny road of jurisprudence to the primrose paths of literature,"—a most uncolloquial expression indeed, and savouring much more of Mr. Hayley's genius than his own. At this period he wrote some verse translations from Horace, which he gave to the Duncombes, and assisted Lloyd and Colman with some prose papers for their periodical works.‡ It was only at this time that Cowper could ever be said to have lived as a man of the world. Though shy

* In Hayley's 'Life' his first school is said to have been in Hertfordshire; the 'Memoir' of his early life, published in 1816, says in Bedfordshire. [In Cowper's account of his own early life, this school is said to have been in Bedfordshire; but Hayley says Hertfordshire, mentioning also the place and name of the master; and as Cowper was only at one private school, subsequent biographers have properly followed Hayley. The mistake probably originated in the press, Cowper's own 'Memoirs' having apparently been printed from an ill-written manuscript. Of this there is a whimsical proof (p. 35), where the 'Persian Letters' of Montesquieu are spoken of, and the compositor, unable to decipher that Author's name, has converted it into *Mules Quince*.—Southey, *Life of Cowper*, vol. i. p. 7.]

† He does not inform us where, but calls the oculist Mr. D. Hayley, by mistake I suppose, says that he was boarded with a female oculist. [He was placed in the house of an eminent oculist, whose wife also had obtained great celebrity in the same branch of medical science.—Southey.]

‡ ['The Connoisseur,' and 'St. James's Chronicle.']

to strangers, he was highly valued, for his wit and pleasantry, amidst an intimate and gay circle of men of talents. But though he was then in the focus of convivial society, he never partook of its intemperance.

His patrimony being well-nigh spent, a powerful friend and relation (Major Cowper) obtained for him the situation of Clerk to the Committees of the House of Lords; but, on account of his dislike to the publicity of the situation, the appointment was changed to that of Clerk of the Journals of the same House.* The path to an easy maintenance now seemed to lie open before him; but a calamitous disappointment was impending, the approaches of which are best explained in his own words. "In the beginning," he says, "a strong opposition to my friend's right of nomination began to show itself. A powerful party was formed among the Lords to thwart it. * * * Every advantage, I was told, would be sought for, and eagerly seized, to disconcert us. I was bid to expect an examination at the bar of the House, touching my sufficiency for the post I had taken. Being necessarily ignorant of the nature of that business, it became expedient that I should visit the office daily, in order to qualify myself for the strictest scrutiny. All the horror of my fears and perplexities now returned. A thunderbolt would have been as welcome to me as this intelligence. I knew to demonstration that upon these terms the Clerkship of the Journals was no place for me. To require my attendance at the bar of the House, that I might there publicly entitle myself to the office, was, in effect, to exclude me from it. In the mean time, the interest of my friend, the honour of his choice, my own reputation and circumstances, all urged me forward, all pressed me to undertake that which I saw to be impracticable. They whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition of themselves, on any occasion, is mortal poison, may have some idea of the horrors of my situation—others can have none. My continual misery at length brought on a nervous fever; quiet forsook me by day, and peace by night; a finger raised against me was more than I could stand against. In this posture of mind I attended regularly at the office, where, instead of a soul upon the rack, the most active spirits were essentially necessary for my purpose. I expected no assistance from anybody there, all the inferior clerks being

* [His kinsman Major Cowper was the patentee of these appointments.]

under the influence of my opponent, and accordingly I received none. The Journal books were indeed thrown open to me; a thing which could not be refused, and from which perhaps a man in health, and with a head turned to business, might have gained all the information he wanted; but it was not so with me. I read without perception, and was so distressed, that, had every clerk in the office been my friend, it could have availed me little; for I was not in a condition to receive instruction, much less to elicit it out of MSS. without direction. Many months went over me thus employed; constant in the use of means, despairing as to the issue. The feelings of a man when he arrives at the place of execution are probably much like mine every time I set my foot in the office, which was every day for more than half a year together." These agonies at length unsettled his brain. When his benevolent friend came to him, on the day appointed for his examination at Westminster, he found him in a dreadful condition. He had, in fact, the same morning, made an attempt at self-destruction; and showed a garter which had been broken, and an iron rod across his bed which had been bent, in the effort to accomplish his purpose by strangulation. From the state of his mind, it became necessary to remove him to the house of Dr. Cotton, of St. Alban's,* with whom he continued for about nineteen months. Within less than the half of that time his faculties began to return; and the religious despair, which constituted the most tremendous circumstance of his malady, had given way to more consoling views of faith and piety. On his recovery he determined to renounce London for ever; and, that he might have no temptation to return thither, gave up the office of commissioner of bankrupts, worth about 60*l.* a-year, which he had held for some years. He then, in June 1765, repaired to Huntingdon, where he settled in lodgings, attended by a man-servant, who followed him from Dr. Cotton's out of pure attachment. His brother, who had accompanied him thither, had no sooner left him, than, being alone among strangers, his spirits began again to sink; and he found himself, he says, "like a traveller in the midst of an inhospitable desert, without a friend to comfort or a guide to direct him." For four months he continued in his lodging. Some few neighbours came to see him; but their visits were not very frequent, and he rather declined than sought

* [Author of 'Visions in Verse,' 'The Fireside,' &c.]

society. At length, however, young Mr. Unwin, the son of the clergyman of the place, having been struck by his interesting appearance at church, introduced himself to his acquaintance, and brought him to visit at his father's house. A mutual friendship was very soon formed between Cowper and this amiable family, whose religious sentiments peculiarly corresponded with the predominant impressions of his mind. The Unwins, much to his satisfaction, agreed to receive him as a boarder in their house. His routine of life in this devout circle is best described by himself. "We breakfast," he says in one of his letters, "commonly between eight and nine; till eleven we read either the Scriptures or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries. At eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but, if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation. If it rains or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors or sing some hymns of Martin's* collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts I hope are the most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest, and we generally travel four miles before we see home again. At night we read and converse as before till supper, and commonly finish the evening with hymns or a sermon."

After the death of Mr. Unwin senior, in 1767, he accompanied Mrs. Unwin and her daughter to a new residence which they chose at Olney, in Buckinghamshire. Here he formed an intimate friendship with Mr. Newton, then curate of Olney, with whom he voluntarily associated himself in the duty of visiting the cottages of the poor, and comforting their distresses. Mr. Newton and he were joint almoners in the secret donations of the wealthy and charitable Mr. Thornton, who transmitted 200*l.* a-year for the poor of Olney. At Mr. Newton's request he wrote some hymns, which were published in a collection long before he was known as a poet.

His tremendous malady unhappily returned in 1773, attended

* Martin Madan, a cousin of the poet.

with severe paroxysms of religious despondency, and his faculties were again eclipsed for about five years. During that period Mrs. Unwin watched over him with a patience and tenderness truly maternal. After his second recovery, some of his amusements, such as taming hares and making bird-cages, would seem to indicate no great confidence in the capacity of his mind for mental employment. But he still continued to be a cursory reader; he betook himself also to drawing landscapes; and, what might have been still less expected at fifty years of age, began in earnest to cultivate his poetical talents. These had lain, if not dormant, at least so slightly employed as to make his poetical progress, in the former part of his life, scarcely capable of being traced.* He spent, however, the winter of 1780-1 in preparing his first volume of Poems for the press, consisting of 'Table Talk,' 'Hope,' 'The Progress of Error,' 'Charity,' &c., and it was published in 1782. Its reception was not equal to its merit, though his modest expectations were not upon the whole disappointed; and he had the satisfaction of ranking Dr. Johnson and Benjamin Franklin among his zealous admirers. The volume was certainly good fruit under a rough rind, conveying manly thoughts, but in a tone of enthusiasm which is often harsh and forbidding.

In the same year that he published his first volume an elegant and accomplished visitant came to Olney, with whom Cowper formed an acquaintance that was for some time very delightful to him. This was the widow of Sir Robert Austen. She had wit, gaiety, agreeable manners, and elegant taste. While she enlivened Cowper's unequal spirits by her conversation, she was also the taskmistress of his Muse. He began his great original poem at her suggestion, and was exhorted by her to undertake the translation of Homer. So much cheerfulness seems to have beamed upon his sequestered life from the influence of her society, that he gave her the endearing appellation of Sister Anne, and ascribed the arrival of so pleasing a friend to the direct interposition of Heaven. But his devout old friend Mrs. Unwin saw nothing very providential in the ascendancy of a female so much more fascinating than herself over Cowper's

* At the age of eighteen he wrote some tolerable verses on finding the heel of a shoe; a subject which is not uncharacteristic of his disposition to moralise on whimsical matters.

mind; and, appealing to his gratitude for her past services, she gave him his choice of either renouncing Lady Austen's acquaintance or her own. Cowper decided upon adhering to the friend who had watched over him in his deepest afflictions, and sent Lady Austen a valedictory letter, couched in terms of regret and regard, but which necessarily put an end to their acquaintance. Whether in making this decision he sacrificed a passion or only a friendship for Lady Austen, it must be impossible to tell; but it has been said, though not by Mr. Hayley, that the remembrance of a deep and devoted attachment of his youth was never effaced by any succeeding impression of the same nature, and that his fondness for Lady Austen was as platonic as for Mary Unwin. The sacrifice, however, cost him much pain, and is perhaps as much to be admired as regretted.*

Fortunately the jealousy of Mrs. Unwin did not extend to his cousin, Lady Hesketh. His letters to that lady give the most pleasing view of Cowper's mind, exhibiting all the warmth of his heart as a kinsman, and his simple and unstudied elegance as a correspondent. His intercourse with this relation, after a separation of nearly thirty years, was revived by her writing to congratulate him on the appearance of his 'Task,' in 1784. Two years after Lady Hesketh paid him a visit at Olney; and, settling at Weston, in the immediate neighbourhood, provided a house for him and Mrs. Unwin there, which was more commodious than their former habitation. She also brought her carriage and horses with her, and thus induced him to survey the country in a wider range than he had been hitherto accustomed to take, as well as to mix a little more with its inhabitants. As soon as 'The Task' had been sent to the press, he began the 'Tirocinium,' a poem on the subject of education, the purport of which was (in his own words) to censure the want of discipline and the inattention to morals which prevail in public schools, and to recommend private education as preferable on all accounts. In the same year, 1784, he commenced his translation of Homer, which was brought to a conclusion and published by subscription in 1791. The first edition of Homer was scarcely out of his hands when he embraced a proposal from a bookseller to be the

* ["Both Lady Austen and Mrs. Unwin," says Southey, "appear to me to have been wronged by the causes assigned for the difference between them."]

editor of Milton's poetry, and to furnish a version of his Italian and Latin poems, together with a critical commentary on his whole works. Capable as he was of guiding the reader's attention to the higher beauties of Milton, his habits and recluse situation made him peculiarly unfit for the more minute functions of an editor. In the progress of the work he seems to have been constantly drawn away by the anxious correction of his great translation; insomuch that his second edition of Homer was rather a new work than a revisal of the old. The subsequent history of his life may make us thankful that the powers of his mind were spared to accomplish so great an undertaking. Their decline was fast approaching. In 1792 Mr. Hayley paid him a visit at Olney, and was present to console him under his affliction at seeing Mrs. Unwin attacked by the palsy. The shock subsided, and a journey, which he undertook in company with Mrs. Unwin, to Mr. Hayley's at Eartham, contributed, with the genial air of the south, and the beautiful scenery of the country, to revive his spirits; but they drooped, and became habitually dejected, on his return to Olney. In a moment of recovered cheerfulness he projected a poem on the four ages of man—infancy, youth, manhood, and old age; but he only finished a short fragment of it. Mr. Hayley paid him a second visit in the November of 1793; he found him still possessed of all his exquisite feelings, but there was something undescrivable in his appearance, which foreboded his relapsing into hopeless despondency. Lady Hesketh repaired once more to Olney, and with a noble friendship undertook the care of two invalids, who were now incapable of managing themselves, Mrs. Unwin being at this time entirely helpless and paralytic. Upon a third visit, Mr. Hayley found him plunged into a melancholy torpor, which extinguished even his social feelings. He met Mr. Hayley with apparent indifference; and when it was announced to him that his Majesty had bestowed on him a pension of 300*l.* a-year, the intelligence arrived too late to give him pleasure. He continued under the care of Lady Hesketh until the end of July 1795, when he was removed, together with Mrs. Unwin, to the house of his kinsman, Mr. Johnson, at North Tuddenham, in Norfolk. Stopping on the journey at the village of Eaton, near St. Neot's, Cowper walked with Mr. Johnson in the churchyard of that village by moonlight, and talked with more composure

than he had shown for many months. The subject of their conversation was the poet Thomson. Some time after he went to see his cousin Mrs. Bodham, at a village near the residence of Mr. Johnson. When he saw in Mrs. Bodham's parlour a portrait of himself, which had been done by Abbot, he clasped his hands in a paroxysm of distress, wishing that he could now be what he was when that likeness was taken.

In December 1796 Mrs. Unwin died, in a house to which Mr. Johnson had removed, at Dunham, in the same county. Cowper, who had seen her half an hour before she expired, attended Mr. Johnson to survey her remains in the dusk of the evening; but, after looking on her for a few moments, he started away, with a vehement unfinished exclamation of anguish; and, either forgetting her in the suspension of his faculties, or not daring to trust his lips with the subject, he never afterwards uttered her name.

In 1799 he resumed some power of exertion; he finished the revision of his Homer, translated some of Gay's fables into Latin, and wrote his last original poem, 'The Castaway.*' But it seems, from the utterly desolate tone of that production, that the finishing blaze of his fancy and intellects had communicated no warmth of joy to his heart. The dropsy, which had become visible in his person, assumed an incurable aspect in the following year; and after a rapid decline he expired on the 5th of April, 1800.

The nature of Cowper's works makes us peculiarly identify the poet and the man in perusing them. As an individual, he was retired and weaned from the vanities of the world; and as an original writer, he left the ambitious and luxuriant subjects of fiction and passion for those of real life and simple nature, and for the development of his own earnest feelings in behalf of moral and religious truth. His language has such a masculine idiomatic strength, and his manner, whether he rises into grace or falls into negligence, has so much plain and familiar freedom, that we read no poetry with a deeper conviction of its sentiments having come from the author's heart, and of the enthusiasm, in whatever he describes, having been unfeigned and unexaggerated.

* [Founded upon an incident related in 'Anson's Voyages.' It is the last original piece he composed, and, all circumstances considered, one of the most affecting that ever was composed.—Southey.]

He impresses us with the idea of a being whose fine spirit had been long enough in the mixed society of the world to be polished by its intercourse, and yet withdrawn so soon as to retain an unworldly degree of purity and simplicity. He was advanced in years before he became an author; but his compositions display a tenderness of feeling so youthfully preserved, and even a vein of humour so far from being extinguished by his ascetic habits, that we can scarcely regret his not having written them at an earlier period of life. For he blends the determination of age with an exquisite and ingenuous sensibility; and though he sports very much with his subjects, yet, when he is in earnest, there is a gravity of long-felt conviction in his sentiments, which gives an uncommon ripeness of character to his poetry.

It is due to Cowper to fix our regard on this unaffectedness and authenticity of his works, considered as representations of himself, because he forms a striking instance of genius writing the history of its own secluded feelings, reflections, and enjoyments, in a shape so interesting as to engage the imagination like a work of fiction. He has invented no character in fable, nor in the drama; but he has left a record of his own character, which forms not only an object of deep sympathy, but a subject for the study of human nature. His verse, it is true, considered as such a record, abounds with opposite traits of severity and gentleness, of playfulness and superstition,* of solemnity and mirth, which appear almost anomalous; and there is, undoubtedly, sometimes an air of moody versatility in the extreme contrasts of his feelings. But looking to his poetry as an entire structure, it has a massive air of sincerity. It is founded in steadfast principles of belief; and if we may prolong the architectural metaphor, though its arches may be sometimes gloomy, its tracery sportive, and its lights and shadows grotesquely crossed, yet altogether it still forms a vast, various, and interesting monument of the builder's mind. Young's works are as devout, as satirical, sometimes as merry, as those of Cowper, and undoubtedly more witty.

* Vide his story of Misagathus ['The Task,' b. vi.], which is meant to record the miraculous punishment of a sinner by his own horse. Misagathus, a wicked fellow, as his name denotes, is riding abroad, and overtakes a sober-minded traveller on the road, whose ears he assails with the most improper language; till his horse, out of all patience at his owner's impiety, approaches the brink of a precipice, and fairly tosses his reprobate rider into the sea.

But the melancholy and wit of Young do not make up to us the idea of a conceivable or natural being. He has sketched in his pages the ingenious but incongruous form of a fictitious mind—Cowper's soul speaks from his volumes.

At the same time, while there is in Cowper a power of simple expression, of solid thought, and sincere feeling, which may be said, in a general view, to make the harsher and softer traits of his genius harmonise, I cannot but recur to the observation that there are occasions when his contrarieties and asperities are positively unpleasing. Mr. Hayley commends him for possessing, above any ancient or modern author, the nice art of passing, by the most delicate transition, from subjects to subjects which might otherwise seem to be but little, or not at all, allied to each other—

“From grave to gay, from lively to severe.”

With regard to Cowper's art of transition, I am disposed to agree with Mr. Hayley that it was very nice. In his own mind trivial and solemn subjects were easily associated, and he appears to make no effort in bringing them together. The transition sprang from the peculiar habits of his imagination, and was marked by the delicacy and subtlety of his powers. But the general taste and frame of the human mind is not calculated to receive pleasure from such transitions, however dexterously they may be made. The reader's imagination is never so passively in the hands of an author as not to compare the different impressions arising from successive passages; and there is no versatility in the writer's own thoughts that will give an air of natural connexion to subjects if it does not belong to them. Whatever Cowper's art of transition may be, the effect of it is to crowd into close contiguity his Dutch painting and divinity. This moment we view him, as if prompted by a disdain of all the gaudy subjects of imagination, sporting agreeably with every trifle that comes in his way; in the next, a recollection of the most awful concerns of the human soul, and a belief that four-fifths of the species are living under the ban of their Creator's displeasure, come across his mind; and we then, in the compass of a page, exchange the facetious satirist, or the poet of the garden or the greenhouse, for one who speaks to us in the name of the Omnipotent, and who announces to us all his terrors. No one,

undoubtedly, shall prescribe limits to the association of devout and ordinary thoughts; but still propriety dictates that the aspect of composition shall not rapidly turn from the smile of levity to a frown that denounces eternal perdition.

He not only passes, within a short compass, from the jocose to the awful, but he sometimes blends them intimately together. It is fair that blundering commentators on the Bible should be exposed. The idea of a drunken postilion forgetting to put the linchpin in the wheel of his carriage may also be very entertaining to those whose safety is not endangered by his negligence; but still the comparison of a false judgment which a perverse commentator may pass on the Holy Scriptures, with the accident of Tom the driver being in his cups, is somewhat too familiar for so grave a subject. The force, the humour, and picturesqueness of those satirical sketches, which are interspersed with his religious poems on Hope, Truth, Charity, &c., in his first volume, need not be disputed. One should be sorry to lose them, or indeed anything that Cowper has written, always saving and excepting the story of Misagathus and his horse, which might be mistaken for an interpolation by Mrs. Unwin. But in those satirical sketches there is still a taste of something like comic sermons, whether he describes the antiquated prude going to church, followed by her footboy, with the dew-drop hanging at his nose, or Vinoso, in the military mess-room, thus expounding his religious belief:—

“Adieu to all morality! if Grace
 Make works a vain ingredient in the case.
 The Christian hope is—Waiter, draw the cork—
 If I mistake not—Blockhead! with a fork!
 Without good works, whatever some may boast,
 Mere folly and delusion—Sir, your toast.
 My firm persuasion is, at least sometimes,
 That Heaven will weigh man’s virtues and his crimes.

* * * * *

I glide and steal along with Heaven in view,
 And,—pardon me, the bottle stands with you.”—*Hope*.

The mirth of the above lines consists chiefly in placing the doctrine of the importance of good works to salvation in the mouth of a drunkard. It is a Calvinistic poet making game of an anti-Calvinistic creed, and is an excellent specimen of pious bantering and evangelical raillery. But Religion, which disdains the hostility of ridicule, ought also to be above its alliance.

Against this practice of compounding mirth and godliness we may quote the poet's own remark upon St. Paul :—

“So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip,
Or merry turn, in all he ever wrote ;
And I consent you take it for your text.”

And the Christian poet, by the solemnity of his subject, certainly identifies himself with the Christian preacher, who, as Cowper elsewhere remarks, should be sparing of his smile. The noble effect of one of his religious pieces, in which he has scarcely in any instance descended to the ludicrous, proves the justice of his own advice. His ‘Expostulation’ is a poetical sermon—an eloquent and sublime one. But there is no Hogarth-painting in this brilliant Scripture piece. Lastly, the objects of his satire are sometimes so unskilfully selected as to attract either a scanty portion of our indignation or none at all. When he exposes real vice and enormity, it is with a power that makes the heart triumph in their exposure. But we are very little interested by his declamations on such topics as the effeminacy of modern soldiers, the prodigality of poor gentlemen giving cast clothes to their valets, or the finery of a country girl whose head-dress is “indebted to some smart wig-weaver’s hand.” There is also much of the querulous *laudator temporis acti* in reproaching the English youths of his own day, who beat the French in trials of horsemanship, for not being like their forefathers, who beat the same people in contests for crowns ; as if there were anything more laudable in men butchering their fellow-creatures for the purposes of unprincipled ambition than employing themselves in the rivalry of manly exercise. One would have thought, too, that the gentle recluse of Olney, who had so often employed himself in making boxes and bird-cages, might have had a little more indulgence for such as amuse themselves with chess and billiards than to inveigh so bitterly against those pastimes.*

In the mean time, while the tone of his satire becomes rigid, that of his poetry is apt to grow relaxed. The saintly and austere artist seems to be so much afraid of making song a mere fascination to the ear, that he casts now and then a little roughness into his versification, particularly his rhymes ; not from a vicious ear, but merely to show that he despises being smooth ; forgetting that our language has no superfluous harmony to

* [See ‘The Task,’ b. vi. l. 265 to l. 277.]

throw away, and that the roughness of verse is not its strength but its weakness—the stagnation of the stream, and not its forcible current. Apparently, also, from the fear of ostentation in language, he occasionally sinks his expression into flatness. Even in his high-toned poem of ‘Expostulation,’ he tells Britain of the time when she was a “puling starveling chit.”*

Considering the tenor and circumstances of his life, it is not much to be wondered at that some asperities and peculiarities should have adhered to the strong stem of his genius, like the moss and fungus that cling to some noble oak of the forest amidst the damps of its unsunned retirement. It is more surprising that he preserved in such seclusion so much genuine power of comic observation. Though he himself acknowledged having written “many things with bile” in his first volume,† yet his satire has many legitimate objects; and it is not abstracted and declamatory satire, but it places human manners before us in the liveliest attitudes and clearest colours. There is much of the full distinctness of Theophrastus, and of the nervous and concise spirit of La Bruyère, in his piece entitled ‘Conversation,’ with a cast of humour superadded which is peculiarly English, and not to be found out of England. Nowhere have the sophist—the dubious man, whose evidence,

“For want of prominence and just relief,
Would hang an honest man, and save a thief”—*Conversation*—

the solemn fop, an oracle behind an empty cask—the sedentary weaver of long tales—the emphatic speaker,

“—— who dearly loves to oppose,
In contact inconvenient, nose to nose”—*Conversation*—

nowhere have these characters, and all the most prominent nuisances of colloquial intercourse, together with the bashful man, who is a nuisance to himself, been more happily delineated. One species of purity his satires possess, which is, that they are never personal.‡ To *his* high-minded views,

* [“While yet thou wast a groveling puling chit,
Thy bones not fashion’d, and thy joints not knit.”—*Expostulation.*]

† [*Southey’s ‘Cowper,’* vol. i. p. 261, and vol. ii. p. 183.]

‡ A single exception may be made to this remark, in the instance of Occiduus, whose musical Sunday parties he reprehended, and who was known to mean the Rev. G. Wesley. [See ‘The Progress of Error:’—

“Beneath well-sounding Greek
I slur a name a poet must not speak.”—*Hope.*] I know

“An individual was a sacred mark,
Not to be struck in sport, or in the dark.”

Every one knows from how accidental a circumstance his greatest original work, ‘The Task,’ took its rise, namely, from his having one day complained to Lady Austen that he knew not what subject of poetry to choose, and her having told him to take her sofa for his theme. The mock-heroic commencement of ‘The Task’ has been censured as a blemish.* The general taste, I believe, does not find it so. Mr. Hayley’s commendation of his art of transition may, in this instance, be fairly admitted, for he quits his ludicrous history of the sofa, and glides into a description of other objects by an easy and natural association of thoughts. His whimsical outset in a work where he promises so little and performs so much may even be advantageously contrasted with those magnificent commencements of poems which pledge both the reader and the writer, in good earnest, to a task. Cowper’s poem, on the contrary, is like a river, which rises from a playful little fountain, and which gathers beauty and magnitude as it proceeds.

—“velut tenui nascens de fomite rivus
Per tacitas, primum nullo cum murmure, valles
Serpit; et ut patrii se sensim e margine fontis
Largius effudit; pluvios modo colligit imbres,
Et postquam spatio vires accepit et undas,” &c.

Buchanan.

He leads us abroad into his daily walks; he exhibits the landscapes which he was accustomed to contemplate, and the trains of thought in which he habitually indulged. No attempt is made to interest us in legendary fictions or historical recollections connected with the ground over which he expatiates; all is plainness and reality; but we instantly recognise the true poet in the clearness, sweetness, and fidelity of his scenic draughts, in his power of giving novelty to what is common, and in the high relish, the exquisite enjoyment of rural sights and sounds which he communicates to the spirit. “His eyes drink the rivers with delight.”† He excites an idea, that almost amounts to sensation,

I know not to whom he alludes in these lines:—

“Nor he who, for the bane of thousands born,
Built God a church, and laugh’d His word to scorn.”

[“The Calvinist meant Voltaire, and the church of Ferney, with its inscription, *Deo erexit Voltaire.*”—Byron, *Works*, vol. xvi. p. 124. See also *Southey’s ‘Cowper,’* vol. viii. p. 305.]

* In ‘The Edinburgh Review.’ † An expression in one of his letters.

of the freshness and delight of a rural walk, even when he leads us to the wasteful common, which,

—“overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly goss, that, shapeless and deform,
And dang'rous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
Smells fresh, and, rich in odorif'rous herbs
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.”—*The Task*, b. i.

His rural prospects have far less variety and compass than those of Thomson; but his graphic touches are more close and minute: not that Thomson was either deficient or undelightful in circumstantial traits of the beauty of nature, but he looked to her as a whole more than Cowper. His genius was more excursive and philosophical. The poet of Olney, on the contrary, regarded human philosophy with something of theological contempt. To his eye the great and little things of this world were levelled into an equality by his recollection of the power and purposes of Him who made them. They are in his view only as toys spread on the lap and carpet of nature for the childhood of our immortal being. This religious indifference to the world is far indeed from blunting his sensibility to the genuine and simple beauties of creation, but it gives his taste a contentment and fellowship with humble things. It makes him careless of selecting and refining his views of nature beyond their casual appearance. He contemplated the face of plain rural English life in moments of leisure and sensibility, till its minutest features were impressed upon his fancy; and he sought not to embellish what he loved. Hence his landscapes have less of the ideally beautiful than Thomson's; but they have an unrivalled charm of truth and reality.

The flat country where he resided certainly exhibited none of those wilder graces of nature which he had sufficient genius to have delineated; and yet there are perhaps few romantic descriptions of rocks, precipices, and torrents, which we should prefer to the calm English character and familiar repose of the following landscape. It is in the finest manner of Cowper, and unites all his accustomed fidelity and distinctness with a softness and delicacy which are not always to be found in his specimens of the picturesque:—

"How oft upon yon eminence our pace
 Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
 The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
 While Admiration, feeding at the eye,
 And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
 Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
 The distant plough slow moving, and beside
 His lab'ring team, that swerved not from the track,
 The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
 Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
 Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
 Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
 Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
 Stand, never overlook'd, our favourite elms,
 That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
 While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
 That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
 The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
 Displaying on its varied side the grace
 Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
 Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
 Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
 Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote."

The Task, b. i.

The whole scene is so defied, that one longs to see it transferred to painting.

He is one of the few poets who have indulged neither in descriptions nor acknowledgments of the passion of love; but there is no poet who has given us a finer conception of the amenity of female influence. Of all the verses that have been ever devoted to the subject of domestic happiness, those in his 'Winter Evening,' at the opening of the fourth book of 'The Task,' are perhaps the most beautiful. In perusing that scene of "intimate delights," "fireside enjoyments," and "home-born happiness," we seem to recover a part of the forgotten value of existence, when we recognise the means of its blessedness so widely dispensed and so cheaply attainable, and find them susceptible of description at once so enchanting and so faithful.

Though the scenes of 'The Task' are laid in retirement, the poem affords an amusing perspective of human affairs.* Remote as the poet was from the stir of the great Babel—from the "*confusæ sonus urbis et illætabile murmur*"—he glances at most of the subjects of public interest which engaged the attention of his

* [Is not 'The Task' a glorious poem? The religion of 'The Task,' bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature; the religion that exalts and ennobles man.—Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, 25th December, 1795.]

contemporaries. On those subjects it is but faint praise to say that he espoused the side of justice and humanity. Abundance of mediocrity of talent is to be found on the same side, rather injuring than promoting the cause by its officious declamation. But nothing can be farther from the stale commonplace and cuckooism of sentiment than the philanthropic eloquence of Cowper—he speaks “like one having authority.” Society is his debtor. Poetical expositions of the horrors of slavery may indeed seem very unlikely agents in contributing to destroy it; and it is possible that the most refined planter in the West Indies may look with neither shame nor compunction on his own image in the pages of Cowper, exposed as a being degraded by giving stripes and tasks to his fellow-creature. But such appeals to the heart of the community are not lost. They fix themselves silently in the popular memory, and they become at last a part of that public opinion which must sooner or later wrench the lash from the hand of the oppressor.

I should have ventured to offer a few remarks on the shorter poems of Cowper, as well as on his translation of Homer, if I had not been fearful, not only of trespassing on the reader's patience, but on the boundaries which I have been obliged to prescribe to myself in the length of these notices. There are many zealous admirers of the poet who will possibly refuse all quarter to the observations on his defects which I have freely made; but there are few who have read him, I conceive, who have been so slightly delighted as to think I have overrated his descriptions of external nature, his transcripts of human manners, or his powers, as a moral poet, of inculcating those truths and affections which make the heart feel itself better and more happy.

ERASMUS DARWIN.

[Born, 1732. Died, 1802.]

ERASMUS DARWIN was born at Elton, near Newark, in Nottinghamshire, where his father was a private gentleman. He studied at St. John's College, Cambridge, and took the degree of bachelor in medicine; after which he went to Edinburgh to finish his medical studies. Having taken a physician's degree at that university, he settled in his profession at Lichfield; and, by

a bold and successful display of his skill in one of the first cases to which he was called, established his practice and reputation. About a year after his arrival he married a Miss Howard, the daughter of a respectable inhabitant of Lichfield, and by that connexion strengthened his interest in the place. He was, in theory and practice, a rigid enemy to the use of wine and of all intoxicating liquors; and, in the course of his practice, was regarded as a great promoter of temperate habits among the citizens: but he gave a singular instance of his departure from his own theory within a few years after his arrival in the very place where he proved the apostle of sobriety. Having one day joined a few friends who were going on a water-party, he got so tipsy after a cold collation, that, on the boat approaching Nottingham, he jumped into the river and swam ashore. The party called to the philosopher to return; but he walked on deliberately, in his wet clothes, till he reached the market-place of Nottingham, and was there found by his friend, an apothecary of the place, haranguing the townspeople on the benefit of fresh air, till he was persuaded by his friend to come to his house and shift his clothes. Dr. Darwin stammered habitually; but on this occasion wine untied his tongue. In the prime of life he had the misfortune to break the patella of his knee, in consequence of attempting to drive a carriage of his own Utopian contrivance, which upset at the first experiment.

He lost his first wife after thirteen years of domestic union. During his widowhood, Mrs. Pole, the wife of a Mr. Pole, of Redburn, in Derbyshire, brought her children to his house to be cured of a poison which they had taken in the shape of medicine, and, by his invitation, she continued with him till the young patients were perfectly cured. He was soon after called to attend the lady, at her own house, in a dangerous fever, and prescribed with more than a physician's interest in her fate. Not being invited to sleep in the house the night after his arrival, he spent the hours till morning beneath a tree opposite to her apartment, watching the passing and repassing lights. While the life which he so passionately loved was in danger, he paraphrased Petrarch's celebrated sonnet on the dream which predicted to him the death of Laura. Though less favoured by the Muse than Petrarch, he was more fortunate in love. Mrs. Pole, on the demise of an aged partner, accepted Dr. Darwin's hand

in 1781; and, in compliance with her inclinations, he removed from Lichfield to practice at Derby. He had a family by his second wife, and continued in high professional reputation till his death, in 1802, which was occasioned by angina pectoris, the result of a sudden cold.

Dr. Darwin was between forty and fifty before he began the principal poem by which he is known. Till then he had written only occasional verses, and of these he was not ostentatious, fearing that it might affect his medical reputation to be thought a poet. When his name as a physician had, however, been established, he ventured, in the year 1781, to publish the first part of his 'Botanic Garden.' Mrs. Anna Seward, in her 'Life of Darwin,' declares herself the authoress of the opening lines of the poem; but as she had never courage to make this pretension during Dr. Darwin's life, her veracity on the subject is exposed to suspicion.* In 1789 and 1792 the second and third parts of his botanic poem appeared. In 1793 and 1796 he published the first and second parts of his 'Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life.' In 1801 he published 'Phytologia, or the Philosophy of Agriculture and Gardening;' and, about the same time, a small treatise on female education, which attracted little notice. After his death appeared his poem 'The Temple of Nature,' a mere echo of 'The Botanic Garden.'

Darwin was a materialist in poetry no less than in philosophy. In the latter he attempts to build systems of vital sensibility on mere mechanical principles; and in the former he paints everything to the mind's eye, as if the soul had no pleasure beyond the vivid conception of form, colour, and motion. Nothing makes poetry more lifeless than description by abstract terms and general qualities; but Darwin runs to the opposite extreme of prominently glaring circumstantial description, without shade, relief, or perspective.

His celebrity rose and fell with unexampled rapidity. His poetry appeared at a time peculiarly favourable to innovation, and his attempt to wed poetry and science was a bold experiment, which had some apparent sanction from the triumphs of modern discovery. When Lucretius wrote, Science was in her cradle;

* ["I was at Lichfield," writes R. L. Edgeworth to Sir Walter Scott, "when the lines in question were written by Miss Seward."—*Edgeworth's Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 267.];

but modern philosophy had revealed truths in nature more sublime than the marvels of fiction. The Rosicrucian machinery of his poem had, at the first glance, an imposing appearance, and the variety of his allusion was surprising. On a closer view it was observable that the Botanic goddess, and her Sylphs and Gnomes, were useless from their having no employment, and tiresome from being the mere pretexts for declamation. The variety of allusion is very whimsical. Dr. Franklin is compared to Cupid; whilst Hercules, Lady Melbourne, Emma Crewe, Brindley's canals, and sleeping cherubs, sweep on like images in a dream. Tribes and grasses are likened to angels, and the truffle is rehearsed as a subterranean empress. His laborious ingenuity in finding comparisons is frequently like that of Hervey in his 'Meditations,' or of Flavel in his 'Gardening Spiritualized.'

If Darwin, however, was not a good poet, it may be owned that he is frequently a bold personifier, and that some of his insulated passages are musical and picturesque. His 'Botanic Garden' once pleased many better judges than his affected biographer Anna Seward; it fascinated even the taste of Cowper, who says, in conjunction with Hayley,

"We, therefore pleased, extol thy song,
 Though various yet complete,
 Rich in embellishment, as strong
 And learned as 'tis sweet;
 And deem the bard, whoe'er he be,
 And howsoever known,
 That will not weave a wreath for thee,
 Unworthy of his own."

JAMES BEATTIE.

[Born, 1735. Died, 1803.]

JAMES BEATTIE was born in the parish of Lawrence Kirk, in Kincardineshire, Scotland. His father, who rented a small farm in that parish, died when the poet was only seven years old; but the loss of a protector was happily supplied to him by his elder brother, who kept him at school till he obtained a bursary at the Marischal College, Aberdeen. At that university he took the degree of master of arts; and, at nineteen, he entered on the study of divinity, supporting himself in the mean time by teaching a school in the neighbouring parish. Whilst he was in this

obscure situation, some pieces of verse, which he transmitted to 'The Scottish Magazine,' gained him a little local celebrity. Mr. Garden, an eminent Scottish lawyer, afterwards Lord Gardenstone, and Lord Monboddo, encouraged him as an ingenious young man, and introduced him to the tables of the neighbouring gentry—an honour not usually extended to a parochial schoolmaster. In 1757 he stood candidate for the place of usher in the high-school of Aberdeen. He was foiled by a competitor who surpassed him in the minutiae of Latin grammar; but his character as a scholar suffered so little by the disappointment, that at the next vacancy he was called to the place without a trial. He had not been long at this school when, in 1761, he published a volume of original poems and translations, which (it speaks much for the critical clemency of the times) were favourably received, and highly commended in the English Reviews. So little satisfied was the author himself with those early effusions, that, excepting four, which he admitted to a subsequent edition of his works, he was anxious to have them consigned to oblivion; and he destroyed every copy of the volume which he could procure. About the age of twenty-six he obtained the chair of Moral Philosophy in the Marischal College of Aberdeen, a promotion which he must have owed to his general reputation in literature: but it is singular that the friend who first proposed to solicit the High Constable of Scotland to obtain this appointment should have grounded the proposal on the merit of Beattie's poetry. In the volume already mentioned there can scarcely be said to be a budding promise of genius.

Upon his appointment to this professorship, which he held for forty years, he immediately prepared a course of lectures for the students; and gradually compiled materials for those prose works on which his name would rest with considerable reputation if he were not known as a poet. It is true that he is not a first-rate metaphysician; and the Scotch, in undervaluing his powers of abstract and close reasoning, have been disposed to give him less credit than he deserves as an elegant and amusing writer. But the English, who must be best able to judge of his style, admire it for an ease, familiarity, and an Anglicism that is not to be found even in the correct and polished diction of Blair. His mode of illustrating abstract questions is fanciful and interesting.

In 1765 he published a poem entitled 'The Judgment of

Paris,' which his biographer, Sir William Forbes, did not think fit to rank among his works.* For more obvious reasons Sir William excluded his lines, written in the subsequent year, on the proposal for erecting a monument to Churchill in Westminster Abbey—lines which have no beauty or dignity to redeem their bitter expression of hatred. On particular subjects, Beattie's virtuous indignation was apt to be hysterical. Dr. Reid and Dr. Campbell hated the principles of David Hume as sincerely as the author of the 'Essay on Truth;' but they never betrayed more than philosophical hostility, while Beattie used to speak of the propriety of excluding Hume from civil society.

His reception of Gray, when that poet visited Scotland in 1765, shows the enthusiasm of his literary character in a finer light. Gray's mind was, not in poetry only, but in many other respects, peculiarly congenial with his own; and nothing could exceed the cordial and reverential welcome which Beattie gave to his illustrious visitant. In 1770 he published his 'Essay on Truth,' which had a rapid sale and extensive popularity; and, within a twelvemonth after, the first part of his 'Minstrel.' The poem appeared at first anonymously, but its beauties were immediately and justly appreciated. The second part was not published till 1774. When Gray criticised 'The Minstrel' he objected to its author, that, after many stanzas, the description went on and the narrative stopped.† Beattie very justly answered to this criticism, that he meant the poem for description, not for incident. But he seems to have forgotten this proper apology when he mentions, in one of his letters, his intention of producing Edwin, in some subsequent books, in the character of a warlike bard inspiring his countrymen to battle, and contributing to repel their invaders.‡ This intention, if he ever seriously entertained it, might have produced some new

* It is to be found in 'The Scottish Magazine;' and, if I may judge from an obscure recollection of it, is at least as well worthy of revival as some of his minor pieces. [See it also in the Aldine edition of Beattie, p. 97.]

† Gray complained of a want of action. "As to description," he says, "I have always thought that it made the most graceful ornament of poetry, but never ought to make the subject."

‡ [This was no *written* intention, but one delivered orally in reply to a question from Sir William Forbes. An invasion, however, had been for long a settled point—some great service that the minstrel was to do his country; but his plan was never concerted.]

kind of poem, but would have formed an incongruous counterpart to the piece as it now stands, which, as a picture of still life, and a vehicle of contemplative morality, has a charm that is inconsistent with the bold evolutions of heroic narrative. After having portrayed his young enthusiast with such advantage in a state of visionary quiet, it would have been too violent a transition to have begun in a new book to surround him with dates of time and names of places. The interest which we attach to Edwin's character would have been lost in a more ambitious effort to make him a greater or more important or more locally-defined being. It is the solitary growth of his genius, and his isolated and mystic abstraction from mankind, that fix our attention on the romantic features of that genius. The simplicity of his fate does not divert us from his mind to his circumstances. A more unworldly air is given to his character, that, instead of being tacked to the fate of kings, he was one "who envied not, who never thought of kings;" and that, instead of mingling with the troubles which deface the creation, he only existed to make his thoughts the mirror of its beauty and magnificence. Another English critic* has blamed Edwin's vision of the fairies as too splendid and artificial for a simple youth; but there is nothing in the situation ascribed to Edwin, as he lived in minstrel days, that necessarily excluded such materials from his fancy. Had he beheld steam-engines or dockyards in his sleep, the vision might have been pronounced to be too artificial; but he might have heard of fairies and their dances, and even of tapers, gold, and gems, from the ballads of his native country. In the second book of the poem there are some fine stanzas; but he has taken Edwin out of the school of nature and placed him in his own—that of moral philosophy; and hence a degree of languor is experienced by the reader.

Soon after the publication of the 'Essay on Truth,' and of the first part of 'The Minstrel,' he paid his first visit to London. His reception in the highest literary and polite circles was distinguished and flattering. The University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of doctor of laws, and the sovereign himself, besides honouring him with a personal conference, bestowed on him a pension of 200*l.* a-year.

On his return to Scotland there was a proposal for transferring

* Dr. Aikin.

him to the University of Edinburgh, which he expressed his wish to decline from a fear of those personal enemies whom he had excited by his 'Essay on Truth.' This motive, if it was his real one, must have been connected with that weakness and irritability on polemical subjects which have been already alluded to. His metaphysical fame perhaps stood higher in Aberdeen than in Edinburgh; but to have dreaded personal hostility in the capital of a religious country, amidst thousands of individuals as pious as himself, was a weakness unbecoming the professed champion of truth. For reasons of delicacy, more creditable to his memory, he declined a living in the church of England which was offered to him by his friend Dr. Porteous.

After this there is not much incident in his life. He published a volume of his Essays in 1776, and another in 1783, and the outline of his academical lectures in 1790. In the same year he edited, at Edinburgh, Addison's papers in 'The Spectator,' and wrote a preface for the edition. He was very unfortunate in his family. The mental disorder of his wife, for a long time before it assumed the shape of decided derangement, broke out in caprices of temper, which disturbed his domestic peace, and almost precluded him from having visitors in his family. The loss of his son, James Hay Beattie, a young man of highly promising talents, who had been conjoined with him in his professorship, was the greatest though not the last calamity of his life. He made an attempt to revive his spirits after that melancholy event by another journey to England, and some of his letters from thence bespeak a temporary composure and cheerfulness; but the wound was never healed. Even music, of which he had always been fond, ceased to be agreeable to him, from the lively recollections which it excited of the hours which he had been accustomed to spend in that recreation with his favourite boy. He published the poems of this youth, with a partial eulogy upon his genius, such as might be well excused from a father so situated. At the end of six years more his other son, Montague Beattie, was also cut off in the flower of his youth. This misfortune crushed his spirits even to temporary alienation of mind. With his wife in a madhouse, his sons dead, and his own health broken, he might be pardoned for saying, as he looked on the corpse of his last child, "I have done with this world." Indeed he acted as if he felt so; for though he

performed the duties of his professorship till within a short time of his death, he applied to no study, enjoyed no society, and answered but few letters of his friends. Yet amidst the depth of his melancholy he would sometimes acquiesce in his childless fate, and exclaim, "How could I have borne to see their elegant minds mangled with madness!"

CHRISTOPHER ANSTEY.

[Born, 1724. Died, 1805.]

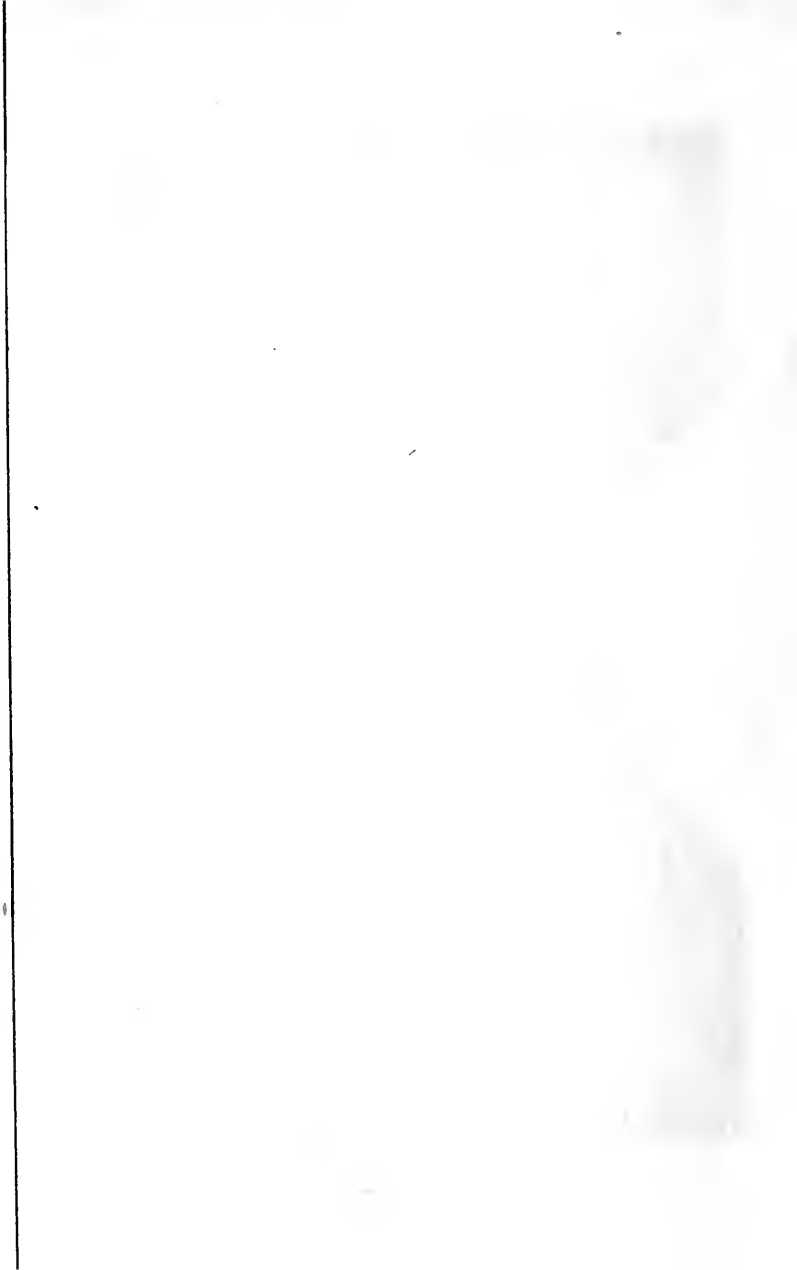
THE first publication in English verse of this light and amusing poet was 'The New Bath Guide,' which appeared in 1766. The droll and familiar manner of the poem is original, but its leading characters are evidently borrowed from Smollett.* Anstey gave the copy price of the piece, which was 200*l.*, as a charitable donation to the hospital of Bath; and Dodsley, to whom it had been sold, with remarkable generosity restored the copyright to its author, after it had been eleven years published.

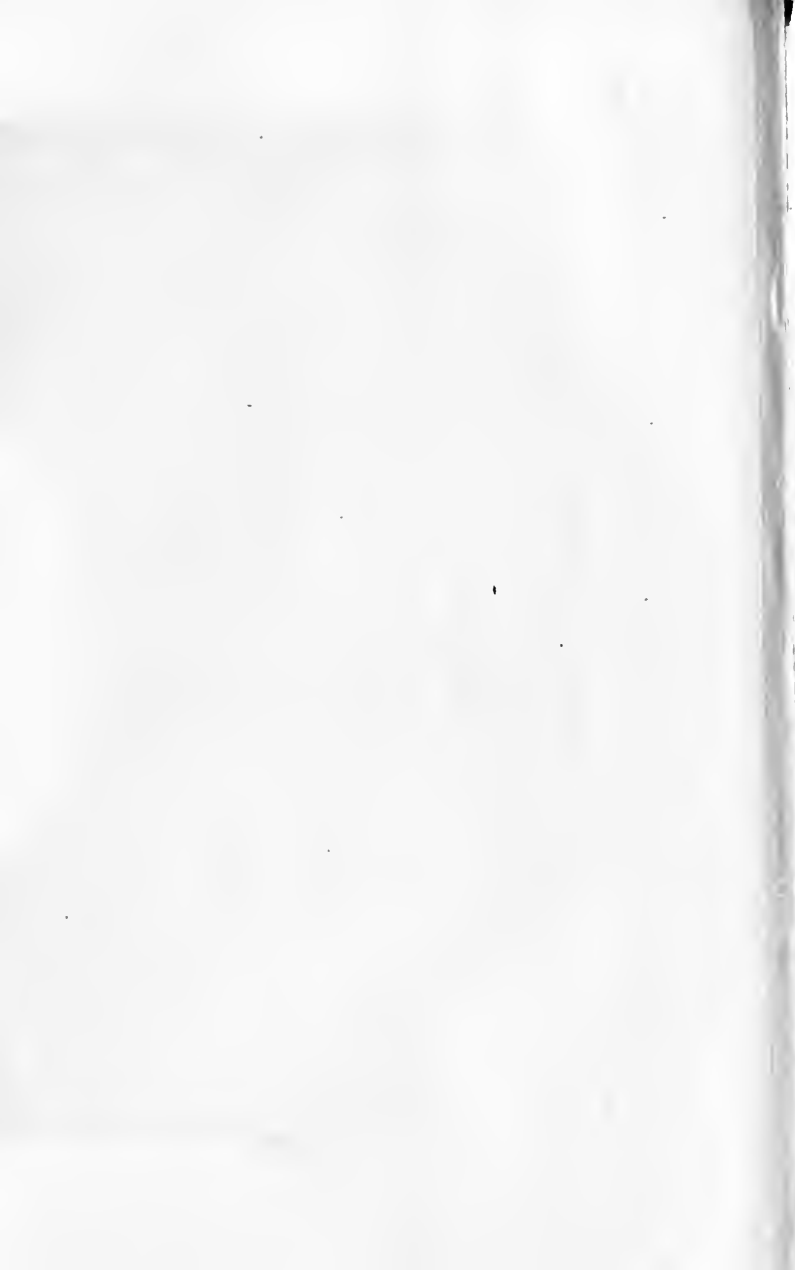
His other works hardly require the investigation of their date. In the decline of life he meditated a collection of his letters and poems; but letters recovered from the repositories of dead friends are but melancholy readings; and, probably overcome by the sensations which they excited, he desisted from his collection.

* [Anstey was the original, for 'Humphrey Clinker' was not out till 1771, nor written before 1770. This inadvertency of Mr. Campbell has been pointed out by Lord Byron in the Appendix to the 5th canto of 'Don Juan.'];

"But Anstey's diverting satire," says Sir Walter Scott, "was but a slight sketch compared to the finished and elaborate manner in which Smollett has, in the first place, identified his characters, and then fitted them with language, sentiments, and powers of observation, in exact correspondence with their talents, temper, condition, and disposition."—*Misc. Pr. Works*, vol. iii. p. 160.]

THE END.





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Campbell, Thomas
An essay on English poetry

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