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Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey

THE MAKING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

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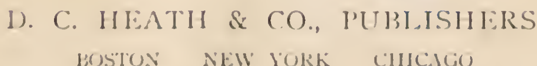
"Watch what main-currents draw the years."
— Tennyson.



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PREFACE

The author's main purpose has been to write a compact yet broadly suggestive historical introduction to English literature for use by students and by general readers. The method is somewhat different from that ordinarily pursued. In the first place, direct and separate discussion of general English history has been avoided, in the belief that so brief a book on literature ought not to turn aside for a moment from its proper aim of treating great literary works, personalities, and movements. Yet opportunity has been constantly sought to suggest and imply the historical background indirectly through the literary treatment, and an outline of historical facts and movements has been furnished in the Appendix. In like spirit, biographical details have been given mainly for the sake of their significant relation to the literature. This principle has been applied with moderation and restraint and with care to avoid forcing its application to unwise extremes.

Unity has been given to the discussion by a reasonable emphasis upon the great life forces which from age to age have determined the general character of English literature, and by a continuous endeavor to illustrate the working of those forces through a discussion of leading authors and works. The purpose has been to present the spirit of the literature as well as the essential facts, the great movements as well as the individual writers. Here again, the author has kept in mind the danger of extremes, and has sought to avoid urging general principles beyond the clear evidence of historical fact. Exceptions and indi-

Gift of M. Ewing

571001

vidual peculiarities have been duly noted, and the aim has been to make clear the relation of each writer to the general movement, whatever that relation might be. Within such limits, the discussion of great literary impulses is fully justified, and ought to prove suggestive and stimulating as well as unifying.

Each chapter marks a chronological advance on the preceding chapter, except in the last book. There, for reasons suggested in the text, the three chapters deal with three separate departments of the literature of a single period — prose, the novel, and poetry. The titles of the various books and chapters are in harmony with the purpose to make the volume a discussion of literature and literary movements rather than of general English history. Various helps to more extended study are given in an Appendix, where they may be easily referred to in connection with the treatment of each period, but where they will not interfere with the continuous reading of the text.

W. H. C.

Hamilton, New York,
November 6, 1906.

CONTENTS

BOOK I

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY (449–1066)

CHAPTER I

PAGE

Anglo-Saxon Pagan Poetry (449–670) 3

CHAPTER II

Anglo-Saxon Christian Poetry (670–871) 14

CHAPTER III

The Anglo-Saxon Prose Period (871–1066) 25

BOOK II

RELIGION AND ROMANCE (1066–1500)

CHAPTER IV

The Anglo-Norman Period (1066–1360) 35

CHAPTER V

The Age of Chaucer (1360–1400) 55

CHAPTER VI

The Fifteenth Century (1400–1500) 75

BOOK III

RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION (1500–1660)

CHAPTER VII

PAGE

Beginnings of Renaissance and Reformation in England (1500–1579) 87

CHAPTER VIII

The Age of Shakespeare (1579–1625) 99

CHAPTER IX

The Age of Milton (1625–1660) 153

BOOK IV

CLASSICISM (1660–1780)

CHAPTER X

The Age of Dryden (1660–1700) 179

CHAPTER XI

The Age of Pope (1700–1740) 196

CHAPTER XII

The Age of Johnson (1740–1780) 221

BOOK V

INDIVIDUALISM (1780–1832)

CHAPTER XIII

The Age of Burns (1780–1800) 251

CHAPTER XIV

The Age of Wordsworth (1800–1832) 269

BOOK VI

DEMOCRACY AND SCIENCE (1832–1892)

CHAPTER XV

PAGE
The Age of Tennyson — Prose (1832-1892) 337

CHAPTER XVI

The Age of Tennyson — The Novel (1832–1892) . . . 359

CHAPTER XVII

The Age of Tennyson — Poetry (1832–1892) 382

APPENDIX

Chronological Outline of English Literature . 410
Reading and Study List 417
Aids to Study 428
INDEX 455

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey . . . . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

Facsimile of First Page of Beowulf Manuscript . *facing* 3
After Zupitza.

Ebbsfleet, Isle of Thanet 13

Facsimile of a Page of Judith Manuscript . . *facing* 14
Cotton Vitellius A, XV, British Museum.

Inscription in Runes 24
Göransson : Bautil — Kyrko-mur, No. 44.

Facsimile of Page of Manuscript of Alfred's Cura Pastoralis . . . . *facing* 25
After Skeat's "Twelve Old English Manuscripts."

Reduced Facsimile from Manuscript of Saxon Chronicle 34
British Museum.

Facsimile of Leaf of Layamon's Brut . . . *facing* 35
Cottonian Manuscript, British Museum.

Lady Chapel, Glastonbury 54
Built 1184–1189.

Geoffrey Chaucer . . . . *facing* 55
From Ellesmere Manuscript of Canterbury Tales.

The Canterbury Pilgrims . . . . . . *facing* 70
After the painting by William Blake.

Reduced Facsimile Page from Malory's Morte d'Arthur, 1529 . . . . *facing* 75
From the edition by Wynkyn de Worde.

Representation of a Mystery Play 86
From Sharp's "Coventry Mysteries."

Sir Thomas Wyatt . . . . *facing* 87
From a drawing by Hans Holbein (1527–1543).

PAGE

THE GLOBE THEATER 98
After a drawing in the British Museum.

THE CHANCEL OF STRATFORD CHURCH, SHOWING SHAKESPEARE'S BUST . . . . *facing* 99
From a photograph.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON . . . . *facing* 122
From a photograph.

INTERIOR OF THE SWAN THEATER 152
After a sketch made in 1596.

JOHN MILTON . . . . *facing* 153

CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE 178

JOHN DRYDEN . . . . *facing* 179

ELSTOW CHURCH AND GREEN, 1658 195
After an old print.

ALEXANDER POPE . . . . *facing* 196

POPE'S VILLA AT TWICKENHAM 220
From an old print.

SAMUEL JOHNSON . . . . *facing* 221

ROBERT BURNS . . . . *facing* 251

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH . . . . *facing* 269

GRAVES OF KEATS AND SEVERN 327
Old Protestant Cemetery, Rome.

ALFRED TENNYSON . . . . *facing* 328

MACAULAY'S HOUSE IN LONDON 336

THOMAS CARLYLE . . . . *facing* 342
After the portrait by Whistler.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF CARLYLE, AT ECCLEFECHAN . . . 358

CHARLES DICKENS . . . . *facing* 359

THACKERAY'S HOUSE IN LONDON 381
Where "Vanity Fair," "Pendennis," and "Esmond" were written.

ROBERT BROWNING . . . . *facing* 382

THE MAKING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE MAKING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

BOOK I

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY (*449–1066*)

INTRODUCTORY

LITERATURE is one of the fine arts — it is language used for those ends of emotion, imagination, and beauty which are sought by the painter, by the sculptor, and by the musician. More important still, literature — like all other art — is an outcome and an expression of human life — of human experience in the past, of human activity in the present, and of human aspiration for the future. In any historical study of literature, it is this intimate relation between literature and life that calls for especial emphasis.

Literature and Life

The greater part of literature is directly or indirectly the product of individual men and women. Therefore the most immediate living fact to be regarded is the fact of personality. Behind the book is the man; and by knowledge of the man and his experiences, we may account for the character of the book. Behind all individual life, however, is the life of a whole people; and in the collective character and life of the race, we may discover the larger forces that have gone to the making of its literature. A thousand minor influences act and interact toward the production of the representative works of a racial literature, but these forces all spring ultimately

Literature and the Race

out of the racial life. This racial life is like a great river. It has many tributaries and many currents; but no tributary, however great, is so important as the main stream, and no cross-currents or counter-currents prevent the onward movement of the strong central flood. Nevertheless, the race undergoes many experiences and is affected by many influences; and if we can observe the forces that have strongly modified its life, we shall see some of the guiding impulses that have determined its literature — not otherwise. In a word, to arrive at the deepest causes of literary creation, we must consider the racial character and the potent influences that from age to age have shaped that character and determined the direction of its activities.

Guiding Impulses

It is not to be supposed that a great guiding impulse will serve to account for a whole age and for all that is in it, for each individual genius and for all that he has achieved. To account for all literary phenomena, we should need to understand all the eddies and currents of racial and national life, all the startling and inexplicable facts of literary personality. All that we can assume is that there are great forces which give a certain degree of unity to the multitudinous variety of life and literature, and that these forces do mark for us the central current of the great literary stream. To observe the guiding impulses that have shaped the life of the English race will be to learn much concerning the secret of that long and stupendous process, the making of English literature.

Facsimile of First Page of Beowulf MS.

Zupitza

CHAPTER I

ANGLO-SAXON PAGAN POETRY (449–670)

Just how or when or where the literature of the English race began, no man can surely say. The Teutonic ancestors of the English came originally from the continent of Europe. They belonged to three related tribes — the Jutes, the Saxons, and the Angles — and dwelt in the Danish peninsula and along the coast of the North Sea to the southward. They began their conquest of Britain about the middle of the fifth century, and gradually extended their sway over what is now known as England — the land of the Angles. It seems altogether probable that these Teutonic invaders brought literature with them from across the sea, and that they still continued to cultivate it in their new home.

Racial and Literary Origins

We know little of the life and history of that early day, but of the general character of the people and of the ideals that guided their life and thought we can be reasonably sure. We find the mind of the race dominated by the conceptions of Teutonic paganism and its heart stirred by the passion for conquest and wild adventure. It was a mighty religious spirit, moving out along the lines of heroic achievement. The principal Teutonic deities were Tiw, the god of war; Woden, the strong and terrible father of the gods; Thor, the god of thunder; and Friga, the great mother. Their names still remain in our Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The supreme religious virtue was physical bravery. The Valkyries, daughters of Woden, rode over the battle-field, selected those who were to die, and conducted the souls of

Pagan Heroism

the heroes to Valhalla, the hall of the slain, there to feast with the gods in immortal joy. It was a religion whose dominant note was one of war and heroism. It was, moreover, a gloomy religion. Over both men and gods, hung the boding shadow of Wyrd, or Fate, and the principle of evil was at last to whelm all in darkness and cold. The conception was a mythological reflection of the northern night and winter overcoming the more genial forces of nature. By such a religion and by such ideals was the race moved; and the oldest English literature finds here its primary guiding impulse.

Earliest Literature

The existing remnant of this pagan literature stands quite by itself in Anglo-Saxon literary history. In bulk, it is almost insignificant. A mere handful of poems, only one of which is of any considerable length, makes up the extent of its treasures. Yet it bears unmistakable evidence of the spirit which created it. It has been worked over by Christian hands, and the old gods have vanished from it; but the heroic spirit of Teutonic paganism is still there, and Wyrd still hangs like a dark cloud over the life which it depicts. Brief space will suffice to make such a survey of its substance and character as will illustrate its pagan tone and give additional insight into the conditions under which it was produced.

The Charms

Certain portions of the so-called *Charms* represent a form of folk-poetry that may be as old as the Teutonic race, and some of their lines carry us back to a period too remote even for conjecture. They embody the folk superstitions of a remote heathenism, handed down among the common people and so tenacious of life that the church of a later time could not abolish them and was driven to baptize them into Christian service. In their present form they belong to a much later period and contain an unusual amount of Christian interpolation.

They form a group of about a dozen short poems or verse incantations to be recited on various occasions, and they are accompanied by prose directions as to certain ceremonies to be performed in connection with the recital. Among others are charms for bewitched land, for a stitch or sudden pain, for swarming bees, for lost or stolen cattle. In the charm for bewitched land, one line appears to address some long-forgotten earth-goddess:

> Erce, Erce, Erce, eorþan modor,
> Erce, Erce, Erce, mother of earth,

and a little further on is an appeal to the earth itself:

> Hal wes þu, folde, fira modor,
> beo þu growende on godes fæþme,
> fodre gefylled firum to nytte.
>
> Hail to thee, earth, of all men the mother,
> Be thou growing in the bosom of god,
> Filled, for the use of men, with food.

The conception of earth as being made fruitful in the embrace of the god is thoroughly pagan, and illustrates the way in which the *Charms* reflect old popular superstitions.

Aside from certain portions of the *Charms*, probably the oldest piece of Anglo-Saxon poetry is that known as *Widsið* or the *Far-Traveler*. It purports to be the song of a *scop* or poet, who is called Widsið, and who relates his travels in many lands and the great events which he has heard of or seen. The persons and events referred to give evidence of the antiquity of the poem. Its literary value is small; but as the earliest complete poem of the literature, and as a description of the life of an Anglo-Saxon *scop*, it is of priceless worth. It is thus that our first English poem begins:

Widsið

> Widsið maþolade, wordhord onleac,
> se þe monna mæst mægþa ofer eorþan,
> folca geondferde: oft he on flette geþah

myneliсne maþþum. Him from Myrgingum
æþelo onwocon.

Widsið spoke, his word-hoard unlocked,
The man who o'er earth the most of nations
And people had traversed: oft took he in hall
A friendly gift. From the folk of the Myrgings
His origin sprang.

After the recital of his wanderings and experiences, it is thus that the poet concludes:

Swa scriþende gesceapum hweorfað
gleomen gumena geond grunda fela,
þearfe secgað, þoncword sprecað,
simle suð oþþe norð sumne gemetað
gydda gleawne, geofum unhneawne,
se þe fore duguþe wile dom aræran,
eorlscipe æfnan, oþ þæt eal scæceð,
leoht and lif somod: lof se gewyrceð,
hafað under heofonum heahfæstne dom.

Thus wandering on through the wide creation,
The minstrels travel through many lands,
Tell their need, speak their thank-word,
Ever south or north with some one meet
Who is skilled in songs, unsparing in gifts,
Who before the host his fame would raise,
Manfully act until all shall depart,
Both light and life: who lives for honor
Hath steadfast glory under the stars.

It is the warrior blood as well as the poet blood that speaks in such words as these. And such is the typical Anglo-Saxon *scop* — a man with the fierce nature and roving disposition which made his kinsmen the fighters and adventurers and conquerors of their time, which made them also the true ancestors of a race that has been without a superior upon the field of battle and has conquered and colonized to the ends of the earth. Here, also, is the spirit that delights to sing as well as to conquer —

the spirit that has made England even greater in the realm of poetry than in the arena of action.

In *The Lament of Deor* we have still another poem dealing with the *scop* and his experiences. Deor, like Widsið, has tasted the joys of the poet's life, but he has lived to see himself superseded and his rewards usurped by a rival more skilled or more fortunate. He gives utterance to a bitter personal grief; but he strengthens his heart with the thought that as the heroes of story have endured great sorrows, so he may endure his. Of the names mentioned, some are found in *Widsið*. Some also appear in the Germanic legend of *Gudrun*, thus furnishing one of the rare points of contact between the early poetry of the Anglo-Saxons and that of the Germans and Scandinavians. The poem is remarkable for being in strophic or stanza form. It is doubtless the oldest lyric in the literature. In each of five stanzas the poet mentions the sorrows of some famous person and closes with the refrain:

The Lament of Deor

> þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg.
>
> That passed over, so also may this.

In the sixth and last stanza, he discloses the nature of his own personal grief and closes with the same refrain. The poem bears with it the atmosphere of the old pagan heroism, and the poet displays the same enduring temper that animated his warrior kinsmen.

The chief business of the *scop* was not to enlarge upon his own joys and sorrows, but to celebrate in epic song the deeds of the heroes. This is well illustrated by the three poems yet to be considered. The first of these is a mere fragment of about fifty lines known as *The Fight at Finnsburg*. It introduces us abruptly into the very heart of a fierce and bloody conflict, and breaks off again in the midst of its spirited description. We have no pictures of old Teutonic battle that

The Fight at Finnsburg

are more vivid and intense, and few that are more poetical. We learn more about the general story from the song of a *scop* in *Beowulf*, but the battle is not there described.

Waldhere is also a mere fragment of a longer epic poem. There remain but two disconnected leaves, each containing thirty-one lines from different parts of the original work. The story involved is that of Walter of Aquitaine; and this is the only known example of the transference into the Anglo-Saxon pagan poetry of any part of the Norse-German epic cycle. Probably there were many cases of the same kind; and these inconsiderable fragments gain much of their interest as revealing to us the earlier association of Anglo-Saxon and German heroic legends.

Waldhere

We come now to the greatest poem of the Anglo-Saxon literature either pagan or Christian. *Beowulf* is the oldest extant heroic poem in any Germanic tongue. In a conservative estimate, we may attribute the conception of the poem to the sixth century, and its completed form to the close of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth. Many parts of the poem are much older and carry us back to the period before the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain in the fifth century. The substance of the narrative relates it to the history and legend of the Teutonic tribes upon the continent. All its heroes, all its scenes, and all its events are continental.

Beowulf

The poem falls naturally into two main parts, and the first of these falls again into two. The stories involved are first those of Grendel and Grendel's dam, and later that of the fiery dragon. In the first part, we are told how Hrothgar, the Danish king, had built a famous and beautiful mead-hall, called Heorot, or Hart, from the hart's horns that adorned its gable roof. There the old king lived in peace and joy with his warriors. "There was harp's sound, clear song of the *scop*." Soon all this

joy was disturbed by the nightly attacks of a hideous and powerful monster named Grendel, who came from the fens and fastnesses by the sea. For twelve years the Danes endured the utmost misery. At last a thane of Hygelac, king of the Geats, came to their rescue. This was the hero Beowulf. The description of his voyage with his fourteen followers shows the love of the old Teutons for the sea and its perils. Beowulf was welcomed at a great feast, where mead flowed freely and the warriors were entertained with the song of the *scop*. Wealhtheow, Hrothgar's queen, passed the cup to each with her own hands and greeted Beowulf with gracious words. At last the Danes departed to their rest, leaving Beowulf and his warriors alone in the hall. "No one of them," says the poet, "thought that hence he should again his dear home ever seek out." Soon Grendel came. He tore the door from its hinges. Fire glared from his eyes. He laughed a terrible laugh as he looked upon the sleeping warriors. One of them he tore limb from limb and drank his blood. Then he encountered Beowulf. The hall groaned with the conflict, and the mead-benches were overturned. Swords would not bite into Grendel's flesh; but at last the monster's arm was torn from its socket, and he rushed away hurt to the death. There was great rejoicing at Heorot, with feasting, gifts, and song.

Beowulf and Grendel

The second part of the first main division of the story introduces another monster, Grendel's dam. Coming by night to avenge her son, she was fiercely attacked, but seized Hrothgar's dearest warrior and bore him away to death. Beowulf determined to attack her in her den. Arming himself, he plunged into the sea and sank to the bottom. There the frightful hag seized him and bore him away to her sea cave. Finding his sword useless, he cast it away and grasped her with his hands. He fell under her and escaped death

Beowulf and Grendel's Dam

only because of his trusty corslet. Regaining his feet, he seized an old magical sword that was lying in the cave and struck a despairing blow. The sword cut into her body and felled her dead. He cut off the head of Grendel, whose body was lying there in the cave, and swam up again to the surface of the sea. The Danes had departed, judging from the bloody sea that he had been slain. Only his own followers waited despairingly for their lord. They were greatly rejoiced at his return, and all departed to Heorot. After feasting and gifts and pledges of friendship, Beowulf returned to his own country. There he was welcomed by his king, Hygelac, to whom he related his adventures. With the account of the presents exchanged between the two, the first main division of the poem closes.

The second main division deals with events that took place in Beowulf's old age. He had then been king for fifty years. A fiery dragon, robbed of the treasure over which it kept guard, was ravaging and destroying the country. Beowulf's palace was burnt, and the old warrior went with twelve men to attack the dragon. With a presentiment of his approaching end, he bade farewell to his followers one by one and went alone to the fight. He was unable to wound the monster with his sword, and suffered much distress on account of its fiery breath. His followers fled instead of coming to his assistance — all but Wiglaf, who rebuked the cowards and hastened to his side. Wiglaf's wooden shield was burnt, and the young warrior sought protection under the iron shield of Beowulf. They finally succeeded in slaying the monster; but Beowulf was poisoned by its breath, and Wiglaf brought the treasures from the dragon's hoard that the old king might see them before he died. The body of the dragon was shoved over the edge of the cliff into the sea. The warriors built a funeral

Beowulf and the Dragon

Death of Beowulf

pyre on a high promontory and burnt there the body of Beowulf. Then they made a great mound on the steep, high and broad, "for the sea-goers to see from afar."

> Swa begnornodon Geata leode
> hlafordes hryre, heorðgeneatas;
> cwædon þæt he wære wyruldcyninga,
> manna mildust and monþwærust,
> leodum liðost and lofgeornost.
>
> Thus then mourned the men of the Geats
> The fall of their prince, the hearth-companions;
> Said that he was among worldly kings
> The mildest and most humane of men,
> Most kind to the people and eager for praise.

Thus ends our greatest Anglo-Saxon poem, with this picture of the ideal king, valiant, tender, and loving the praises of men. *Beowulf* is a noble poem, worthy to stand in the forefront of a great literature. The life described is essentially that of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, although neither Saxons nor Angles are mentioned. It is a picture of royal courts, with the king, the wise men, the nobles, the warriors, the women, and the singers of songs. It is a story of adventure by sea and land, of battle, of feasting, of song, of treasure-giving. It is an authentic portrayal of the old Teutonic past; and here the pagan heroism, the pagan gloom, and the pagan sense of fate find adequate expression. The fight of Beowulf against Grendel, and Grendel's dam, and the fiery dragon, is the fight of the heroic spirit against those evil forces of nature which loomed so large in the religious imagination of our forefathers.

Significance of Beowulf

It has been already implied that the Anglo-Saxon pagan poetry has in the course of time undergone important modifications. Handed down from *scop* to *scop* and from scribe to scribe through generations and centuries, change was inevitable, and we cannot now say how far it has

departed from its original shape. In thought, in language, and in poetic form it has become more or less closely assimilated to the Christian poetry. Metrical laws are substantially the same for the whole body of Anglo-Saxon verse. The metre is based chiefly upon accent and alliteration. Each line is divided into two parts, and in the ordinary metre each half line contains two accented syllables. The number of unaccented syllables in a foot varies from none to five. The law of alliteration demands that two or more of the accented syllables in any line shall begin with the same consonant sound or with any vowel sound. The number of alliterating syllables in a line may be two, three, or four; but there must be at least one in each half line. The common rule gives two in the first half line and one in the second. This metre has a peculiar effect, and could be greatly varied by increasing or decreasing the number of unaccented syllables. It is strongly rhythmical and yet singularly flexible. The accented syllables probably coincided with rhythmic strokes upon the harp, while the irregular number of unaccented syllables gave the singer great freedom in improvisation. The feature of alliteration seems very artificial; but the professional *scop* doubtless became so expert in its use as to handle it with little sense of restraint.

Form of Anglo-Saxon Poetry

This verse has little claim to sweetness or smoothness of effect. It is rather vigorous and abrupt, suggesting to the ear the clash of sword upon shield or the rhythmic slap of waves against the prow of a swaying ship. It has no time for elaborate ornamentation or for formal similes or for mere play of the fancy. The style is serious and intense. Imagination displays itself in concrete diction and in condensed and forcible metaphor. The sea is the "whale-road," the ship is a "foamy-necked floater," the sun is the "candle of heaven," the body is a

Style and Spirit

"bone-house," battle is "war-play," the arrow is a "war-adder," the chief is a "gold-friend." There is little circumlocution, but much repetition and parallelism of expression, giving the effect, not of fulness and richness, but rather of emphasis and vehemence. In fine, the best Anglo-Saxon poetry is direct, concrete, vigorous, and intensely serious. It may be crude, barbaric, and unrefined; but it is unquestionably the utterance of men who were fighters and poets as well.

EBBSFLEET, ISLE OF THANET

CHAPTER II

ANGLO-SAXON CHRISTIAN POETRY (670–871)

In the Anglo-Saxon pagan poetry, and especially in *Beowulf*, there was the promise of a genuine English epos; but this epos was, as Ten Brink phrases it, "frozen in its development." It was thus arrested, not because the impulses behind it were inadequate or because they were exhausted, but because a new and more powerful influence was suddenly introduced. This new influence — so mighty as to turn the whole tide of the literature forever into new channels — was the advent of Christianity. No wonder that the pagan literature lost its vitality and failed of its natural growth. No wonder that a new life and a new literary development began under the force of an impulse so strange and so powerful, under the influence of ideals so different and so exalted. It is precisely the advent of great life forces like this that marks the beginning of new literary periods. Yet right here we are met by certain significant and at first sight startling facts. The old impulse did not immediately die out, nor did the new influence come quickly to supremacy. The spirit of pagan heroism continued to breathe through many a Christian poem; and no Anglo-Saxon poem written under Christian auspices begins to equal in poetic power the essentially pagan *Beowulf*.

Advent of Christianity

What accounts for these facts? Many causes, doubtless, but among others these. The preaching of Christianity was necessarily slow, and paganism gave way but slowly before it. The old poetic impulses were strong and had great momentum, and later

Christianity *vs.* Paganism

ude ða snoteran idese eodon ða ste
rcedferhðe hæleð heora hearran cyðan.
þæt wæs seo halige meowle gebroht on his
burgetelde þa wearð se brema on
mode bliðe burga ealdor þohte ða
beorhtan idese mid widle 7 mid wōme
besmitan. ne wolde þ wuldres dema
geðafian þrymes hyrde ac he hī þæs
ðinges gestyrde. dryhten duguða wal
dend gewat ða se deoful cunda gal ferhð
gumena ðreate bealo full his beddes
neosan þær he sceolde his blæd forleosa
ædre binnan anre nihte hæfde ða his
ende gebidenne on eorðan unswæslicne
swylcne he ær æft̄ worhte þearl mod
ðeoden gumena þenden he on ðysse
worulde wunode under wolcna hrofe
gefeol ða wine swa druncen. se rica
on his reste middan swa he nyste ræda
nanne on gewitlocan wiggend stopon

FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF JUDITH MANUSCRIPT

Cotton Vitellius A, XV, British Museum

poets did not readily find new ways even when they felt in full measure the new influence. Most important of all, Christianity was essentially a foreign influence, and no foreign influence becomes greatly effective in the making of literature so long as it really remains foreign. It must first be thoroughly assimilated, must enter into the very life-blood of a people, must become bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. This is a process of generations, and, under some conditions, of centuries. Even when the process has been fully accomplished, the old nature is likely to reappear in sporadic cases. We must remember that the race remains the same, however powerfully it may have been modified.

Spread of Christianity

Nevertheless, the literary influence of Christianity is easily and distinctly traceable from the seventh century onward. Augustine, the first Christian missionary to the Anglo-Saxons, had come to England from Rome in 597. From the ecclesiastical centre which he established at Canterbury, Christianity spread throughout the south of England; and during the first half of the seventh century it was extended throughout the north by both Roman and Irish missionaries. The new religion henceforth infused into literature a new tone and spirit. It was new in a national as well as in a religious sense. The old pagan poetry contains no allusion to English men or to English scenes, and it remained for Christian poets to begin the history of English literature in the stricter sense of the term. The first definite creative period in English literary history began in the monasteries of Northumbria toward the close of the seventh century. Its best work was accomplished during the eighth century, and it probably came to a close early in the ninth. During this time, and indeed throughout the remainder of the Anglo-Saxon Period, the great guiding impulse of literature is the impulse of Christianity in

Christianity and Literature

struggle with paganism. It is noteworthy that the work of the period now under consideration was almost exclusively poetical, and that it includes practically all of the Anglo-Saxon Christian poetry. The next period, as we shall see, was mainly productive of prose literature.

The beginning of Christian poetry in England is marked by definite dates and by a definite name. The first English poet—the authentic father of English literature —is Cædmon. He is supposed to have begun his work about 670 and to have died in 680. Later investigation has robbed him of much that tradition once distinguished with his name; but it has not yet denied his right to be regarded as the first English singer of whom we have any positive record. Our account of him is derived from Bede, the first great English scholar, who was born before Cædmon died, and who had every opportunity to know whereof he wrote. Cædmon was a humble brother in the monastery of Abbess Hilda at Whitby, on the wild northeastern coast of Yorkshire. He was an old man before the gift of song came to him; and as he was utterly without literary training, his poetry seemed to those about him the direct inspiration of God. One night, after he had left the feast, ashamed of his inability to sing like the others as the harp went round, he lay down to sleep in the stable of the cattle of which he had the charge that night. In a vision, one bade him sing. "I cannot sing," said he, "for this reason I left the feast and came hither." "Nevertheless, you must sing for me," said the stranger. "What shall I sing?" asked Cædmon. "Sing the beginning of created things," was the answer. Then he began to sing verses in praise of God the Creator. In the morning he made known his wonderful gift. The Abbess exhorted him to enter the monastic life and had him taught in the Scriptures. "And all that he might learn by hearing, he remembered, and like a clean beast chewing the

Cædmon

Cædmon's Vision

cud, turned it into the sweetest poetry." "He sang first of the creation of the world, and of the origin of man, and all the story of Genesis; and afterward of the departure of the people of Israel from Egypt and their entrance into the promised land; then of many other stories from the Holy Scriptures; and of Christ's humanity, and of his suffering, and of his ascension into heaven; and of the coming of the Holy Ghost; and of the teaching of the apostles; and afterward of the day of the coming judgment, and of the fear of the punishment of torture, and of the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom, he made many songs; and also many others concerning the divine mercy and glory." The legend is typically symbolic of the beginnings of Christian influence in the literature.

Cædmon's Poetry

A small fragment of nine lines known as Cædmon's *Hymn* may contain the substance of his first song. It is in Cædmon's native Northumbrian dialect, and the manuscript is supposed to date from 737, little more than half a century after his death. Here, if anywhere, we may feel that we are almost in the very presence of Cædmon, at the fountain head of native English song.

Cædmon's Hymn

Nu scylun hergan hefaenricaes uard,
metudæs maecti end his modgidanc,
uerc uuldurfadur, sue he uundra gihuaes,
eci dryctin, or astelidæ.
he aerist scop aelda barnum
heben til hrofe, haleg scepen:
tha middungeard moncynnæs uard,
eci dryctin, æfter tiadæ
firum foldu, frea allmectig.

Now ought we to praise the prince of heaven's kingdom,
The Maker's might and the thought of his mind,
The work of the Father, since he of all wonders,
Eternal Lord, the beginning established.

First did he shape for the sons of mankind
Heaven as a roof, the holy Creator;
Then the middle-world did the warden of men,
The eternal prince, after prepare
As a dwelling for men, the Lord Almighty.

Then the manuscript adds, *Primo cantavit Cædmon istud carmen.*

The so-called Junian Manuscript contains a series of poems once collectively known as Cædmon's *Paraphrase.*

The Cædmonian Paraphrase

This poetry answers in a general way to Bede's description of what Cædmon wrote, but it is uncertain whether any of it can really be traced back to Cædmon. The first part of the manuscript contains three poems, known as *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel.* The second part contains a series of poems on the Fall of the Angels, the Harrowing of Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Day of Judgment, and the Temptation. *Genesis* is a paraphrase of the first book of the Bible up to the sacrifice of Abraham. It treats the Creation freely, but follows closely the remainder of the Scripture narrative. It has been divided into two parts. Some critics assign "Genesis A" to Cædmon, but "Genesis B" is commonly attributed to a later hand. *Exodus* is much freer and more poetical in its treatment of the Bible story. It deals with the departure from Egypt, the flight of the host, and the passage through the Red Sea. This is usually not attributed to Cædmon. *Daniel* is a close paraphrase of the first five chapters of the Book of Daniel. Its interest centres in the deliverance of the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, and it closes with the feast of Belshazzar. This is much inferior to the other two poems in poetical merit, and it is probably not the work of Cædmon. The remainder of the manuscript consists of paraphrases from the New Testament and from the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus. The

poems seem to show the work of various hands, and some fragmentary portions may possibly belong to Cædmon.

These so-called Cædmonian poems differ from anything else in the literature. If not produced by Cædmon, they belong to his school and were written by men familiar with his work and inspired by his example. We may therefore form some fair conjecture as to the quality of his poetry, even if we possess next to nothing of his actual work. It shows many characteristics of the old pagan poetry, especially in the more heroic passages. The accounts of the Deluge and the passage of the Red Sea mingle the old Teutonic spirit with the newer spirit of Christianity. How different Cædmon was from the pagan *scop*, we may readily see. He was no wanderer through far lands, no singer at boisterous feasts, no seeker of princely gifts, but simply an humble monk who sang to the glory of God and with a sense of divine inspiration.

Quality of Cædmonian Poetry

We have already had occasion to mention Bede, who is as truly the father of English learning as Cædmon is the father of English song. His voluminous and scholarly works in Latin do not belong strictly to English literature, much less to English poetry. His lost translation of the Gospel of John associates him with Anglo-Saxon prose; and he even gains a slight connection with poetry by virtue of five lines of verse known as Bede's *Death Song*. His disciple, Cuthbert, relates that Bede sang many things during his last illness, and among others, this brief song in English. It is a pleasure thus to associate with religious poetry the name of the old scholar who wrote the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and who has there given us our account of the first English poet.

The Venerable Bede

Bede tells us that the followers of Cædmon were many, and we still possess a number of poems that seem closely

related to the Cædmonian school. One of the finest of these is *Judith*. It is based upon the apocryphal Book of Judith, and a greater or less portion of it has been lost. Three books and a fragment remain. These tell of the drunken revelry in the Assyrian camp, the slaying of Holofernes by Judith, her return with the head of the heathen prince, the attack of the Hebrews upon their drunken and leaderless enemies, the defeat and slaughter of the Assyrians, and the rich plunder of their camp. The subject affords opportunity for those descriptions of feasting, battle, and victorious celebration which make the pagan poetry so vivid and poetical. The unknown author of *Judith* has been able to mingle with this pagan vigor the loftier charm of the Hebrew story, and his poem must have seemed to him in some sense typical of the conflict waged in his own day between Christianity and Teutonic paganism. He was a genuine poet, with unusual power in description, in narrative, and in characterization.

Judith

Other poems of the Cædmonian school are inferior to the *Judith*, but are informed with the same spirit. They are wholly religious in purpose—sometimes with outbursts of spiritual fervor, as in the Prayer and the Song of the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace from *Azarias* and the Cædmonian *Daniel;* sometimes with flashes of the grim Anglo-Saxon imagination, as in the *Address of the Soul to its Body;* sometimes tediously didactic, as in *A Father's Teaching*. One of the most interesting fragments is an inscription from the so-called Ruthwell Cross, still preserved in the parish church at Ruthwell in Scotland. The cross is supposed to speak and vividly depicts its emotions at the hour of the crucifixion.

Other Early Christian Poems

Anglo-Saxon poetry is for the most part epic in character. In the five so-called elegies, we have the nearest approach that the eighth century can offer to the independent, personal, and really poetical lyric.

The Elegies

They are to some extent Christian in tone; but they also carry on the pagan tradition and remind us in many ways of the older poetry. *The Wanderer* has not a few points of likeness to *Widsið*. It is a lament for dead friends and vanished happiness, for the desolation of the world and the sorrows of men. The speaker has lost his dear lord and kinsmen, and has been forced to wander in far ways seeking a happiness which he does not find. The poem is artistically conceived and executed, and has no superior among the shorter Anglo-Saxon poems. *The Seafarer* is full of the old pagan love for the sea. Vivid pictures are presented of the dangers and delights of the sailor's life, and there are charming indications of a genuine love for nature. The latter part of the work passes into a tone of didactic moralizing which somewhat mars the effect of an otherwise fine poem. *The Ruin* is a fragment of excellent poetry. Its subject is a ruined city, identified by some with the ancient Roman city of Bath. The description of the ruined heaps, with hoar frost on the stones and with hot springs welling out among them, is of great interest. *The Wife's Complaint* and *The Husband's Message* are almost alone among Anglo-Saxon poems in their expression of the passion of love. In the one, a woman left to sorrow and disgrace tenderly laments her absent lord. In the other, a wandering husband sends a message written on a piece of wood, conveying to his loved one a reminder of their long-continued affection, and bidding her come to him over the sea.

Cynewulf

A new school of religious poetry grew up during the latter half of the eighth century, and its leader was Cynewulf. He was more nearly allied than was Cædmon to the old *scop*. The pagan poets sang of mythical heroes and warriors; his heroes were the saints. They described deeds of adventure by land and sea; he carries his heroes through battles and voy-

ages and perils for the sake of their faith. The gentler spirit of Christianity has not altogether superseded the fierce and aggressive valor of heathenism. His saints know how to suffer, but they also know how to fight. He seems to have wandered like Widsið, and to have known the favor of a gracious lord. In his youth, he was gay and wild, a lover of sports and war and poetry, delighting in love and beauty, but caring little for religion. In later life came suffering, followed by seriousness and repentance. He tells us that he had led a sinful life; but after severe struggle, he appears to have found comfort in religion and in the writing of religious poetry. It is not improbable that both he and Cædmon were heathens in their youth and that they represent in their own individual lives the great transition from the old religion to the new.

In four poems have been discovered series of runic letters concealing the name of Cynewulf. These, then, may be regarded as his authentic works. *Elene* is the story of the finding of the true cross at Jerusalem. The Emperor Constantine, after his conversion, sends his mother, Helena, to seek for the cross. She is successful after many hindrances, and builds a church on the spot where the cross is discovered. At the end of his narrative, Cynewulf reflects upon his work, upon the future judgment, and upon his experiences as a man and as a poet. It is into this personal passage that he has woven the runes that conceal his name. In *Juliana*, Cynewulf has told the story of another female saint. She is a Roman maiden who remains true to her faith in spite of the persecutions of her father and her lover, and in spite also of the wiles of the devil. Her fidelity is sealed by a triumphant death. *Crist* deals with the Nativity, the Ascension, and the Last Judgment. It lacks artistic completeness and unity, but contains some

Cynewulf's Signed Poems

of the finest poetical passages to be found in Anglo-Saxon literature. We receive the impression of a series of related poems, gathered about the personality of Christ; and the work is remarkable as containing features of epic, lyric, descriptive, and even dramatic poetry. *The Fates of the Apostles* is a brief poem, reciting the fates of the twelve apostles in a not very poetical fashion.

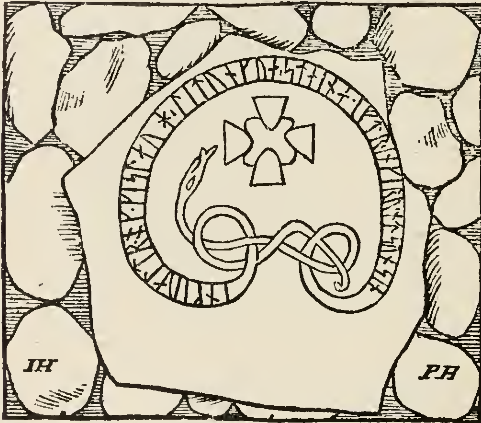
A number of other interesting poems have been associated with the name of Cynewulf, and it seems probable that they were written either by him or by men of his time and school. *Guthlac* tells of the life and death of an English saint. *Andreas*, one of the best of Anglo-Saxon narrative poems, relates the adventures of the Apostle Andrew among the cannibal Mermedonians. *The Phœnix* describes the fabled bird that was able to rise from its own ashes, and makes it an allegorical type of the resurrection of Christ and his saints; it is remarkable among Anglo-Saxon poems for its tenderness and beauty, and none is less tinged with pagan ideas. *The Descent into Hell* deals with Christ's visit to hell between his death and resurrection, in order to rescue the spirits in prison — a theme congenial to the old English mind for centuries. One notable poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, differs much from these, but reminds us in many places of the earlier verses from the Ruthwell Cross. It is a description of the cross seen in a vision, and voices a passionate adoration.

The School of Cynewulf

It seems probable that most of the poetry thus far considered was written in Northumbria. It has come down to us, however, not in the Northumbrian but in the West-Saxon dialect. This fact is due to the incursions of the Danes, who devastated Northumbria and practically annihilated her learning and literature. Scholars and poets took refuge in Wessex, and the surviving fragment of Northumbrian poetry was translated into

Language of the Poems

West-Saxon. The Northumbrian originals being lost, the poems have been preserved only in their West-Saxon form. How much loss the Danish invasion meant for Anglo-Saxon poetry can never be told. The change from one dialect to another is a matter of minor importance. The real loss is that so much poetry and so much of knowledge about this poetry should have been swept away forever.



INSCRIPTION IN RUNES

Göransson: Bautil-Kyrko-mur, No. 44

✠ ÐEOS BOC SCEAL TO WIOGORA CEASTRE

ÆLFRED kyning hateð gretan wærferð biscep his wordum luf-
lice & freondlice; & ðe cyðan hate ðæt me com swiðe oft on ge-
mynd hwelce wiotan iu wæron giond angelcynn ægðer ge godcundra
hada ge woruldcundra; & hu gesæliglica tida ða wæron giond angel-
cynn; & hu ða kyningas ðe ðone onwald hæfdon ðæs folces gode & his
ærendwrecum hyrsumedon; & hie ægðer ge hiora sibbe ge hiora
siodo ge hiora onweald innanbordes gehioldon, & eac ut hiora
eðel rymdon; & hu him ða speow ægðer ge mid wige ge mid wisdome;
& eac ða godcundan hadas hu giorne hie wæron ægðer ge ymb lare
ge ymb liornunga, ge ymb ealle ða ðiowotdomas ðe hie gode scol-
don; & hu man utanbordes wisdom & lare hieder on lond sohte,
& hu we hy nu sceoldon ute begietan gif we hie habban sceoldon; Swa
clæne hio wæs oðfeallenu on angelcynne ðæt swiðe feawa wæron
behionan humbre ðe hiora ðeninga cuðen understondan on englisc,
oððe furðum an ærendgewrit of lædene on englisc areccean.

FACSIMILE PAGE OF MANUSCRIPT OF ALFRED'S CURA PASTORALIS

Skeat's "Twelve Old English Manuscripts"

CHAPTER III

THE ANGLO-SAXON PROSE PERIOD (871–1066)

During the centuries that intervened between the coming of Augustine in 597 and the accession of King Alfred in 871, Christianity had won its battle against the old Anglo-Saxon heathenism and had established its ideals in the minds and hearts of the English people. The church had laid her foundations, had fixed her pillars, and was patiently rearing her great superstructure. Nevertheless, the conflict between Christianity and heathenism was by no means at an end. Up to this time it had been mainly a conflict against heathenism within, an effort to transform a pagan people into a Christian people. From this forward it was mainly the conflict of Anglo-Saxon Christianity against Danish heathenism coming in upon it like a flood from without. In a very true sense, then, the guiding impulse of literature during the present period is still the impulse of Christianity struggling to maintain its ground and to continue its progress in the face of heathen aggression. The form of the conflict has changed; the spirit of it remains essentially the same. The religious note is unmistakably dominant in literature throughout the whole period. The educational work of Alfred in the ninth century is moved by the desire for the religious and moral elevation of his people. Ælfric, in his homilies and lives of the saints and Scripture translations, carries on the same spirit into the early part of the eleventh century. Wulfstan is stirred by a passion of religious zeal and prophetic warning of God's punishment for sin. Even the

Christianity and Heathenism

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is touched by the same great impulse; for its interest is largely ecclesiastical, and its most notable passages record the warfare of English Christianity against the terrible assaults of the Danes. To save the people from ignorance and barbarism by religious effort, to repel the attacks of heathen foes — these are the dominant ideas of the later Anglo-Saxon literature.

It is to be noted that the conditions are decidedly less favorable for literary production than in the older days.

Effect on Literature

To set up the Christian ideal and strive to give it the mastery in heathen hearts, to see the new faith winning its way and diffusing the light of a higher civilization — that is full of inspiration — that can make poets as well as preachers and teachers. To fight an almost despairing struggle against heathen hordes, to labor almost against hope to save a Christian people from falling back into the brute and Christian civilization from sinking beneath a deluge of barbarism — that may awaken religious zeal and heroic courage, but it can hardly inspire poetic enthusiasm. The literature of the present period is therefore almost wholly in prose — the work of preachers and teachers and chroniclers. It is religious, but it is not inspired.

The earliest prose writings in England were in Latin, and there is no considerable prose literature in the English tongue until the ninth century, after the poetical period had come to a close. Bede, in addition to his voluminous Latin writings, had completed an Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospel of John; and if this had been preserved, the history of English prose would begin with the early part of the eighth century, and in Northumbria.

Early West-Saxon Prose

As it is, the earliest extant prose literature is in the form of West-Saxon legal documents and entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle;* and the first important period of prose writing is in the reign of King Alfred, 871–901.

This is known as the Early West-Saxon Period. Its literature is almost wholly in prose. It gathered up and preserved the poetry of the past, but it did not add to our poetical treasures. In addition to its important contributions to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, its chief works are those which are associated with the name of King Alfred himself.

Alfred is the true father of English prose, as Cædmon is of English poetry, and as Bede is of English learning. He is so in a double sense; for Alfred was not only a royal patron of letters, but was also himself the only important prose-writer of his time. When he began to make headway against the Danes, the strength of England gathered about him as the true preserver of the land against its foes. Poetry came from Northumbria to take on under his protection a West-Saxon form, and to be preserved and handed down to posterity. The monasteries became again the seats of learning and culture and education. A new literature, which was to be henceforward chiefly in prose, grew up around Alfred's court at Winchester. It is, of course, in the West-Saxon dialect, as the great body of Anglo-Saxon literature continued to be until its final extinction after the Norman Conquest. It is with Alfred the writer that we have here chiefly to do, and our thought of the great king must be simply the background to the picture.

King Alfred

We must acknowledge that Alfred was not a great literary genius or even a great original writer. He possessed, however, a clear, simple, vigorous, and interesting style; and the literature of the thousand years which lie between his day and ours reveals no soul more simple, earnest, reverent, and devoted than that of the royal father of our English prose. His literary work consists principally of four notable translations from the Latin.

Alfred as a Writer

One of these is the *Cura Pastoralis*, or *Pastoral Care*, of Pope Gregory the Great. It has for its object to show

what the mind of a true spiritual pastor ought to be; and the translation of it was part of Alfred's effort to improve the intellectual and spiritual condition of his bishops and lower clergy. The preface, written by Alfred himself, is by far the most interesting part of the work, and in some respects the most interesting part of Alfred's writings. It gives a graphic picture of the lamentable condition of religion and learning in England when Alfred came to the throne, and shows clearly the lofty and intelligent purpose that was in the king's mind to bring about a better state of affairs.

Alfred's Pastoral Care

A translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* has also been commonly attributed to Alfred. This was, in fact, the first history of England, and its translation may well have been part of Alfred's general scheme for the instruction of his people. Among other things of great interest, the translation contains Bede's famous account of Cædmon, together with a West-Saxon version of Cædmon's Northumbrian *Hymn*.

Alfred's Bede

Still another of Alfred's works was the translation of Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy*. Alfred adds a preface, in which he gives an account of Boethius, whom Gibbon has called "the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman." His work was held in great esteem, not only in Anglo-Saxon times, but throughout the Middle Ages, by the church and in the monastic schools.

Alfred's Boethius

The other notable translation of Alfred was a *Universal History from the Creation to the Year of our Lord 416* written by a Spanish monk named Orosius. This translation, like the others, is made with considerable freedom. Alfred introduces a geographical description of Europe north of the Rhine and the Danube, which is the only contemporary account of the Germanic

Alfred's Orosius

nations as early as the ninth century. In particular, he gives the narrative of two travelers, Ohthere and Wulfstan, who, he tells us, had visited his court and related to him the story of their voyages. One of them had sailed around the North Cape and as far as the White Sea. The other had traveled in the Baltic along the northern coast of Germany.

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

It seems probable[1] that from a very early time monks in various monasteries had begun to make brief and bare records of contemporary events. The oldest annals are both scanty and broken; but gradually the years skipped became fewer and the accounts fuller and more connected. An interesting entry for the year 755 has been called "the oldest piece of historical prose in any Teutonic tongue." About 855 was undertaken a general revision of the earlier annals. Gaps were filled up, new entries were made in existing accounts, and detailed narratives were added of some of the more striking events. The record was also carried back to the landing in Britain of the first Teutonic invaders under Hengist and Horsa in 449. The Winchester *Chronicle*, in its fuller revised form, was existing when Alfred came to the throne in 871. Alfred's wars with the Danes furnished an inspiring subject for the historian, and for many years the annals are continuous and usually very full. In Alfred's last years a new revision of the *Chronicle* was made, either by Alfred himself or under his direction. The record from 894 to 924 is supposed to be the work of a single writer. His name is unknown, but all historians have united in praising the animation and vigor of his style. As we shall have occasion to note later, the *Chronicle* was continued until after the Norman Conquest. We may further observe here that it remains to us in seven different texts made in different monasteries, that it is the oldest native history

[1] Ten Brink's English Literature, I, p. 72.

in any Teutonic tongue, and that it is an indispensable source of information to the modern historian of England.

Before passing on to consider the prose work of the Later West-Saxon Period, we may here briefly notice what was being accomplished in the poetical field. It is small enough in amount, but not altogether negligible. There was poetry of a sort in Alfred's day and later; but for the most part it lacks the old vitality and power. Once and again, the old heroic note is heard, and there are at least two poems that possess a high order of merit and are not unworthy to rank with the best of the older poetry. One is known as the *Battle of Brunanburh*, and is inserted in the *Chronicle* for the year 937. It is a song of triumph for the victory of the West-Saxons under Æthelstan and Edmund, grandsons of Alfred, over the North Danes under Anlaf and the Scots under Constantine. The other is called the *Battle of Maldon*, and is even finer in quality. It is a record of the fight of the East-Anglians against the Danes in the year 991, and seems to have been written so soon after the battle that the poet does not even know the name of the Danish leader. It is interesting to observe that the events of actual history can on occasion furnish as true poetic inspiration as heathen myth or Christian legend. One of these poems celebrates a great Christian victory over heathen invaders, and has therefore a theme full of poetic suggestions. The other records a defeat at the hands of heathen foes, and finds its poetry in the splendid valor which despises cowardice as it despises death, and which rejoices to fall in heroic battle about a beloved chief. Both poems reflect in a clear and striking way the age-long struggle of Christianity against heathen barbarism and show the heroic temper of the Anglo-Saxon race whether in victory or in defeat. With this later verse die away the last echoes of the noble poetry of the

Later Poetry

Anglo-Saxons, with its pagan sternness and courage, its Christian faith and devotion, its poetic passion and imagination. Not again does England hear such voices until she has emerged from the long night of mediæval feudalism and ignorance into the dawn of her modern literature.

After Alfred's death, literature rapidly declined; and for over half a century little or nothing was produced outside of the *Chronicle*. During the reign of Edgar the Peaceful, however, from 958 to 975, a new literary period began which continued until after the Norman Conquest. This period is known as the Late West-Saxon, in distinction from the Early West-Saxon Period under Alfred. The chief literary product of Edgar's reign is the so-called *Blickling Homilies*, written about 971. The homily was the popular form of religious instruction in the tenth and eleventh centuries, as it continued to be for centuries later. It was the predecessor of the modern sermon in its function and to some extent in its form. It has the exhorting element of the sermon and something also of the expository element; but it indulges more freely in religious narrative drawn from the Bible and from the lives of the saints. The *Blickling Homilies*, although they form a notable single collection, do not differ materially from other and greater works of the same class presently to be mentioned.

Late West-Saxon Prose

Blickling Homilies

About twenty years after the *Blickling Homilies* we come to the greatest of Anglo-Saxon prose-writers. Ælfric was born about 955 and died not far from 1025. He was a man of gentle yet decided nature, cultured, learned, and eminently pure in life. As a writer,[1] he had not the creative power of a great literary genius, nor had he fallen upon an age that was favorable to literary production of a high order; but he had the ability to assimilate facts and ideas, to marshal them in

Ælfric

[1] Ten Brink's English Literature, I, pp. 105, 106.

orderly array, and to express them in clear and effective style. His principal literary work is found in his *Homilies*. These are in two series of forty each. They are based upon the writings of the church fathers, and include topics for the whole ecclesiastical year. They embody great theological learning, but are admirably adapted to the understanding of the common people. Ælfric follows the fashion of his age in interpreting allegorically many things in the Scripture text, yet he does so with comparative intelligence and caution. There is a large admixture of the legendary and the miraculous; but one feels also the childlike faith and the deep piety. Closely allied to his *Homilies* are his *Lives of the Saints*. These were designed to be publicly read or delivered on the various saints' days. A notable peculiarity, and one which appears to a less extent in other works of Ælfric, is that they are written in a sort of "rhythmical, alliterative prose," which approaches poetry without really leaving the prose level. In sentiment and in picturesqueness, also, as well as in form, both the *Homilies* and the *Lives of the Saints* have occasional poetical leanings. In addition to his more original work, Ælfric also takes his place among our great translators of the Bible. He translated the whole of the Pentateuch, the Book of Job, and several other portions of the Old Testament into clear, graceful, and vigorous English. In his preface to the translation of Genesis, we see the lofty sincerity of his purpose and his solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the people. He hesitated to translate the book, because he feared the evil consequences of a popular misunderstanding with reference to the old law concerning polygamy.

Wulfstan

One contemporary of Ælfric is deserving of personal mention as a writer. This is Wulfstan, Archbishop of York from 1002 until his death in 1023. He is the last great English writer before the Norman

Conquest. Some fifty-three *Homilies* have been attributed to him, but many of them on uncertain grounds. One work of his has long been generally known. This is commonly called Wulfstan's *Address to the English.* It warns the people that the terrors of Danish invasion have come upon them because of their sins, and forebodes the coming of Antichrist and the end of the world. Wulfstan was not gifted with a great creative imagination; but he evidently had a terrible knowledge of the sins of his age and described them with passionate earnestness and with graphic realism of effect. His is almost the last word of the Anglo-Saxon literature; and it is charged with religious fervor and with gloomy foreboding of the triumph of evil in the world.

Oriental Romance

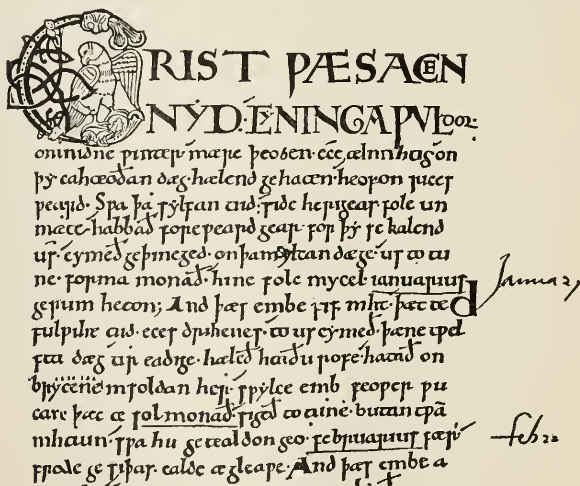
Into this intensely religious atmosphere, dark with thoughts of impending judgment and of eternal terrors, breathes the strange odor of eastern romance, anticipating the romantic literature which was to make so large a part of the poetry of the Middle Ages. As an illustration of this, we may mention the translation of the late Greek romance of *Apollonius of Tyre.* It is an interesting popular tale, in strong contrast with anything produced by the Anglo-Saxon genius. Nearly six hundred years later, Shakespeare made a part of this same story the basis for his *Pericles, Prince of Tyre.*

Once again Danish invasion pours in its tide of war to submerge the Anglo-Saxon literature, and the long prose period comes to an end. It shows some signs of revival toward the middle of the eleventh century; but then comes the Norman Conquest in 1066 to crush and overwhelm it completely. All save the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* which continues for nearly a century more.

Later Anglo Saxon Chronicle

Chronicle writing at Winchester, the old capital of King Alfred, came to an end in 1001. Canterbury, Abingdon, and especially Worcester then became

prominent as centres of historical record. The Worcester *Chronicle* continued until 1079, and was the last of the older Chronicles. The Peterborough *Chronicle*, youngest of all, was kept up until the death of King Stephen in 1154. It shows marked changes in the language, which was rapidly breaking up under the combined influence of the Latin and the Norman French and of historical conditions. With the close of the Peterborough *Chronicle* die away the last echoes of the Anglo-Saxon literature.



Reduced Facsimile from MS. of Saxon Chronicle

British Museum

Facsimile of Leaf of Layamon's Brut

Cottonian Manuscript, British Museum

BOOK II

RELIGION AND ROMANCE (1066–1500)

CHAPTER IV

THE ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD (1066–1360)

BETWEEN the Anglo-Saxon Period, which we have just traversed, and the Middle English Period, upon which we are about to enter, there is for the student of literature a great gulf fixed. The Norman Conquest had intervened, and under the stress of conditions created by that great historic event, literary utterance in the English tongue was all but silenced. For about a century and a half there is practically no literature in English except the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle;* and it is not until near the close of the twelfth century that a new native literature begins to appear. The language, too, under similar influences, has undergone marked changes; and the Middle English literature almost seems to be written in a new speech. Yet all these changes had been gradual, and the life of the race had been continuous from the close of the one age to the beginning of the other. The race had passed over the gulf and had reappeared on the other side, ready to take up again the task of expressing through literature its ever moving life. It had passed through great experiences and had been subjected to new and powerful foreign influences; but it had not been radically changed. Indeed, it was still essentially the same race, with much the same ideals. In a word, the thread of literary development had been broken by the accident of foreign conquest, but the thread of racial life had remained intact.

From Anglo-Saxon to Middle English

By what impulses shall we now find this life and this literature determined? The question is not so easy to answer as in the case of the preceding period; for the situation is a more complicated one. The Norman Conquest, of course, powerfully affected the conditions of English national and social life; but it was not in itself a great literary influence, except in the purely negative sense that it helped to bring the old order to a close and to hinder a native literary revival. Yet the Conquest brought with it conditions which did in time have a positive and very important influence on literary production. In the first place, it brought a new race into England — a race originally Teutonic, but transformed by the infusion of French blood into the most brilliant and masterful race in Europe. The Normans, moreover, were a romantic, an artistic, and a poetic people; and their presence could not fail to affect literary conditions and movements. Furthermore, Normans and English were brought into close contact with each other in almost all departments of life. At first the relation was one of hostility; but gradually the two races drew together until at last the one was merged in the other. It was not the mingling of two equal streams; for doubtless the native English element was much the larger and more important. The old race, however, was in time profoundly modified, just as the Normans themselves had been modified before by their union with the French. The new union was a most fortunate one; for it joined the brilliant, emotional, and imaginative Norman temper with the more solid and steadfast qualities of the Anglo-Saxon nature. This contact of races, in all its stages, so profoundly affected the conditions of life and the growth of racial character that it necessarily exerted a dominating influence on literature as well. Indeed, we may fairly say that the literature of the whole Middle English Period, and espe-

English and Normans

cially of what we have here called the Anglo-Norman Period, was mainly shaped and controlled — perhaps we may add, to some extent repressed and hindered — by the relations which existed between two races, two languages, two national and literary ideals.

In order to appreciate still more definitely the impulses now working toward the making of literature, we must observe the direction in which the genius of each race was urging it to literary expression. The English literary temper was still, as it had been throughout the Anglo-Saxon Period, chiefly religious. Under the existing conditions, it seems natural to expect the utterance of a national or racial passion, asserting English sentiment against alien conquerors. This English spirit does find voice, to some extent, in songs and ballads; but the dominant note is a religious one. It is as though the race had accepted its lot and was seeking compensation for its woes in the consolations of its religion. Indeed, there is comparatively little of English literary protest against Norman rule; and the patriotic note is strongest at a time when Englishmen and Normans were sufficiently united to feel a common pride in a common country.

English Religious Temper

As contrasted with English religious feeling, the Norman literary temper was essentially romantic. When William the Conqueror advanced against the English army at the battle of Hastings, the Norman minstrel, Taillefer, rode in front, tossing his sword in the air and catching it again while he chanted the *Song of Roland*. He was the first to strike and the first to fall. The Norman valor was there, but there also was the Norman romantic spirit. The incident is finely symbolic of the new element which the Normans were to bring into English literature.

Norman Romantic Temper

We may say, therefore, that the literature of the Middle English Period was guided, not merely by the contact of

two races in one national life, but by the double impulse of religion and romance. These two forces were not hostile to each other; for English religion was in some degree romantic, and became ever more and more so under Norman influences, while Norman romance was in large measure religious, and took on a deeper religious tone through its contact with the English mind. The two literary streams tend finally to run in the same channel. No more typical example could be found than the Arthurian legends, which by the addition of the story of the Holy Grail are exalted into great religious romance. The mediæval cathedral is also a type of this same union. In no creation of man is there a more impressive combination of religious solemnity and awe with romantic mystery and beauty. Indeed, are not the Middle Ages the world's treasure house of romance, and do they not at the same time furnish the world's supreme illustration of popular religious faith?

Religion and Romance

We shall get the best clue to a comprehension of the literary history of this Anglo-Norman Period by conceiving of literature as moving along two lines which gradually tend to merge into each other. On the one side is the religious literature, for the most part purely native in form and in spirit. The line runs from Orm in the early part of the thirteenth century to Langland and Wyclif in the latter part of the fourteenth. Over against this purely native work we find the romantic literature which grew up under Norman-French inspiration. The line here runs from Layamon at the beginning of the thirteenth century to Chaucer at the close of the fourteenth. The religious literature is mainly in poetry, but there is some prose of the same character. Romantic literature is almost wholly poetical, though there are a few prose tales. Where romance leans toward history, it is likely to be more English; where it is mainly fanciful, it is

Religious and Romantic Literature

more likely to be French. Especially on its more fanciful side, most of the romantic literature is translated from French originals. An important difference between purely native poetry and that which is affected by French influence is seen in the form of the verse. The old Anglo-Saxon alliterative measure, in a modified form, still continued to exert an influence upon the verse of purely English poems. Alongside of this grew up a more strictly metrical verse, following Latin and French models. In Anglo-Saxon poetry, rhyme was of very infrequent occurrence; now it became a recognized feature of poetic expression. Modern English poetry has been affected by both metrical systems, but it is chiefly based upon the French scheme.

Method of Treatment

In a period covering so large an extent of time and having such various lines of literary interest — English and Norman, religious and romantic, prose and poetic — it seems best to keep even pace with the steady onward march of literary progress. The following outline of the Anglo-Norman literature will therefore deal with the various representative works so far as possible in a chronological order, indicating the relation of each to the separate but ever converging lines of literary development. It is desirable, however, to keep constantly in mind the two great racial sources — English and French — from which this literature springs, and the two great impulses — religious and romantic — by which its character is determined.

There is evidence that the making of English literature did not altogether cease during the century or more succeeding the Norman Conquest, but practically nothing of importance has remained to our time. With the exception of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which continued until 1154, most of the extant literature of that time is of two kinds, — histories and chronicles in Latin, and romantic stories in French. It is interesting to observe that historical writ-

ings — including the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* itself — tend to become more and more romantic in character. Toward the close of the twelfth century, English literature proper begins to revive. It is chiefly in the form of Scripture translation and homily, thus reminding us of the latest Anglo-Saxon literature; and its tone is that of religious moralizing. A typical production is the *Poema Morale*, or *Moral Ode*. It is found in a collection of homilies, and is itself a sermon in verse on the inevitable requital hereafter of men's good or evil deeds. It is not without poetic merit, and gains an added interest from its somewhat personal tone. A brief specimen will show something of this and will also enable us to observe the decided change that has taken place in the language:

Early Religious Literature

Moral Ode

Ich æm elder þen ich wes   a wintre and a lore;
Ic wælde more þanne ic dude,   mi wit ah to ben more.
Wel lange ic habbe child ibeon   a weorde end ech a dede;
Þeh ic beo a wintre eald   tu ȝyng i eom a rede.

I am older than I was   in winters and in lore;
I wield more than I did,   my wit ought to be more.
Full long I have been a child,   in word and eke in deed;
Though I be in winters old,   too young I am in reed.

In the metre there is a free but not regular use of the Anglo-Saxon principle of alliteration. On the other hand, we find rhyme and a more regular rhythm here recognized as established features of versification.

The first important poem of the Middle English Period is Layamon's *Brut*. What we know of Layamon is contained in the introduction to his poem:

Layamon's Brut

An preost wes on leoden: laȝamon wes ihoten.
he wes leouenaðes sone: liðe him beo drihten.
he wonede at ernleȝe: at æðelen are chirechen.
uppen seuarne staþe: sel þar him þuhte.

on fest Radestone: þer he bock radde.
Hit com him on mode: & on his mern þonke.
þet he wolde of engle: þa æðelæn tellen.
wat heo ihoten weoren: & wonene heo comen.
þa englene londe: ærest ahten.
æfter þan flode: þe from drihtene com.

* * * * * * * * *

laȝamon gon liðen: wide ȝond þas leode.
& biwon þa æðela boc: þa he to bisne nom.
he nom þa englisca boc: þa makede seint Beda.
an oþer he nom on latin: þe makede seinte albin.
& þe feire austin: þe fulluht broute hider in.
boc he nom þe þridde: leide þer amidden.
þa makede a frenchis clerc: wace wes ihoten.

* * * * * * * * *

laȝamon leide þeos boc: & þa leaf wende.
he heom leofliche biheold: liþe him beo drihten.
feþeren he nom mid fingren: & fiede on boc felle.
& þa soþe word: sette to gadere.
& þa þre boc: þrumde to are.
Nu biddeð laȝamon
alcne æþele mon: for þene almiten godd.
þet þeos boc rede: & leornia þeos runan.
þat he þeos soðfeste word: segge to sumne.
for his fader saule: þa hine forð brouhte.
& for his moder saule: þa hine to monne iber.
& for his awene saule: þat hire þe selre beo.
Amen.

A priest was in the land who Layamon was named.
He was Leovenath's son, the Lord be good to him.
He lived at Ernley, at a lordly church
On the Severn's shore (good there it seemed),
Near to Radestone; there books he read.
It came into his mind, and his main thought,
That he would of the English the origins tell,
What they were called and whence they had come
Who English land first had owned,
After the flood which came from the Lord.

* * * * * * * * *

Layamon fared far among the folk,
And obtained the noble books which he took for a pattern.

He took the English book which Saint Bede made;
Another he took in Latin which Saint Albin made,
And blessed Augustine who brought baptism hither.
The third book he took, laid it there in the midst,
Which a French clerk made who Wace was called.

* * * * * * * * *

Layamon laid down these books and turned the leaves.
He lovingly beheld them, the Lord be good to him.
Pen he took with fingers, and wrote on parchment,
And the true words set together,
And the three books threw into one.
Now Layamon asketh each excellent man
(For Almighty God's sake)
Who reads this book and learns this record,
That these sacred words he say together:
For his father's soul who brought him forth,
And for his mother's soul who bore him a man,
And for his own soul, that it be the safer.
Amen.

This is the old Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre, and the diction is also thoroughly English. In spite of its close contact with foreign models, the long poem is said to contain fewer than fifty French words. English patriotism and English religious feeling are clearly manifest; and yet the poem is a curious compound of foreign influences. Of the "three books" which he mentions as the basis of his work, Wace was his chief authority; and Wace's work was based upon Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, written in Latin about the middle of the twelfth century. Geoffrey was a Welsh priest who afterward became Bishop of St. Asaph; and his work purports to be a history of British kings from the time of their mythical ancestor, Brutus, or Brut, the great-grandson of Æneas the Trojan. It was, in fact, a very imaginative compilation of Welsh legends; and its extremely romantic character is well indicated by the fact that it contains the stories of many legendary kings since

Layamon's Sources

well known to readers of later poetry. Such are Locrine, Gorboduc, Cymbeline, Lear, and Arthur. Geoffrey's work is the fountain head of the Arthurian legends, than which there are no greater romantic stories in English literature. On the basis of Geoffrey's history, Wace, a native of the island of Jersey, wrote in French his *Brut d'Angleterre*, or *Brutus of England*. This is the work which Layamon took, about 1205, and expanded to more than twice its original size. He tells us that he traveled far and wide among the people; and doubtless his nearness to Wales had familiarized him directly with Welsh legendary lore. His additions are the best part of the poem. English himself, he enters readily into the romantic mood, tells the story of British kings after a French poet, and betters it in the telling. His work is interesting for its language; for its assimilation of Welsh and Norman influences; for its romantic character; and not least for the fact that it was the first to naturalize in the English tongue the great story of King Arthur and his Knights. The account of the founding of the Round Table appears for the first time in Layamon's *Brut*.

Orm's Ormulum

As Layamon is the first notable writer of romance in Middle English, so Orm is the first known writer of religious verse. Orm was a pious monk who paraphrased in verse the portions of the Gospels appointed to be read at the church services and interpreted these passages often in a fanciful and allegorical manner. He begins thus:

> þiss boc iss nemmnedd Orrmulum, forrþi þatt Orrm itt wrohhte.
>
> This book is named Ormulum, because Orm wrote it.

The work has no real poetical value, but it gains a certain interest by virtue of its quaintness and its religious earnestness. To the student of the language, the work is of

unusual value because of Orm's interest in his orthography. His chief peculiarity is the doubling of the consonants after short vowels. The language at this time was broken up into dialects, grouped into three general divisions, — the Northern, the Midland, and the Southern. Orm's dialect is East-Midland, and has an admixture of Scandinavian elements; French influence is very slight. The *Moral Ode* and Layamon's *Brut* are both in the Southwestern dialect. We shall have occasion later to observe specimens of the Northern. The metre of the *Ormulum* lacks both alliteration and rhyme; its scheme is that of iambic verse of fifteen syllables to the line. The date of the work is about 1215.

During the first half of the thirteenth century, literature written in English continued to be mostly religious. The example of Layamon was not much followed, and romance still remained mostly in French. Religious poetry followed mainly the tradition set by the *Moral Ode.* A specimen of it at its best is found in the *Orison of our Lady.*

Religious Poetry

This is a lyrical adoration of the Holy Virgin, "Cristes milde moder, seynte Marie," and at times mingles the tone of a chivalrous love song with its tender religious devotion. It is real poetry, and well represents the mediæval passion of worship for the "Mother of God." The poetic paraphrasing of Scripture is represented by *Genesis and Exodus.* The type is as old as Cædmon, of whom the title reminds us. A unique sort of work is the *Bestiary.* The supposed "natures" of various animals are quaintly described and made the basis of fanciful religious allegory, so naïve as to be really amusing to a modern reader. The lion, for instance, has three "natures." The first is that when from the top of a hill he discovers the hunters, he hastens down to his den, dragging dust after him with his tail to cover his tracks; the second is that when he is born he sleeps for three days, till

his father arouses him with roaring; the third is that he never shuts his eyes in sleep. The lion is the type of Christ. The Lord came down from the high hill of heaven and made his den in the womb of Mary, but not even that clever hunter, the devil, might know how he came; the Lord lay in the sleep of death for three days, till aroused by the power of the Father; the Lord is the ever watchful shepherd of his flock.

There were homilies and lives of the saints both in verse and in prose. Perhaps the most typical prose work of the early half of the thirteenth century is the *Ancren Riwle*, or *Rule of Nuns*. It was written for the direction and religious consolation of three pious women who had retired into a convent in Dorsetshire. The style is simple, tender, devotional, and imaginative, and moreover happily illustrates the union of French and English diction that was gradually enriching the language during the present period.

Religious Prose

English literature up to the middle of the thirteenth century had been comparatively barren in the matter of genuine lyric poetry. The lyric spirit, however, had been gradually developing, and at about this time and somewhat later there is an outburst of real song. It takes the form of nature poems, love songs, patriotic songs, and ballads. There seems here to be a union of French influence with popular poetic feeling. Representing the spirit of folk-poetry, is the famous *Cuckoo Song*:

Lyric Poetry

> Sumer is icumen in, lhude sing, cuccu;
> Groweþ sed and bloweþ med and springþ þe wude nu;
> Sing, cuccu.
> Awe bleteþ after lomb, lhouþ after calue cu;
> Bulluc sterteþ, bucke uerteþ, murie sing, cuccu.
> Cuccu, cuccu,
> Well singes þu, cuccu; ne swik þu nauer nu.

Summer is a-coming in, loudly sing, cuckoo;
Groweth seed and bloweth mead and springeth the woodland now;
Sing, cuckoo.
Ewe bleateth after lamb, lows after calf the cow;
Bullock starteth, buck darteth, merry sing, cuckoo.
Cuckoo, cuckoo,
Well singest thou, cuckoo; cease thou never now.

One of the best of the love songs is *Alysoun,* of which this is a stanza:

Bytuene Mershe & Aueril,
When spray biginneþ to springe,
Þe lutel foul haþ hire wyl
On hyre lud to synge;
Ich libbe in louelonginge
For semlokest of alle þynge;
He may me blisse bringe,
Icham in hire baundoun.
An hendy hap ichabbe yhent,
Ichot from heuene it is me sent,
From alle wymmen mi loue is lent
& lyht on Alysoun.

Between March and April,
When spray begins to spring,
The little bird hath its will
In its song to sing;
I live in love-longing
For the fairest earthly thing;
She may me blessing bring,
I am her very own.
A happy chance to me is lent,
I wot from heaven to me 'tis sent,
From all other women my love is bent
And lights on Alysoun.

The love for nature, the hearty human quality, the fresh lyric impulse, of such verse as this, give it an enduring charm. It does not ally itself with the great literary movements of the age, but tends to supplement them by an

inspiration drawn from the life and sentiment of the common people. A poem of somewhat different character is *The Owl and the Nightingale.* In it there is a dialogue between the two birds, in which each claims precedence. They agree to submit the matter to the poet. There is real poetic feeling for nature, and the poem allies itself with the religious literature of the time by virtue of its moralizing tone.

Humorous Verse Tales

Men turned from the religious and romantic literature of the age to common life, and found there not only inspiration for popular song, but also abundant material for verse tales of a comic and often coarse realism. Some were imitated from the French *fabliaux;* some were humorous stories of animals, like our negro tales of Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox; and still others were frankly satirical. It is interesting to see that the two favorite subjects of satire were found in the fields of religion and romance. The corruption of the clergy and the abuses of monastic life were held up to ridicule; fanciful and overstrained romanticism was the subject of good-natured parody. Thus even this lighter and more popular poetry allies itself with the great literary interests of the time. It illustrates in its way the many-sidedness of life and literature in all periods. The most romantic age has its touches of realism, just as the most realistic age has its flashes of romance. Religion goes on its solemn way to the jingling of cap and bells, and the maddest laughter may find itself checked in mid-volley by the feeling of religious awe.

With the lyric and humorous poetry we are carried along into the second half of the thirteenth century. It is a period rather barren of important literary work; and its chief interest lies in the fact that French romance was now exerting an ever increasing influence upon English literature. French originals were translated or imitated, and

English themes were dealt with in the French manner. A good example of the French romance transferred into English is *Sir Tristrem*. It deals with the well-known story of one of Arthur's knights, since handled by such great modern poets as Tennyson, Arnold, and Swinburne. With the exception of Layamon's *Brut*, it is the first handling in English of any part of the Arthurian legends. *Havelok the Dane* is an English story; but it is treated in the French manner and is probably copied after a French original. The legend tells how Havelok, the son of the king of Denmark, was saved from a murderous guardian by the fisherman Grim, who escapes with him to England, where he builds a house on the site of the modern town of Grimsby, at the mouth of the river Humber in Lincolnshire. Another well-known romance is *King Horn*. It is thought that its legend of love and adventure is English in origin, but that the poem in its present form is derived from the French. Just before 1300, romance passes over into the field of historical poetry in Robert of Gloucester's rhymed *Chronicle*, which is a historical description of England from Brutus to the death of Henry III in 1272. One can not speak highly of its poetical quality; but it is interesting for its language and metre, for its patriotic spirit, for the historical value of some of its later portions, and because it forms a link between Layamon and later historical poets. It contains the story of King Lear.

Growth of Romance

As we pass over into the fourteenth century, French romance is in full flower in English literature. It is impossible to treat the multitude of romances in detail, but we may note that they fall into four great cycles. The most important of these is the Arthurian. We have observed that the story of Arthur and his knights was treated in Latin by Geoffrey of Monmouth, in French by Wace, in English by Layamon

Cycles of Romance

and in the romance of *Sir Tristrem.* The story had been treated during the thirteenth century by many French writers; and French genius had added the legend of the Holy Grail, which exalts knightly romance into great religious allegory. During the fourteenth century there were many Arthurian stories written in English. The second romantic cycle was the Carlovingian. Its stories deal with the adventures of Charlemagne and his twelve paladins. The *Song of Roland*, chanted by the Norman minstrel, Taillefer, at the battle of Hastings, was one of the French Carlovingian legends. The cycle in England was much less extensive than the Arthurian. The third cycle was the Alexandrian. The story of Alexander the Great seems to have fascinated the mediæval imagination, and its ancient wonders took on the garb of true romantic chivalry. The fourth cycle was the Trojan. Its stories are connected in one way or another with the siege of Troy. Brutus, the great-grandson of Æneas, it will be remembered, was regarded as the ancestor of the British kings. In addition to these four cycles there were many separate romances Among the most English of them, are *Bevis of Hampton* and *Guy of Warwick*.

During the first half of the fourteenth century, as the two races began to draw together and as the two great literary streams began to flow freely in the channel of a common language, there was a noteworthy revival of literature. We have already observed it in the field of romance, and it is no less apparent in the field of religious poetry. The earliest writer of the century was Robert Manning of Brunne, or Bourn, in Lincolnshire, who wrote in 1303 a work called *Handlynge Synne.* It is interesting as having been adapted from a French original written by an Englishman, and as being much more modern than any English hitherto written. In a mixture of homily and pious tale, it deals with the seven

Religious Poetry

deadly sins, the seven sacraments, the twelve requisites of a good confession, and the twelve spiritual graces. Verse homilies and lives of the saints are common at this time, but the greatest religious poem is the *Cursor Mundi*, a huge work of some thirty thousand lines by an unknown poet. It is a religious history of the world, based chiefly on the Bible story, but intermingling this with many discursive legends and homilies. The dialect is Northern. One scribe says of it, enthusiastically:

> þis is þe best boke of alle,
> þe cours of þe werlde men dos hit calle.

Considering its immense size and scope, the following lines seem not inappropriate:

> Cursor o werld men aght it call,
> For almast it overrennes all.

Still another religious poet is Richard Rolle of Hampole, in Yorkshire. He was educated at Oxford, but left the University at the age of nineteen, and adopted the life of a hermit. In his solitary cell, he prayed, meditated, and wrote. Sometimes, in a passion of religious zeal, he went out among the people and preached with powerful effect. He seems to have been a holy and an influential man; and after his death, his cell was revered as a sacred shrine. His chief work is the *Pricke of Conscience*, a long poem dealing with the uncertainty of human life and the coming of the Last Judgment. His shorter sacred poems to the divine love are the work of a mystic and a poet. Many other works in prose and verse, in Latin and English, have been attributed to him.

Religious Prose

Rolle's work, as we have just implied, ranks him with the prose-writers as well as with the poets of his age. His prose writings are all religious, but no single work calls for special mention. He carries us along to about 1340; and to this same period

belongs Dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwit*, or *Remorse of Conscience*. Written in the Kentish dialect, it is of decided interest to the student of the language, but not much can be claimed for it as pure literature. It has been called "a popular handbook of moral theology"; and as such, it is typical of the religious spirit of the age. Among its subjects are the ten commandments, the creed, the Lord's Prayer, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the beast of Revelation. Like other works of the period, it is full of allegory.

Contemporary with the religious literature there is an interesting development of historical poetry, inspired by the ever growing national spirit. Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*, at the close of the thirteenth century, has been already mentioned as opening the way in this direction. This lead was followed early in the fourteenth century by Robert Manning of Brunne, already noted as the author of *Handlynge Synne*. About 1338, he wrote a rhyming *History of England*. Like his religious work, it is adapted from a French original written by an Englishman, thus illustrating both the importance of French and the growing tendency to turn to English as a literary medium. Manning shows no advance over his predecessors in recognizing the boundary between history and romance; and his work is more interesting for its patriotic spirit than for its historical fidelity. A writer of a somewhat different type is Lawrence Minot, probably a Northumbrian, who wrote between 1333 and 1352. His work consists of a series of political songs or ballads on the battles and deeds of Edward III. They show a vigorous patriotism, but not much imagination or lyric gift. Minot is a true-born Englishman, and religiously hates Frenchmen and Scots. One of his ballads begins as follows:

Patriotic Poetry

> God, þat schope both se and sand,
> Saue Edward, king of Ingland,
> Both body, saul and life,
> And grante him ioy withowten strif.

Mandeville's Travels

The most famous single work of the period now under review is Mandeville's *Travels.* This book purports to have been written by Sir John Mandeville, an Englishman who was born at St. Albans, traveled abroad for thirty-four years, returned to England in 1356, and wrote the account of his wanderings in Latin, French, and English. Modern criticism says that Mandeville is as fictitious as his *Travels.* In any case, we have the book; and it is the first genuinely imaginative prose work in the literature and the first work to have the gift of a real English prose style. That is much; and no doubts about the author can obscure the fact that the book was immensely popular and that it had a most important influence upon the development of English prose. It seems to be made up partly of real experiences and partly of romantic marvels drawn from many sources. Here are accounts of Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Armenia, India, Cathay, the realm of Prester John, and the Terrestrial Paradise. Here are stories of dragons, griffins, hunting leopards, devils, giants, pygmies, Saracens, Amazons, men with one foot so large that they lie down in the shadow of it, men with a single eye in the middle of their foreheads, men with heads beneath their shoulders, men with heads like hounds, men covered with feathers, and many other wonders too numerous to recount. The narrative is accompanied with quaint and convincing pictures of the objects described, and is written with a naïve realism that leaves little to be desired. Yet "Sir John" has exercised withal a commendable self-restraint:

> There are many other countreys where I have not yet ben nor sene & therefore I can not speke properly of them. Also in countreys where I have bene are many marvailes that I speke not of, for it were to long a tale and therefore hold you payd at this time y[t] I haue sayd, for I will say no more of mervailes that are there, so that other men that go thither may fynde ynough for to say that I haue not tolde.

Four notable poems have come down to us in the same manuscript, and it is believed by some that they are all the work of a single poet. If this could be finally established, we should have a new and important figure in the literature of the fourteenth century. Without accepting it as proved, we may venture to consider the poems together. *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight* is an Arthurian story and one of the very best of the old romances. It represents a group of works in which there was a revival of the old alliterative metre. It also unites with its romantic character a true religious spirit. A gigantic Green Knight challenges any of Arthur's knights to strike at him with his axe and to endure a stroke in return. His head is smitten off by Gawayne, but he calmly picks it up again, challenges Gawayne to meet him at the Green Chapel on the next New Year's Day, and disappears. Gawayne meets with a variety of adventures, is subjected to various temptations, and comes at last to the rendezvous. The Green Knight is unable to do him serious injury because he has been faithful and true; but because he has been weak in one particular, he receives a slight wound. The story is almost in the nature of a religious allegory. For originality, vividness of narrative and description, feeling for nature, and high moral tone, it is far superior to most works of its class. *The Pearl* appears to be a lament of the poet over the loss of his little daughter. He sees and talks with her in a strange and wonderful land. From the other side of a beautiful river she endeavors to console him with the thought of her life in heaven and of their future reunion there. Trying to cross over the river, he awakes. Not only is the work genuinely poetical, but it also is full of pathos and of personal quality. The allegory may be sometimes overdrawn, but in the main it is both beautiful and imagina-

An Unknown Poet

Gawayne and the Grene Knight

The Pearl

tive. *Cleanness* is the title of a poem whose aim is to exalt the virtue of purity. It enforces the virtue by the use of various Bible stories which it handles in vigorous and poetic fashion. Somewhat similar in manner, but less valuable as poetry, is *Patience*. It is chiefly occupied with the story of Jonah; and the storm is treated in a vividly realistic way.

Cleanness

Patience

This group of poems fittingly closes our survey of the Anglo-Norman Period. Here is found the union of the two streams of religion and romance. Here the English and the Norman spirit meet upon common ground. Here is really excellent poetry, giving promise of the masterwork soon to appear in English literature for the first time. While there is no marked break in literary history at this point, nevertheless the period that is characterized by two distinct streams of national and literary life is practically at an end; and we are at the beginning of a generation which is to produce poetic work that will demonstrate the literary possibilities of the union of English and Norman genius.

Close of the Period

LADY CHAPEL, GLASTONBURY

Built 1184-1189

Geoffrey Chaucer
Ellesmere Manuscript of Canterbury Tales

CHAPTER V

THE AGE OF CHAUCER (1360–1400)

THE Age of Chaucer is like a high table-land to which we ascend as by a long and gradual slope through the literature of the previous period and from which we descend again somewhat abruptly to the literature of the period that follows. It is hardly forcing the figure to say that Chaucer himself rises from the midst of this table-land like a single, lonely peak, unmatched and almost unapproached. This is not to suggest that the age is separated by any gulf from what goes before and after. Quite the contrary is the case. The literary development is continuous, and what we have now reached is not so much different as it is higher and better.

The Age of Chaucer

During the latter part of the fourteenth century, as during the two centuries preceding, religion and romance are still the guiding impulses of English literature. Life is growing more complex, and many minor influences are making themselves felt; the two great impulses are no longer so easily separable as before; but these two impulses are still operative and still dominant. Indeed, the two literary tendencies which we have traced through the previous period may be said to find here their culmination. The religious literature, which began with the *Moral Ode* and the *Ormulum*, and which ran through such works as the *Orison of our Lady*, *Genesis and Exodus*, the *Bestiary*, the *Ancren Riwle*, Robert Manning's *Handlynge Synne*, the *Cursor Mundi*, Richard of Hampole's *Pricke of Conscience*, the *Ayenbite of Inwit*, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, and *The Pearl*, is now to find a higher exempli-

Religion and Romance

fication in the works of Langland and Wyclif. The romantic literature, which began with Layamon's *Brut*, and which ran through such works as *Sir Tristrem*, *Havelok the Dane*, *King Horn*, the great Cycles of Romance, and *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, is about to find a natural sequence in Gower and great poetic expression in Chaucer. How far religion and romance remain separate and how far they become united in their literary influence, we shall have occasion to see.

People and Language

We shall no longer have to take account of the difference of races, for Englishmen and Normans have now become welded into one great English people, stronger for action and better endowed for literary creation because of the mingled blood. The duality of language, too, has passed or is rapidly passing away; and the newer English, blending the might of two great tongues, is displaying its splendid powers as an instrument of literary expression. It is to be in large measure the task of this generation to rescue English from the chaos of dialects and to create for all time a great standard speech.

Wyclif

One of the greatest personalities of the age is John Wyclif. He is famous not alone because of his literary work; for as a matter of fact his name belongs even more to the history of religion and religious thought than to the history of literature. He was first of all a great theologian. At the age of forty or earlier, he was master of Balliol College at Oxford and one of the recognized theological scholars of his time. After occupying various positions in school and church, he became vicar of Lutterworth and occupied that benefice until his death in 1384. Not merely as a theologian and a churchman, however, does he claim our attention. A man of pure life and lofty character, filled with an intense religious zeal, he became the first great religious reformer. All his great learning was devoted to vigorous and at times violent

controversy. His enemies abused him for his doctrines, deprived him of his preferments, and once summoned him to appear at St. Paul's in London to answer to a charge of heresy. Many of the greatest men of the time were divided into parties for or against him. One of his strongest partisans was John of Gaunt, the great Duke of Lancaster, son of Edward III. Opposition only moved him to a greater activity, and his work became more aggressive and more practical. His "poor priests" went throughout England, preaching the gospel, inculcating the new doctrines, crying out against formalism and luxury and corruption in the church, and exhorting men to purer life and faith. His followers were known as Lollards. They were the Protestants and Puritans of their day and the forerunners of the great movement which we call the Reformation.

Wyclif's Literary Work

It is through this religious activity that Wyclif enters into literature. He wrote theological works in Latin and many sermons, tracts, and pamphlets in English. Most important of all, he planned and in large measure personally executed a complete translation of the Bible. By virtue of these works, he takes rank as the greatest English prose-writer of his century and as one who either directly or indirectly influenced prose style for some two hundred years. The various translations of the Bible are a most important part of English literature; and Wyclif's right to rank as one of the great translators is beyond dispute. He was not a great literary artist, but he played a distinguished part in the history of English thought and in the development of English prose as a medium of literary expression. By virtue of the fact that he wrote and translated in order to bring home to the common people the truths of religion, his style is simple, vigorous, and picturesque. His severe theological training served to make it also clear, logical, and accurate. It is the union, therefore, of trained intelligence, intense re-

ligious fervor, and popular purpose that has made his translation of the Bible our first great monument of English prose.

Even more unique than the figure of Wyclif is that of William Langland. Of his life and personality, we know very little. Some hints in his poem may possibly be interpreted as autobiographic; and on the basis of these, it has been customary to construct a more or less imaginative picture of the man. According to the traditional view, he seems to have been born at Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire and to have been given a fair degree of education. Perhaps as early as 1362, he wrote the first version of his famous *Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman.* Then he went to London, where he lived a precarious and somewhat discontented life, probably holding some minor office in the church. About 1378, he revised his poem and enlarged it to three times its previous size. Later, he returned to the West of England, and again, about 1393, rewrote his poem with many changes. He had much of Wyclif's religious intensity and puritanical spirit, but he was not a theological scholar and probably not a Lollard. There is an element of bitterness and misanthropy in his work which makes it somewhat sombre. The most interesting feature of his character is his sympathy with the poor and oppressed, and his earnest desire to better their condition and to lead them to a truer religious life. He was a religious reformer, but his concern was not so much with doctrine as with practical living.

Langland

The three versions of Langland's poem differ greatly from each other. This variation, together with the fact that Langland, though a real poet, was but a poor literary architect, makes it somewhat difficult to present briefly a clear statement of the contents of the work. The poem is a vision, or rather a series of visions. The poet imagines himself as falling asleep on

Piers the Plowman

a May morning in the Malvern Hills, near his home. In his dream, he sees a "fair field full of folk," carrying on the various activities of the world. All are seeking their own selfish ends and courting the favor of Lady Meed, or Reward. She is the daughter of Falsehood and the promised bride of Flattery. Conscience and Reason are both hostile to her, and she stands in marked contrast with another fair lady called Holy Church. It was an evil world that Langland saw, a world full of selfishness, of treachery, of dishonesty, and of all manner of wrong. Through a series of pictures continually dissolving the one into the other, he continues his description. The treatment is allegorical, yet the allegorical figures are mingled with real human personages, and both classes seem to stand upon an even footing. The chief character is Piers the Plowman. At first he is a simple plowman, type of the humble and laborious poor. Then he is conceived as the faithful and lowly Christian, living a godly life himself and endeavoring to lead others to the truth. Finally, he is exalted into a type of Christ, opposing the corrupt priesthood of the age and striving to bring men to a true knowledge of the way of salvation. This confusion with reference to the hero of the poem is a fair example of Langland's desultory method and lack of literary art. He simply pours out into his poem, in vigorous and imaginative fashion, whatever he has to say concerning the degraded life and false religion of his time and concerning the way in which men may be saved from their sins. Three of his favorite allegorical figures are Do-well, Do-bet, and Do-best, typifying the three stages by which men may ascend to true godliness. They represent the poet's view that faith without works is dead, and that men need to have preached to them the doctrine of an honest, industrious, and godly life as the way to salvation. The poet is, in the main, orthodox in his faith; and in spite

of his gloomy view of the life of his day, he believes in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. One of his finest passages is that in which he describes the victory of Piers the Plowman, now conceived as Christ, over Death and Hell.

The Vision is in some sense a work of genius. Its vivid imagination, its note of intense personal feeling, its righteous indignation against the social and political and religious evils of the time, its spirit of lofty aspiration, its graphic and realistic pictures of human life, its occasional outbursts of fine poetry — all help to make it a really remarkable work. What more than anything else it lacks is a definite and orderly plan — that order, proportion, arrangement, unity, which constitute a true literary whole. Its form is scarcely less noteworthy than its matter. It is written in the old alliterative measure which had been characteristic of Anglo-Saxon verse and which had been revived in several poems of the fourteenth century. In this respect, as well as in its religious feeling, it is thoroughly English. French metrical forms, including rhyme, are here ignored. With Langland, the antique measure is heard for the last time. Since his day all English poetry has been metrical and not alliterative. A few lines from the latter part of his poem will give a taste of its quality:

Character of the Poem

> A-rys, and go reuerence godes resurreccioun,
> And creop on kneos to the croys and cusse hit for a Iuwel,
> And ryghtfullokest a relyk non riccher on erthe.
> For godes blesside body hit bar for oure bote,
> And hit a-fereth the feonde for such is the myghte,
> May no grysliche gost glyde ther hit shadeweth !

A writer in strong contrast with Langland, both in character and in genius, is John Gower. "Moral Gower" Chaucer called him, and the phrase has been current from that day to this. The moralizing tendency of Gower's work is, indeed, one of its most

Gower

marked qualities. Moralizing poetry is apt to be both prosaic and tedious, and Gower's is no exception to the rule. Few poets are more prosy, and "the old man tedious" is one of his nicknames. His three principal works illustrate the uncertainty of the poet and of his age as to what was finally to be the literary language of England. The first of these, the *Speculum Meditantis*, was written in French. It was for a long time lost, but has recently been found and edited. It is a long moral poem on the vices and virtues. His second work, the *Vox Clamantis*, was written in Latin. It deals with the political conditions of the time, including the revolt of the peasants under Wat Tyler. Gower, as an aristocrat and as a landholder in Kent, had suffered from this rising, and wrote in a spirit of contemptuous hostility to the peasants. His third and most important work, the *Confessio Amantis*, was written in English. It is professedly the confession of a lover to an allegorical personage named Genius, and consists of a series of tales by way of illustration. Some of these stories, notably that of the Knight Florent — afterward handled by Chaucer in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* — are well told; but most of them are characterized by tediousness and by what one writer has called "merciless and heart-breaking long-windedness." In spite of all limitations, Gower is for his time a really noteworthy writer. He illustrates both the religious and the romantic tendencies of his age. He was more original than most of his predecessors, and taught his age some important literary lessons. As a professed and industrious man of letters, he brought together a mass of literary material that was full of suggestion to later poets. While less of a genius than Langland, he was more of a literary artist. His chief defects seem to have been a certain nervelessness or lack of vigor and a fatal inability to understand when he had said enough. His *Confessio Amantis* is, like

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories; and while Gower is in almost every way vastly inferior to his great contemporary, he at least deserves to be named with Chaucer as a coworker in the same literary field.

Chaucer's Historical Position

Geoffrey Chaucer is the one great landmark of all English literature before the beginning of its modern epoch in the later years of the sixteenth century. There is nothing to compare with his work in the long centuries that went before him; there is nothing to compare with it for nearly two centuries after his death in 1400. His position is singular and unique. With him, the old period closes; and with him, the great literature of modern England in a sense begins, although it is long before any others appear who are capable of following his leadership and carrying on his work in new and original ways. From his lofty height, he is a herald of the dawn, but it is still many hours to the full break of day. He appears to us at first like a great literary figure standing isolated; and, indeed, he is so in the sense that he has no near neighbors of anything like his own stature. Yet we do not easily associate the idea of isolation with the name of Chaucer. He was in his own time a man among men, open on many sides to the human influences about him. He was, too, an organic part of the literary development of the whole Middle English Period. In him, the literary tendencies of two centuries culminate and find their supreme expression. We have already observed, and shall have occasion to see further, that the romantic literature of the Middle Ages was a necessary preparation for Chaucer's infinitely greater achievements in the field of romantic poetry. He took up the work of the old romancers and showed what such literature might be in the hands of a master. Then, gradually learning his art and maturing his genius, he went beyond anything that they had taught him and produced the poetry that still makes

him a power in the world. Chaucer also has his associations with the religious sentiment of the Middle Ages. He was not distinctively a religious poet, but he was a man of religious nature and sympathies. He directs his genial satire against the religious abuses of his day; he draws an immortal picture of a good parish priest; he knows how to tell a religious story with full appreciation of mediæval feeling and with a poet's delight in all the beauty and pathos of his subject. In many ways, he gathers up the past and enshrines it for all time in his great verse. No other English poet has preserved for us so much of the life and sentiment of the Middle Ages. Still more emphatically is it true that Chaucer's work embodies the many-sided life of his own time. He was in touch with all sorts and conditions of men; and they reappear in his pages as living types. We know their faces and we know their souls. With the future, too, Chaucer has vital connection. For nearly a century after his death, he was recognized as literary master and model. For us he still has a historical significance because of the permanent gains which his work achieved for the literature and the language. More than any other one man, he helped to determine the modern standard of English speech; with inevitable changes, it is still Chaucer's dialect that we speak to-day. Scarcely less important was his influence in furnishing literary models, in revealing literary possibilities, in establishing a literary tradition, and in affording literary inspiration. Few of our greatest writers have altogether escaped his influence. Dryden calls him "the father of English poetry." Tennyson speaks of him as

> The morning star of song, who made
> His music heard below;
>
> Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
> Preluded those melodious bursts that fill

The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

Chaucer is great, not only by historical position, but also by individual genius. Many men hold a place in the history of the literature because they are among the few important figures of their time or because they are representative of an interesting stage of literary development. Chaucer is all this, but his fame does not rest upon any such considerations. Regardless of all merely historical estimates, the intrinsic merit of his work gives him a place among the few greatest poets of England. It is not too much to say that he is one of the great poets of the world; and if he may not quite stand with the few supreme world poets, it is only of that crowning honor that he falls short. In the Middle Ages, he has no superior save Dante; and if Dante is more sublime, Chaucer is at least more human. Indeed, in this thoroughly human quality of his best work, he yields to Shakespeare alone. That this estimate of Chaucer's rank is not exaggerated, may be attested by the universal appreciation which he has received for five centuries. The fifteenth century was filled with his name. In the age of Elizabeth, he was praised or imitated by such men as Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Fletcher. Milton lauded him; and even in the age of classicism, he was highly appreciated by Dryden and Pope. The nineteenth century has endorsed this judgment by the mouths of its greatest poets and critics; and it is safe to say that Chaucer's fame has never stood higher than it does to-day.

Chaucer's Personal Importance

Chaucer was born in London, probably about 1340. His father was a vintner, or wine-merchant, and the family was, therefore, of the well-to-do middle class. There was sufficient court interest, however, to secure for Chaucer a position — probably that of a page — in the household of Elizabeth, wife of Lionel, Duke of

Chaucer's Life

Clarence, the third son of King Edward III. In the retinue of Prince Lionel, he went in 1359 with the English army to France, and doubtless had opportunity to observe the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war" as it was waged in the mediæval time. He had the misfortune to be taken prisoner, but was ransomed by the king. After his return to England, he was for a time valet of the king's bedchamber. Chaucer's association with the court was, of course, an important part of his education. As a page he would be carefully trained and taught in the company of other boys of higher rank than his own; and the life of the court would give unsurpassed opportunity for refinement, observation, and wide knowledge of men and things. It need hardly be added that such a life would be full of suggestion to the imagination of a young poet. Chaucer did not receive a university education, but he had the best possible substitute for it and what was for his purpose perhaps superior. That he was a broad and careful scholar is sufficiently shown by his works; and these reveal also that he was even more deeply versed in human life than in scholastic learning. His further education was no less practical. Between 1370 and 1380, he was sent on various diplomatic missions to the continent. Twice he visited Italy. It is easy and pleasant to indulge the imagination with fancies of Chaucer's delighted appreciation of the beauties of Italian art and his congenial association with Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other great men who were then living; but these are mere fancies. We may be reasonably certain that his visits must have been a joy and an inspiration to such a nature. We know that his genius and his work were powerfully affected by Italian literary models. At home he was appointed controller of customs, retaining his office for some twelve years. In 1386, he became member of Parliament for Kent, but his political career was brief and rather unfortunate. Later

we find him acting as clerk of the king's works at Westminster and at Windsor. Toward the close of his life, Chaucer seems to have fallen into poverty. On the accession of Henry IV, in 1399, he wrote a "complaint to his empty purse," which he addressed to the king in these words:

> O conquerour of Brutes Albioun,
> Which that by lyne and free eleccioun
> Ben verray king, this song to you I sende;
> And ye, that mowen al our harm amende,
> Have minde upon my supplicacioun.

The appeal was successful; and Chaucer's pension was doubled, thus placing him in comfortable circumstances for the few remaining months of his life. He died in 1400, and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

Chaucer's French Period

The first period of Chaucer's literary life was one of imitation and of training in the poetic art. During this time, before his first visit to Italy in 1372, he was essentially mediæval in temper, a follower of French models and methods. He wrote many songs and ballads, and translated or imitated mediæval allegorical romances. Little or nothing of these has been preserved, but such work gave him his early discipline as a poet. His most important work of this period was his *Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse*, written on the death of the wife of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, son of Edward III. She died in 1369, and the poem probably belongs to that year. John of Gaunt was Chaucer's patron, and the poem was written to console him in his bereavement. It is based on the familiar conception of a dream; and although it contains some good poetry, it is distinctly imitative in manner.

Chaucer's second period followed his sojourn in Italy, and is characterized by the prevalence in his work of Italian influences. The French mediæval spirit does not

entirely disappear from his writings, but it is more and more subordinated as his genius ripens under the influence of a fresher and finer inspiration. His new models are in their way as romantic as the old, and Chaucer still continues to be a romantic poet; but the romance is less conventional, less artificial, less strained in its allegory. The best poem of this period is *Troilus and Criseyde*, a romance of false love which carries us back to the siege of Troy. It is based upon a long poem of Boccaccio, and is therefore professedly an imitation. Nevertheless, Chaucer in many ways shows his growing originality. The characters are conceived in his own way, and are really lifelike presentations of human motive and action. The story is well told, although Chaucer has not yet attained his later skill in direct and rapid narration. The *Parlement of Foules* is an allegorical poem suggested by the betrothal of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. In it the birds are gathered in assembly to decide which of three lovers shall be the successful suitor for a female eagle. The eagle is, of course, Anne and the successful wooer Richard. It is one of the best of Chaucer's shorter poems. In the *Hous of Fame*, Chaucer has a vision in which he is carried by an eagle to the temple of Fame. There are carved on ice the famous names of the world; and under the rays of the sun, they are gradually melting away. The names of the great ancients are in the shade and therefore have been longest preserved. The poem is generally supposed to show the influence of Dante. Still another poem of this period is the *Legend of Good Women*. It presents a series of stories drawn from classical sources and dealing with famous women who have sacrificed everything in order to prove their faithfulness in love. This poem was written about 1385, and probably marks the period at which Chaucer had finally attained his full poetic power.

Chaucer's Italian Period

During his first and second periods, Chaucer was a follower of mediæval and foreign models. During his third period, including about the last fifteen years of his life, he is, in the main, thoroughly English and original. He is still a romantic poet, but there is also in his work a large element of realism. He exercises to the full his great gift of poetic imagination; but he has developed also a wonderful power of observation, and he writes with his eye on the object. The crowning work of his life grows out of the life around him and out of his insight into English character. His previous literary experience has taught him the art of the narrator; and his skill as a story-teller becomes now the basis for his wonderful portrayals of men and women. Up to this time he has been merely bettering the example set by other men. Now he is to do something entirely new and original, something which in its kind has never been surpassed. The great work of this period, Chaucer's masterpiece and one of the great masterpieces of the literature, is the *Canterbury Tales.* For this work, Chaucer had been preparing through most of his literary life. He had written separate stories which, in revised form, were to be made a part of this great collection of stories. He had been gathering from many sources the materials and the knowledge which he was now to put to use. In the ripeness of his years and in the fulness of his genius, he undertakes a task which he is never to finish, but which, in its present form, gives little sense of incompleteness. The scheme was too large for perfect accomplishment; but it was of such a character that perfect accomplishment was not essential to full success.

Chaucer's English Period

The plan of the *Canterbury Tales* is simple, yet wonderfully effective and comprehensive. The poet tells us that in the springtime of the year, the folk of his day longed to go on pilgrimages, and

Plan of the Canterbury Tales

that from every shire of England they were accustomed to journey to the famous shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, in the cathedral at Canterbury,

> The holy blisful martir for to seke,
> That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

Seizing on this custom as admirably adapted to his purpose, he represents himself as meeting a company of such pilgrims gathered by chance on a certain day at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, then a village at the south end of London Bridge, but long since swallowed up in the metropolis. Chaucer is soon in fellowship with the other pilgrims, and a general agreement is formed that they will all make the journey together. At the suggestion of their Host, who offers to accompany them and to act as umpire, it is arranged that each of the pilgrims shall tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two more on the return journey, the most successful story-teller to be given a supper at the cost of the others. In addition to a long introduction and to the narrative and conversational passages which serve to make proper transition from one story to another, the work is made up of the tales supposed to have been related by various pilgrims. There are in all twenty-four stories, told by twenty-three different persons. As there were, including the poet, thirty-one pilgrims, the whole scheme would have called for no less than one hundred and twenty-four tales. Of course, it made little difference how many or how few stories were told; and the poet evidently wished to leave himself room enough for all that he might want to gather into the great collection.

The Prologue

The most important part of the *Canterbury Tales*, the master-product of Chaucer's genius, is the Prologue. Here he gathers his pilgrims at the Tabard Inn and presents the general plan for the story-telling. What is more important, he here describes most of his

characters, setting them forth as living individuals with a skill that no man has ever surpassed. In comparatively few words, each personage is sketched so that we perceive clearly both outward appearance and inward disposition. There are thirty pilgrims besides the poet; of these, twenty-one are individually described, five are described as a group, and the rest are simply mentioned. The various characters are individual men and women, but they are also significant types, broadly representative of English life in the fourteenth century. The first group consists of a Knight, of a Squire his son, and of a Yeoman his servant. Then there are various representatives of the church — a Prioress, accompanied by a Nun who was her chaplain and by three Priests, a Monk, a Friar, a Summoner, a Pardoner, and a poor Parson. A number of professional men are in the company — a Sergeant-at-Law, a Doctor of Physic, a Manciple, a Clerk of Oxford. Still another group represents various departments of trade and commerce — a Merchant, a Shipman, a Cook, a Wife of Bath, a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer, and a Maker of Tapestry. The list is completed by several representatives of agriculture — a Franklin or country landholder, a Plowman, a Miller, and a Reeve or steward. Not only does Chaucer describe most of these characters with a minute realism, but in many cases he gathers up the significance of the individual into some brief and suggestive expression. Thus, of the Knight he says:

> He was a verray parfit gentil knight.

Of the Squire,

> He was as fresh as is the month of May.

Of the Prioress,

> And al was conscience and tendre herte.

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

After the painting by William Blake

Of the Friar,

> He knew the tavernes wel in every toun.

Of the Shipman,

> With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.

Of the Doctor of Physic,

> His studie was but litel on the Bible.

Of the poor Parson,

> But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
> He taughte, but first he folwed it himselve.

Chaucer's full power in graphic description can be appreciated only from reading the whole Prologue; but a single complete sketch will give a fair specimen of his art. The description of the Clerk of Oxford is one of the best of the briefer portraits:

> A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
> That unto logik hadde longe y-go.
> As lene was his hors as is a rake,
> And he nas nat right fat, I undertake;
> But loked holwe, and thereto soberly.
> Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy;
> For he had geten him yet no benefyce,
> Ne was so worldly for to have offyce.
> For him was lever have at his beddes heed
> Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed,
> Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
> Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye.
> But al be that he was a philosophre,
> Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
> But al that he mighte of his freendes hente,
> On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,
> And bisily gan for the soules preye
> Of hem that yaf him wherwith to scoleye.
> Of studie took he most cure and most hede.
> Noght o word spak he more than was nede,
> And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
> And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence.
> Souninge in moral vertu was his speche,
> And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

As the pilgrims ride out toward Canterbury in the early morning, Harry Bailly, the Host, reminds them of their agreement, and calls upon them to draw cuts to see who shall tell the first tale. The lot falls to the Knight, who thereupon proceeds to tell the long but interesting story of Palamon and Arcite. This is the most famous of the *Canterbury Tales*, and nowhere does Chaucer better display his powers of narrative and description. It is a romance of love and chivalry. The materials were drawn from Boccaccio, but Chaucer handles them with remarkable freedom and originality. If the story seems somewhat long in the reading, we may do well to remember that Chaucer has compressed it into little more than one-fifth of the length of Boccaccio's poem. Not only is the story well told and each personage well portrayed, but Chaucer has adapted the tale thoroughly to the Knight's chivalrous and high-bred character. This same adaptation is found in the other stories and constitutes a large part of their charm. When the Knight is done, the Host calls upon the Monk for the next tale; but the drunken Miller insists on breaking in with a coarse tale of his own. This angers the Reeve, who takes revenge by telling a similar story of which a miller is the hero — or victim. This ribaldry is finally broken off by the Host, at whose request the Sergeant-at-Law tells a more dignified story, the romantic narrative of Custance. So the story-telling proceeds, with entertaining interludes of conversation suitable to the characters and to the stories introduced. At the courteous solicitation of the Host, the Prioress tells of little St. Hugh of Lincoln, the site of whose shrine is still shown in Lincoln Cathedral; this Christian child has been slain in a Jewry, but though his throat is cut,

The Tales

He "*Alma redemptoris*" gan to singe
So loude, that al the place gan to ringe.

The company is sobered by this miracle, till the Host turns jokingly to Chaucer:

> "What man artow?" quod he;
> "Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
> For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.
> Approche neer, and loke up merily.
> Now war yow, sirs, and lat this man have place;
> He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
> This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
> For any womman, smal and fair of face.
> He semeth elvish by his contenaunce,
> For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.
> Sey now somwhat, sin other folk han sayd;
> Tel us a tale of mirthe, and that anoon."

Thus adjured, Chaucer begins his tale of Sir Thopas, a parody on the romances of chivalry prevalent in his day. When the Host impatiently cuts him off, he offers to "telle a litel thing in prose." The "litel thing" turns out to be a long and tedious "moral tale vertuous" of Melibeus and his wife Prudence. One of the best of the tales is the Nun's Priest's story of the cock who has been seized by a fox and who escapes by flattering the fox into stopping to taunt his pursuers. The Wife of Bath, after a long prologue, tells a story already mentioned as occurring in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. The Clerk of Oxford relates the pathetic story of Patient Griselda, which he had

> Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk.
>
> *   *   *   *   *
>
> Fraunceys Petrark, the laureat poete,
> Highte this clerk, whos rethoryke sweete
> Enlumined al Itaille of poetrye.

The *Tales* conclude with a long and tedious prose sermon by the Parson. He began near sundown; and by the time he was through, most of his auditors must have been ready for bed. Perhaps Chaucer wished to make amends at the close of the day for any frivolity or ribaldry of which

he might have allowed his coarser characters to be guilty. We may well forgive him for his prosy ending, in view of the wonderful variety, fitness, narrative interest, and poetic power of his great collection of tales. In prose, he may be tedious and cumbersome; in poetry, and especially in narrative poetry, he is a consummate master.

Character of Chaucer's Genius

Much of what is most characteristic in Chaucer's genius has already been suggested, and few words will serve by way of summary. He was a strikingly original figure. In him were combined the competent man of affairs and the genuine poet. His love of nature crops out here and there all through his poetry; it was not conventional, but true and sincere. No man has shown greater delight in life, and few have had greater power of observation and insight. The Prologue alone would rank him as one of the greatest of humorists — a genial spirit, keenly satirical but with no touch of bitterness. He loved beauty like a true poet, and he had that gift of creative imagination which makes a poet great. He was first of all a great narrator, with the power of telling either a romantic or a realistic tale in felicitous verse. Few men have ever approached his skill in vivid and lifelike description. In the ability to create character, he ranks with the great dramatists. His work is objective and sound, the work of a great literary artist and of a thoroughly sane and healthy nature. He was emphatically a man of his age, but he is no less truly a man for all time.

There foloweth the syxth boke of the noble and worthy prynce kyng Arthur.

How syr Launcelot and syr Lyonell departed fro the courte for to seke auentures / & how syr Lyonell lefte syr Laũcelot slepynge & was taken. Capitulum .i.

Anone after that the noble & worthy kyng Arthur was comen fro Rome in to Englande / all the knyghtes of the roũde table resorted vnto ẏ kyng and made many iustes and turneymentes / & some there were that were good knyghtes / whiche encreased so in armes and worshyp that they passed all theyr felowes in prowesse & noble dedes & that was well proued on many. But in especyall it was proued on syr Launcelot du lake. For in all turneymentes and iustes and dedes of armes / bothe for lyfe and deth he passed all knyghtes & at no tyme he was neuer ouercomen but yf it were by treason or enchauntement. Syr Launcelot encreased so merueylously in worshyp & honour / wherfore he is the first knyght ẏ the frensshe booke maketh mencyon of / after that kynge Arthur came from Rome / wherfore quene Gueneuer had hym in grete fauour aboue all other knyghtes / and certaynly he loued the quene agayne aboue all other ladyes and damoyselles all the dayes of his lyfe / and for her he

Reduced Facsimile Page from Malory's Morte d'Arthur, 1529

CHAPTER VI

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY (1400-1500)

After the Age of Chaucer, the two streams of literature — religious and romantic — are hardly to be distinguished from each other; and the influences arising from the relations between the two races have largely spent their force. Indeed, if this period stood by itself, it might be difficult to say that the influences of religion and romance were very clearly manifested as the guiding impulses of its literature. They are certainly not so in any fresh and vigorous way. Nevertheless, no new influences have as yet arisen to take their place; and as a consequence, literature rapidly sinks into that state of exhaustion and decay which marks the fifteenth century as one of the most barren tracts of all our literary history. Especially in the early part of the century, and more or less throughout its whole extent, literature is chiefly imitative of what went before; and so far as any vital forces are at work, they are the same as those which dominated the Age of Chaucer. In default, therefore, of any new and original impulses, and in view of the fact that the older impulses are still operative in weak and decadent form, we may still continue to speak of literature as growing out of the religious and the romantic spirit. Literary revival could come only with the advent of new and powerful quickening impulses; and toward the close of the century, we can feel the coming of those newer forces which are to exert so powerful an effect upon the literature of the sixteenth century.

Decline of Literature

During a large part of the fifteenth century, imitation of Chaucer was a prevailing fashion. This would be an evidence of excellent literary taste, if it were not for the fact that Gower was commonly ranked with him and imitated in only a less degree. It is well to note, too, that Chaucer was imitated least where he was most original and masterful — that he was imitated most where he was chiefly mediæval, French, allegorical, a child of his age. Among his English followers, two call for special mention. The first of these is Thomas Occleve. His principal work is a poem called *Gouvernail of Princes*. It deals with the duties of rulers, and was dedicated to the Prince of Wales, Shakespeare's Prince Hal, afterward Henry V. The best thing about the poem is its revelation of Occleve's love and admiration for his friend and master, Chaucer. Among other praises, he writes:

Chaucer's English Followers

Occleve

> O maister dere and fader reverent,
> My maister Chaucer! floure of eloquence,
> Mirrour of fructuous entendement,
> O universal fadir in science,
> Allas! that thou thyne excellent prudence
> In thy bedde mortel myghtest not bequethe;
> What eyled Dethe? allas, why wold he sle thee?

A better poet and much more voluminous writer was John Lydgate, "the Monk of Bury." His *Storie of Thebes* is represented as a new Canterbury Tale told by him after joining the pilgrims on their journey. His other chief poems are the *Troye Book* and the *Falles of Princes*, both of which titles sufficiently suggest the subjects of the poems. He seems to have been able to turn his hand to almost any kind of literary work, and produced more writings than anybody has yet been found willing to publish. One of his best known minor pieces is his ballad of *London Lickpenny*, which gives vivid and realistic pictures of the London life of his time.

Lydgate

The best Chaucerian tradition was carried on, not by English, but by Scotch poets. Theirs is about the only vigorous and inspired poetical work of the fifteenth century. First and personally most interesting of these is James I of Scotland. Captured at the age of eleven, the young prince spent nineteen years as a prisoner in England. Poetry became one of the diversions of his captivity; and he wrote among other things *The King's Quair* (Book). From the windows of his prison — possibly Windsor Castle — the king sees a beautiful lady walking in the garden and falls in love with her. The poem proceeds, in the customary allegorical manner, to tell the story of this love. It is supposed to be based upon the real experience of the prince's love for Lady Jane Beaufort, whom he married at the close of his captivity in 1424. The incident of the lady in the garden reminds us of Emelye seen by the prisoners Palamon and Arcite, in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.

Chaucer's Scotch Followers

James I of Scotland

Probably later than the middle of the century, Robert Henryson produced a number of excellent poems. He was a follower of Chaucer, but did not lack originality. His *Testament of Cresseide* undertakes to complete Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and is in the old romantic manner. *Robyne and Makyne* has been called "the earliest English pastoral." Probably his most vigorous and interesting work is in his *Fables*, where he is lively, imaginative, and humorous. Not the least of his good qualities is his sincere and direct feeling for nature.

Henryson

Two other Scotch poets carry us along toward the end of the fifteenth century and over into the sixteenth; but as they, too, represent the Chaucerian tradition, it is perhaps best to consider them here. The first of these, and the best poet of the Scotch group, was William Dunbar. His poems are too numerous for detailed mention, but a few may be cited as typical. *The Thistle*

Dunbar

and the Rose is an allegory commemorating the marriage of James IV of Scotland with the Princess Margaret of England. *The Golden Targe* is another allegory, full of picturesque description. *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* is a grotesque ballad, realistic, forcible, and imaginative. In the *Lament for the Makers* (Poets), he utters a moving complaint on the death of the poets, known and unknown, from Chaucer to Maister Walter Kennedy. These poems represent a body of work both forcible and poetical, ranging from pathos to satire, from coarse realism to pure fancy, from allegorical moralizing to fine natural description. The last Scotch poet to be mentioned is Gawain Douglas, son of the Earl of Angus and Bishop of Dunkeld. Poetry belonged to his earlier life, and was later abandoned for politics. His *Palice of Honour* and *King Hart* (Heart) are moral allegories, the latter dealing with the heart of man. His best work is in his translation of Virgil's *Æneid*. Like the other Scotch poets, he has an eye for the poetical aspects of nature.

Douglas

During the fifteenth century many romances were written, both in verse and in prose. Romantic literature was thus carried forward, sometimes with a large infusion of the moral or religious element. Through the prose romances and various other works of more or less importance, prose style was considerably advanced in its development. The greatest romance and the greatest prose of the century are to be found together in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, written about 1470. By its addition of a moral and religious tone, it becomes perhaps the most typical work of the age. As one of the earliest works to be printed (in 1485) at Caxton's new press, it reminds us that the introduction of printing is bringing about new conditions of immense importance to literature. Malory's work is a great collection of Arthurian

Malory's Morte d'Arthur

legends, brought into a fair degree of unity about the central conceptions of King Arthur and the Round Table. It may in a sense be said to gather up into a single book the whole spirit of mediæval romance. For Malory is not a great inventor, but only a moderately skilful compiler. He gathers his materials from the best of the old French romancers, arranges them in rather confusing fashion, and thus reproduces for us the long labor of the Middle Ages on the great subject-matter of Arthurian story. What Malory had above all things was the power of lively and interesting narrative clothed in vivid style. He did not invent his story, but he knew how to tell it. His credit, however, does not end here. To have caught the spirit of Arthurian legend, to have seized and held its features of greatest and most enduring interest, to have embalmed forever the fast-fading charm of the Middle Ages, is to have done much for modern literature and for the modern world; and this, when all proper deductions have been made, Malory may be justly said to have accomplished. It is to him, rather than to his French or English predecessors, that our modern poets of Arthurian legend have gone for their inspiration and their materials. Alongside of their work, his still stands and keeps its attraction. It is one of the great romances of literature, a book that men will not willingly let die.

The Ballads

It is a little difficult to determine the precise point in literary history at which the Ballads should be taken up for consideration. It seems probable that ballads were made and sung as early as the thirteenth century, and that they continued to prevail throughout the Middle English Period. On the other hand, many ballads of undoubtedly mediæval origin exist to-day in a form of English as late as that of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. While it is impossible to date most of the individual ballads, and while they probably belong to widely

separated periods, it seems probable that most of the older and more genuine ballads were produced in or before the fifteenth century, and that they took on their present form at about that time. Few, if any, are in a language of earlier date. It has even been asserted with much plausibility that the fifteenth century was the great time of ballad-making in England and that many of the ballads on older subjects were written at that period. So far as the ballads may be associated with fifteenth-century literature, they distinctly help to raise its tone and to better its average quality. Many of them are finely poetical, and most of them are quaint and charming in effect. The ballads are the poetry of the common people. Individual authors are unknown; and in a very true sense the poems may be regarded as the product of popular feeling and imagination. Whoever gave them their first form, they have been resung, retouched, reshaped, until they bear the stamp of the people rather than of any individual poets. English literature is comparatively poor in genuine folk-poetry; and so far as the ballads are really popular, they are for that reason all the more precious.

Character of the Ballads

Ballad subjects cover a wide field. Many of them are either historical or romantic or supernatural, while the ballads of the Scottish border and those associated with Robin Hood form special groups of great interest. Most true ballads combine narrative substance with a lyric form; they are stories to be sung. Some are more purely lyric, and they shade off gradually into the strict lyric type. The verse is often crude, the tone is often coarse, but not seldom they have a genuine music and a high degree of poetic beauty. Some of the best and oldest deal with themes common to many lands and to many peoples. This is an evidence of the wide and unaccountable diffusion of popular legends and beliefs, but not at all an evidence of foreign influence or of imita-

tion. Indeed, no part of our poetry is more genuinely native and original than the ballads. They smack of the soil and bear the unmistakable mark of English and Scottish character. It is the life and thought and feeling of the English peasant that they reflect, even when they are dealing with the most romantic themes or with high-born lords and ladies. Their very crudeness tells of the uncultured sources from which they sprang; and their poetry is evidence that the English nature is not without the artistic instincts which have made other races rich in popular song. It is impossible in brief space to recount even the best and most typical of English ballads. One of the most famous is *Chevy Chase*, of which Sir Philip Sidney said that his heart was stirred by it more than with a trumpet. Perhaps none is superior in poetic value to the *Nut-Browne Mayde*. It is in the form of a dialogue between the maid and her lover. In order to test her love, he pretends that he has been outlawed, but she insists on following him into banishment. She says:

And though that I of auncestry
A baron's daughter be,
Yet have you proved howe I you loved,
A squyer of lowe degre.

He finally reveals to her the truth, and says:

I wyll you take, and lady make,
As shortely as I can:
Thus have you won an erlys son,
And not a banyshed man.

Sir Patrick Spens is a fine ballad, typical in substance and metre. Sir Patrick has been sent by the king of Scotland on a rash winter voyage to bring home "the king's daughter of Noroway." On their return the ship is lost.

And lang, lang, may the maidens sit,
Wi' their goud kaims in their hair,
A' waiting for their ain dear loves!
For them they'll see na mair

O forty miles off Aberdeen,
'Tis fifty fathoms deep,
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

Mysteries and Miracle Plays

The earliest dramatic literature in England was in the form of Mysteries and Miracle Plays. Mysteries were dramatic representations of Bible incidents and characters, especially of such as were in any way connected with the life or personality of Christ. They appear to have developed out of the church ritual, to have been encouraged by the church as a means of utilizing strong human instincts in the service of religion, to have been represented at first by ecclesiastics and within the church buildings. Later, they were acted by the trade guilds of various towns; and from this association, they were called Mysteries, a name derived from the Old French *mester*, a trade. Mysteries occur mostly in long series or cycles of plays, dealing with successive steps of the Bible history. Miracle Plays dealt with the lives and deeds of various saints, and occur as separate plays rather than in cycles. Mysteries and Miracles are of essentially the same dramatic type, though it is likely that Mysteries represent the earlier stage of development. They are better discriminated from each other in French literature than in English. In English literature, indeed, the name Miracle is applied to both classes of plays, and there seems never to have been a clear distinction between them. The distinction, however, is a serviceable one and is not without historical justification. Allowing ourselves to make use of it, we may say that English literature is comparatively rich in Mysteries and that it has few, if any, Miracles, strictly so-called, that are written in the native tongue.

The earliest known dramatic work to be associated with English literature is the Miracle Play of *St. Katherine.*

It was performed early in the twelfth century and was probably written in Latin, though possibly in French. English Mysteries, and probably Miracles also, were played as early as the thirteenth century, and were both common and popular in the fourteenth. No extant plays are older than the latter part of the fourteenth century, and probably most, if not all, of them belong to the fifteenth. A French literary historian has called the fifteenth century "the golden age of the Mysteries," and the expression is probably as applicable to English literature as to French. It seems best, therefore, as in the case of the ballads, to treat at this point a form of literature which had been developing among the people throughout the Middle Ages. It seems worthy of note that Mysteries were in full flower more than a hundred years before the first complete Elizabethan dramas and that they are a product of mediæval life rather than of the Age of the Renaissance.

Mediæval Drama

Besides a few separate plays, there are in English four great series of Mysteries, known as the York, Towneley, Chester, and Coventry cycles. Many other cycles formerly existed, such as those of London, Worcester, Beverley, Dublin, and Newcastle. The York cycle is the most extensive, and in many respects the most interesting and typical. It contains forty-eight plays. The first is on the Creation and the Fall of Lucifer; eleven are based on the Old Testament; most of the others have to do with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ; and the last deals with the Judgment Day. Each play was presented by the representatives of some particular trade, and there is sometimes a naïve fitness in the association of certain trades with certain plays. Thus, for instance, the shipwrights had the Building of the Ark, the fishers and mariners had the play of Noah and the Flood, the bakers had the Last Supper, the butchers had

Mystery Cycles

the Death and Burial of Christ. The plays were acted in the open air on movable platforms which could be drawn about the city from one station to another, as from the cathedral to one of the city gates. At these stations the crowds were gathered, and to each station came in proper succession the various wheeled platforms or "pageants." Each play was thus acted as many times as there were stations. It often took several days to complete the acting of a long cycle where numerous stations were made necessary by the size of the crowds. The "pageants" were constructed in two stories, the upper serving as the main stage, and the lower serving as a dressing room or, on occasion, to represent hell. The costumes seem often to have been of a striking or elaborate character, and there is evidence of much care in the selection and training of actors.

The Mysteries, like the ballads, are essentially a product of the popular imagination. Literary finish and artistic skill they do not possess, but they have what is better — force, vividness, sincerity. Drawing their material from the Bible, they nevertheless possess much originality of conception, and even show something of boldness in the introduction of comic elements. Withal, they are for the most part reverent and earnest in feeling. Their dramatic effect must have been powerful upon the simple but vigorous imaginations of their uncultured spectators. The famous Passion Play enacted every ten years at Oberammergau gives evidence of the possibilities that are latent in plays of the Mystery type. The secret of their power is largely in the fact that they have a high spiritual theme and know how to treat it in a thoroughly human fashion. They reflect in Bible scenes and heroes the life that was passing under men's very eyes. That life was deeply and genuinely religious, even though it was also coarse, ignorant, and superstitious. The mediæval

Dramatic Effect

drama is scarcely less typical than the mediæval cathedral of an age of profound faith and of strong romantic sentiment.

Moralities

The so-called Moralities, on the other hand, reflect the mediæval passion for allegory. Perhaps, too, they grew out of the more intellectual side of the mediæval temper. The characters are personified abstractions, representing the various virtues and vices. The plays, at least in the earlier examples, deal with the broad problems of man's whole moral nature. Later, they become somewhat more limited in scope, as we shall have occasion to see in the next period. A typical specimen of the older Moralities is *Everyman*, in which the hero represents general human nature, and in which some of the characters are Death, Fellowship, Kindred, Gold, Good Deeds, Knowledge, Confession, Beauty, Strength, Discretion, Five Wits. When Everyman is summoned by Death, all his other former friends forsake him, but Good Deeds alone is willing to accompany him on the dreadful journey. The Moralities represent a second stage of dramatic development, but they are not in all respects an improvement upon the Mysteries. Their plots are invented instead of borrowed, and they have attained a freer form, from which it is possible for later drama to grow; but as dramatic figures their moral abstractions are far inferior to the living personages of the Bible story. That they were probably not so dull and tedious, however, as they have sometimes seemed to modern readers, is shown by the recent effective production of *Everyman* upon our contemporary stage.

Representation of a Mystery Play
Sharp's "Coventry Mysteries"

Tho: Wiatt Knight.

Tho Wiat

BOOK III

RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION (*1500–1660*)

CHAPTER VII

BEGINNINGS OF RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION IN ENGLAND (1500–1579)

THE close of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth formed a period of transition. The long period of the Middle Ages was rapidly passing away, and a new life was rapidly being shaped by new ideals and new modes of thought. Literature had declined, and its revival could come only with the advent of a new quickening impulse. Such impulse had already appeared and was growing more and more to the exercise of its full power. It was of a twofold nature. On the one hand was that great intellectual awakening which we call the Renaissance; and on the other was that great spiritual awakening which we call the Reformation. These two great forces worked together to shape the general character of literature for over a century and a half. Never before or since has the race been so mightily stirred, and never elsewhere have we seen so great literary results. What wonder, when we consider the nature of the influences at work. The Renaissance was in very truth a new intellectual birth. Think for a moment of what it involved or implied. First, we have the revival of classic learning, revealing to the modern world the riches of ancient thought. Then came the introduction of printing, spread-

Renaissance and Reformation

ing broadcast both the old and the new in literature. Then the discovery of America, revealing to men an unknown world. Then the Copernican system of astronomy, giving them new heavens as well as a new earth. To all this was added the religious fervor of the Reformation, quickening human life at its very centre. Such an intellectual and moral revolution is almost beyond conception; and the race that would not respond to such influences must be incapable of great literary expression. The English race did respond, and in a way that has made English poetry the crowning glory of the world's intellectual history.

These new impulses, like the earlier introduction of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons, were foreign in their origin. They were European rather than English. Yet the English race responded to them without any long period of assimilation. How shall we account for this, if it be true that a foreign influence must first enter into the very life-blood of a people before it can vitally affect their literature? The answer is not difficult. The new influences in a certain sense came from without; but they were merely the touch on the spring which let loose the restrained forces of the English mind, the suppressed religious passion of the English heart. They were the occasion rather than the adequate cause of the new movements. In other words, the true impulses of the new literature were not the Renaissance and the Reformation as independent forces, but rather the pent-up powers of the English nature which were now brought to a consciousness of themselves. The Renaissance and the Reformation did not create these powers; they found them already existing. If they had not so found them, the new influences would have worked comparatively in vain. This is not mere theory. Historical fact justifies our view that the intellectual and moral influences that create great

English Response

literature were already straining on the leash, eager to be let loose. See the race struggling for great poetic utterance in Chaucer more than a hundred years before — struggling with splendid success for a moment, and then sinking back stifled in that heavy intellectual atmosphere. See it struggling in Langland and Wyclif and the Lollards for a new religious life, only to find the wings of its aspiration beating vainly against the iron bars of a cage. When air and light and freedom came to all western Europe, the repressed energies of England sprang forward with a bound toward their magnificent task. Not in a moment, however, were the greatest literary results achieved. Ready and eager as England was, she, like the rest of Europe, needed time to accommodate herself to the new circumstances, time to try her strength in the new ways, time to find herself in the new tasks. At first, we must content ourselves with Wyatt and Surrey as exponents of the Renaissance, with Tyndale as exemplifying the English response to the spirit of the Reformation. It is not until the last quarter of the sixteenth century that we come upon the great works which make the glory of English literature.

Continuation of Drama

Mediæval dramatic forms did not at once cease with the advent of the Renaissance. Mysteries continued to be acted throughout the sixteenth century. The type, however, did not develop further, but remained substantially what it had been during the fifteenth century and earlier. Moralities, on the other hand, show some progress. In the first place, they become more limited in the range of their subject-matter. Earlier Moralities had dealt with the full scope of man's moral nature. Now the tendency is to deal with more particular problems, such as the temptations of youth or the advantages of sound learning. In the latter case especially, the influence of the Renaissance is

Moralities

apparent. Then, the Moralities were tending to become less allegorical and more realistic, to make their characters less abstract and more individual. In particular, a humorous element creeps in which is often taken from actual life. A change of somewhat similar nature was the tendency toward greater concreteness. Characters became more solid and vital, incidents had more interest for their own sake and less for the sake of didactic effect. This again is shown chiefly on the humorous side. The Devil and the Vice especially became something like real flesh-and-blood personages. All this is in the direction of true drama, though it is still a long way from the goal.

Yet another kind of dramatic work is to be found in the Interludes. The name designates a short dramatic piece to be acted in the intervals of longer entertainments. The type is not well defined, and, indeed, is hardly to be separated from other classes. Many Interludes are practically Moralities. Others have a considerable mixture of classical elements, and still others are brief farces. There is, perhaps, a gain in freedom and realism, but not much advance in other respects. John Heywood, who produced several Interludes as early as 1532, gave this sort of play its most distinct literary form. One of his works is entitled *The Four P's, a merry Interlude of a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potecary, and a Pedlar.* Its farcical character is suggested by the title. In a competition as to which can tell the greatest lie, the prize is won by the Palmer, who declares that he never saw a woman out of patience.

Interludes

The farcical Interlude passes on into the true Comedy. The first comedy in English literature was acted between 1534 and 1541, and was written by Nicholas Udall, master of Eton College. It is called *Ralph Roister Doister;* and the fact that it was based on a comedy of Plautus shows it to be a product of the

First English Comedy

Renaissance spirit. It is crude and farcical; but the incidents are lively, the plot is fairly well constructed, and the characters are realistic. This play represents the farthest reach of dramatic development during the first half of the sixteenth century. Before pursuing our way further, we will retrace our steps to consider the growth of other forms of literature during this same period.

The revival of classsic learning was one of the most important features of the Renaissance. Under its influence, the English universities ceased to be mere schools of analytics and dialectics, and became European centres of light and culture. They now made the so-called "humanities" the basis of liberal education.

The Humanists

Their reputation abroad is shown by the fact that Erasmus of Rotterdam, perhaps the greatest scholar of his day, was attracted to Oxford by the opportunities for the study of Greek. His own learning and enthusiasm did much to encourage these studies, and his influence on education and indirectly on literature serves to associate him with the English humanists. We are here, of course, concerned with literature rather than with scholarship, and must confine ourselves to such of the humanists as illustrate the influence of the new learning on literary work.

Most conspicuous of these was Sir Thomas More. Renowned alike as a scholar, a lawyer, a statesman, and a man of wisdom and integrity, he was also a man of letters. His chief work, the *Utopia*, was written in Latin, and has therefore only an indirect association with English literature. Nevertheless, as the production of an English thinker and as an illustration of the English Renaissance spirit, it has great significance. It is an imaginative description of such an ideal commonwealth as only a liberal humanist could then have conceived. It is the work of a practical statesman but also of a poetic idealist. It was not only a protest

Sir Thomas More

against existing evils but a rational plan for an improved social order. In its views on education, it represented the new learning as contrasted with mediæval scholasticism; in its advocacy of freedom of individual religious belief, it was in advance both of Catholic and Protestant theologians. The word "Utopian" has since come to describe that which is fanciful or theoretical, but many of More's Utopian ideas are now in practical operation. In his *History of Edward V and Richard III*, we have our first good historical work, both in matter and in style.

Roger Ascham was a notable scholar and at one time the tutor of the Princess Elizabeth, afterward queen. His first work was a treatise on archery called *Toxophilus*, written in 1545. His *Schoolmaster* was written much later in life and was not published until after his death in 1568. It sets forth his decidedly humanistic ideas of education. Ascham believed in healthful sport, in physical culture, in classical training, in sympathy between teacher and pupil, in character as the aim of education.

Roger Ascham

The Renaissance and the Reformation were, in the main, working toward the same great end of intellectual and spiritual freedom. At times, however, their aims and their spirit seemed to be in conflict; and humanists and reformers often regarded each other as belonging to hostile camps. The humanists appealed for the most part to the cultured classes. The reformers recognized the necessity of reaching the minds and hearts of the common people. This necessity led to a new translation of the Bible, the first since the days of Wyclif. It was in part the work of William Tyndale and in part the work of Miles Coverdale. Tyndale is generally regarded as the finer stylist of the two; but doubtless to both men the

The Reformers

Tyndale and Coverdale

translation owed its qualities of directness, simplicity, vigor, and picturesqueness. This translation, revised more than once during the sixteenth century, became the basis of the great "authorized version" of 1611, which has lasted down to our own day, and which has had more influence on English prose style than any other single book. Another important prose-writer was Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, a zealous reformer and most powerful preacher. His *Sermons* are written in an English that is homely, idiomatic, humorous, and at times even coarse, but frequently vivid and impressive. During the reign of Edward VI (1547–1553), was prepared the English Book of Common Prayer, supposed to have been edited by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. In spite of some limitations, it shows a remarkable combination of melody and stateliness in style, and has exerted a strong and continuous influence from that day to this. One of its peculiarities is the use of both the Anglo-Saxon and Latin synonyms for the same idea, as in "acknowledge and confess."

Latimer

English Prayer-book

The mediæval type of poetry persisted well into the sixteenth century, but without producing any important results. We have already noted the work of the Scotch poets, Dunbar and Douglas; and to these may be added another Scotchman, Sir David Lyndesay, who wrote until as late as 1553 and whose satires associate him with the new reform movement. Among English poets the continuation of the older poetry is illustrated by the names of Stephen Hawes and John Skelton. Skelton's work gradually changed, and he was one of the earliest English poets to manifest the influence of the newer ideas. By virtue of a Morality with farcical elements, entitled *Magnyfycence*, his is one of the earliest definite names to be connected with the development of the drama. He displays at times an interesting lyric gift,

Transition Poetry

but his best-known work is satirical. His bitter and rather coarse satire is mostly directed against the religious abuses of the age. This fact associates him in a sense with the reformers; but his vagabond temper had little in common with their lofty spirit. Through his undoubted learning, he is linked with the humanists. Most of his best-known poems are written in a doggerel metre, called from him Skeltonic. We may not unfairly regard him as a man of some genius who came so early in the course of a great movement that he was unable to find his way.

The New Poetry

The first of the true Renaissance poets were Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. In the humanists, we have seen the Renaissance on the side of learning. In Wyatt and Surrey, we see it on the side of poetry. The influences that inspired these men came chiefly from Italy; but they were both good, sound English natures, and knew how to give something of a native flavor to their verse. They were both polished gentlemen, men of culture, and men of the world. Most of their work consists of rather artificial love poetry, written after Italian models; but some of their later poems have a more serious and more genuine tone. That they intro-

Wyatt and Surrey

duced and practised the sonnet is alone sufficient to give them a name in the literature; but Surrey has the additional credit of having been the first of English poets to use blank verse. Both helped to give to English poetry more of classical finish and facility of expression, qualities which were needed to make it a fitting instrument for the great poets of the later sixteenth century. They were really the first of modern English lyric poets, and their lyric gift was no mean one. Wyatt was the older of the two, and probably the master-spirit. His poetry has the greater seriousness and dignity, and he adds to his other abilities that of the satirist. Surrey is more varied, more musical, and more finished than his friend

and master, though he has less of force and weight. It is worthy of note that his use of blank verse is in translations from Virgil's *Æneid*. Wyatt and Surrey were the first of the "Courtly Makers," the noble beginners of our really modern English poetry.

Wyatt died in 1542 and Surrey in 1547; but their works were not printed until ten years after the latter date. They were first published in a work called *Tottel's Miscellany*, issued in 1557. The book also contained the work of various minor poets. Nothing in it rises to the level of really great poetry; but the little volume is forever famous as the first poetical publication of the greatest period of our literature — the Age of Elizabeth.

Tottel's Miscellany

The first twenty years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth continue the work which had begun in the early part of the century. There is advance in various lines, but no literary work of the first order. It will serve our purpose to note briefly the work that was accomplished in the three important departments of literature — poetry, drama, and prose.

Early Elizabethan Literature

The example of Wyatt and Surrey was followed by many poets, none of whom calls for personal mention. The popularity of poetry is shown by the publication of many collections of songs and lyrics, some of which were issued again and again. The titles are often quaint and fanciful, as, for instance, the *Paradise of Dainty Devices* and the *Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*. There were also various translations from the classics and from other modern languages.

Early Elizabethan Poetry

Only one poet of the period produced really notable work and gave indication of the great poetry that was soon to follow. This was Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and afterward Earl of Dorset. A curious and extensive narrative poem, called *The Mirror*

Thomas Sackville

for Magistrates, had already been written in part by various poets and was afterward much enlarged by others. Its purpose was to show "with how grievous plagues vices are punished in Great Princes and Magistrates, and how frail and unstable worldly prosperity is found, where fortune seemeth most highly to favour." Sackville contributed to this work an *Induction*, or introduction, and the *Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham*. His contribution is the only part of the whole that has poetic value. In the *Induction*, he imagines himself as guided by Sorrow to the realms of the dead. In the *Complaint*, he meets the Duke of Buckingham in the underworld, and listens to his lamentation over his tragic fate. Sackville's work is somewhat stiff and crude; but it has a largeness, a stateliness, a grandeur, a musical cadence that give promise of better things. It is a matter of regret that Sackville did not continue his work in this direction; but the attractions of public life soon drew him away from poetry.

Early Elizabethan Drama

During the early part of the sixteenth century, drama had already attained, in the case of Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, to the stage of real comedy. Mysteries, Moralities, and Interludes continued to be acted throughout the century, and many new Moralities and Interludes were written; but, nevertheless, drama continued to develop along the new lines. The influences working toward the newer drama were in part mediæval and English — influences growing out of the Mystery and the Morality. They were in part also classical, arising from the study of the ancient drama. Many classical dramas were translated and imitated, and there was a decided, though fortunately vain, attempt to conform the English drama to classic models. One of the earliest examples of this is found in the first English tragedy, *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex*, written by

Thomas Sackville in collaboration with Thomas Norton. It is modeled after Seneca, and represents a class of English plays known collectively as Senecan dramas. The tragedy tells how Gorboduc, king of Britain, divided his realm between his sons, Ferrex and Porrex, and of the terrible consequences that followed. It is written in blank verse, and was first acted in 1561. In 1566 was acted for the first time the second English comedy, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. This is a farcical play, almost purely native in tone, reputed to have been written by John Still, afterward Bishop of Wells. Gammer Gurton has various amusing experiences in hunting for her lost needle; she finds it at last in the seat of her man Hodge's breeches, which she had been mending. The incidents and the language are coarse, and the characters are taken from English low life. Tragedy and comedy are thus seen to be fairly under way. Still another kind of drama to be originated at about this time is the historical or chronicle play. Most of the great Elizabethan dramas belong to these three classes. During the first twenty years of the reign of Elizabeth, therefore, the foundations of the later drama were laid. No work of a very high order was accomplished; but experiments were made in all directions, and the way was made plain for the great dramatists of the next generation.

Early Elizabethan Prose

The development of prose went on, but there were no real masters of style or invention. The work of Roger Ascham continued into this period, and his *Schoolmaster*, already mentioned, was published in 1570, two years after his death. His is the only name of prominence. The Reformation spirit is represented by John Knox and by Fox's popular *Book of Martyrs*. Chroniclers, like Holinshed and Stow, provided historical material for the later dramatists. Stories of the early voyagers fired the imaginations of high and low, and

carried on the influences which had arisen from the discovery of new lands beyond the seas. Translations were made from foreign languages, both ancient and modern, and thus the new learning became more and more widely spread. Such translations, moreover, were doing their full part to inspire the coming poets and dramatists and to furnish them with their wealth of materials. England was intellectually alive; and although no great works were being produced either in prose or in verse, we are now able to see that English literature was rapidly moving on toward the noblest results which it has ever achieved. It was the darkness just before a great dawn.

THE GLOBE THEATER

After a drawing in the British Museum

The Chancel of Stratford Church, showing Shakespeare's Bust

CHAPTER VIII

THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE (1579-1625)

During the lifetime of Shakespeare, the English Renaissance reached its flood-tide. Its spirit was really the creative literary force of the age; and its richness, its vigor, its delight, its beauty, its enthusiasm, sought and in large measure found adequate expression. The age was filled with superabundant life, with an ardent desire for knowledge, with a passion for action and adventure, with a boundless ambition to accomplish great things, with a childlike wonder at the marvels of the world, with a splendid faith in man's power to conquer the realm of nature and the realm of thought, with an intense appreciation of the charm of all that was beautiful and attractive. The race had been born again; it felt itself young, and its dominant notes were those of passion and imagination. It was the time of all times for the poet with his pictures of the ideal world and for the dramatist with his presentation upon the mimic stage of the moving pageant of human life. All this and more had come into English literature with the culmination of the Renaissance.

Influence of Renaissance

The spirit of the Reformation was for a time subordinated as a literary force; but it had by no means vanished. If men had for a day almost forgotten spiritual concerns in seeking after the glory of this world, the deep religious instinct of the English nature was still in their hearts, and doubtless such words as those of Philip Sidney came often to their lips:

Reformation Spirit

> My mind, aspire to higher things;
> Grow rich in that which never taketh rust.

In the greatest literature of the time, religion was present as a steadying and restraining if not as an impelling force. In the period succeeding this, we shall see it rising to the full measure of its power as a dominant guiding impulse. The literature of Shakespeare's age was full, rich, varied, complicated, as well as powerful. It is not easy to present even its essential features in brief space. We shall endeavor, as heretofore, to hold as closely as possible to the chronological order, while at the same time keeping fairly distinct from each other the three main streams of literary development — prose, poetry, and the drama.

Later Elizabethan Prose

The reign of Elizabeth continued until 1603, and we may conveniently group together the leading prose-writers who belong to the latter half of her reign. First in time of these is John Lyly, one of the minor dramatists and poets of the age, who in 1579 and 1580 published the two parts of a unique romance called *Euphues.* The first part was entitled *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit;* and the second part, *Euphues and his England.* Euphues is a young Athenian who visits England and is made the mouthpiece for the expression of Lyly's views upon various phases of the life, thought, and manners of the day. The work displays the Renaissance interest in education and philosophy, but it harmonizes also with the religious feeling of the time in declaring that "vain is all learning without the taste of divine knowledge." It had a decided influence as a guide to polite manners, and perhaps a still greater influence in setting the fashion of an affected and elaborate style of speech. Courtiers talked and authors wrote in the high-flown manner which we still describe as "Euphuism." Lyly was concerned more with expression than with thought, but his work at least shows the exceeding care

Lyly's Euphues

that was being devoted to the matter of prose style. He misled prose for a time in the direction of poetry, but his experiment was, after all, one that was worth making. His work is remembered to-day more for its historical influence than for any gift of invention or originality of thought. A single sentence will help to illustrate his characteristic balance of sentence, alliteration, and excessive use of figures and parallels:

> For as the hop, the pole being never so high, groweth to the end, or as the dry beech kindled at the root never leaveth until it come to the top: or as one drop of poison disperseth itself into every vein, so affection having caught hold of my heart, and the sparkles of love kindled my liver, will suddenly, though secretly, flame up into my head, and spread itself into every sinew.

Sir Philip Sidney

In the case of Sir Philip Sidney, it is the man that we honor and admire more than anything or all that he has written. There is a magic charm about his name which appeals powerfully to the imagination. High birth, lofty character, knightly honor, chivalrous loyalty, romantic spirit, faithful friendship, disappointed love, classic learning, religious zeal, faultless courage, early death — all unite to create a personality that embodies for us all that was greatest and best in a great age. Beside this his literary achievement grows dim. Yet it was by no means insignificant. We shall have occasion later to consider his poetry. In prose his notable works are two. First is a pastoral romance, entitled *Arcadia*. Somewhat lengthy, tedious, and affected in style it is; and yet it has much of the charm that fascinates us in the man. This charm is half poetical, and, indeed, some of Sidney's characteristic verse appears here and there throughout the *Arcadia*. His *Defense of Poesy* is much better written, and has the distinction of being our first important work in the field of literary criticism. Its critical theories are, in the main, sound, though he defended

the classical unities in drama and held that verse was not an essential feature of poetry. The concluding sentence of the *Defense* will give an idea of his manner:

> But if — fie of such a but! — you be born so near the dull-making cataract of Nilus, that you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry; if you have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry, or rather, by a certain rustical disdain, will become such a mome as to be a Momus of poetry; then, though I will not wish you the ass's ears of Midas, nor to be driven by a poet's verses, as Bubonax was, to hang himself; nor to be rimed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland; yet thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets: — that while you live you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph.

The theological literature of the time is nowhere better represented than in the writings of Richard Hooker. His great work is *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. This is not an especially favorable subject for literature; but Hooker succeeded in producing a work which not only remains valuable for the theologian but also calls for the recognition of the literary historian. It is one of the landmarks in the development of English prose. The style is dignified, stately, restrained, and not seldom really musical. In spite of its heaviness, its long periodic sentences, and its Latinized character, it is also reasonably clear and forcible. A brief, familiar passage may be profitably compared with the quotations from Lyly and Sidney:

Richard Hooker

> Of law, there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power. Both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.

Hooker's style is probably the best model that his immediate time affords; but contemporary writers show his

influence much less than that of Lyly and Sidney. This is not altogether unfortunate; for English prose was to be used for many and varied purposes, and it was well that it should make its experiments in different directions. While the three names already mentioned will suffice to represent the prose movement, we should not fail to observe that a great mass of prose was written on a great variety of subjects. There were Euphuists, concerned chiefly with formal excellence; there were theological writers, Catholic, Anglican, and Puritan; there were literary critics, representing widely divergent theories; there were writers of travels and voyages, dealing sometimes with their own experiences; there were historians, treating of events English and foreign, ancient and modern; there were pamphleteers, discussing religion, politics, and other matters; there were romances, realistic tales, personal reminiscences, sketches of life and manners, sermons, and translations. All this does not exhaust the field; for there was intense ferment and activity, though little of literary art. Sometimes a writer belonged to several of these classes, and might be poet and dramatist as well. The age was striving, aspiring, experimenting; but on the side of prose, it can not be said to have found its way to great literary achievement.

Minor Prose Writings

The first great English poet after Chaucer — ranking with Chaucer among the few greatest poets of English literature — was Edmund Spenser. In him, beyond all question, Elizabethan poetry had "found its way." The facts of his life that immediately concern us in the consideration of his poetry may be briefly stated. Like Chaucer, he was born in London; and it seems probable that he received there his early education, at the Merchant Taylors' School. We know that he was a member of Pembroke Hall at Cambridge and that he received both his degrees in arts from that University.

Spenser's Life

A sojourn in the North of England, following his departure from the University, is associated with a disappointment in love for a young lady whom he poetically names Rosalind. On his return to London, he enjoyed the patronage of that powerful favorite of the queen, Lord Leicester, and became a member of the brilliant circle in which Sir Philip Sidney was the central figure. About 1580 he was appointed secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton, Deputy of Ireland, and passed most of the remainder of his life in that country. There Sir Walter Raleigh became his friend and patron. Spenser married at the age of forty-two. In 1598 his home was burned by the Irish rebels, and he fled with his family to England. He died in London during the following year, and was buried beside Chaucer in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. The inscription on his monument declares that he was "the prince of poets in his tyme"; and the judgment of posterity has not reversed the record. Perhaps the most interesting and important feature of his life, apart from his poetic work, is to be found in his association with some of the most noble and brilliant men of his generation and in his participation with them in the eager and strenuous life of the age.

Spenser in his Age

Spenser was the first great Elizabethan poet. In him the purely poetical influences of the Renaissance culminate, and from him flow streams of poetic influence that have helped to make fruitful the literature of three centuries. He embodied the romantic spirit of his age; but he embodied its moral spirit as well. He gives us the last great picture of chivalry; he reflects what was loftiest and most brilliant in his own passing age; he expresses all the purity and elevation of the Reformation temper without its harshness. His influence is thoroughly poetic and artistic. To call him the "poets' poet" is to imply that he is best appreciated and most

highly esteemed by those who themselves have most of the poetical nature; and surely of no English poet can this be more truly said. Of all the men of his time, he belongs most exclusively to poetry, and has little importance aside from that. Judged purely as a poet, without regard to any other qualities or characteristics, he is probably unsurpassed in English literature.

Spenser, we have implied, is above all other things a poetic artist. As such, he is richly endowed with the poet's supreme gift, a wonderful love for the beautiful. To this he adds the power of giving a living embodiment to his poetic conceptions. Everything he touches, even the dryest ethical truth, seems to change into beauty as if by magic. His work reveals him as eminently a poet of the ideal rather than of the real. He moves in an ideal world. He is "of imagination all compact." For him the practical world of men and things seems to sink out of sight. He deals in his poetry with the real men and women of his time; but even these, in his world of dreams, seem to lose their reality and to become shadows like the rest. This is not to imply that the characters of his poetry are mere lay figures or dry abstractions. Such an implication would be very far from the truth. The world of his poetry is an ideal world; but it is not, therefore, a "world not realized." Spenser has a magic power to make his dream creations almost as distinct as reality. His personages live with a life of their own and impress themselves upon the imagination. Nevertheless, they are not real in the ordinary sense of the term; they are the unsubstantial though vividly beautiful creatures of a most illusive vision. Spenser is a lover of nature; but nature, too, is made subject to his idealizing process. He does not portray her, as does Chaucer, frankly and directly; his dream landscapes have no earthly existence. In fact, he is interested in ideas and images rather than in nature or in men. His work,

Spenser's Genius

therefore, displays very little dramatic power in the creation of lifelike men and women — the power which Chaucer possessed in such an eminent degree. "Chaucer," it has been said, "painted persons, Spenser qualities." Yet he is objective in his pictures, and can portray scenes and figures that live in the imagination entirely distinct from the personality of the poet himself. It is as though he had the power to transport us also into his ideal realm and make us move as shadows in a world of shadows. Spenser is a great epic poet. Through his wonderful powers of narration and description, he is able to attract, to charm, to fascinate. He has also a fine lyric gift. There are few, if any, sweeter singers in the literature. He has intensity, variety, fluency, music, fervor, high poetical power. His poetry of nature is largely tentative. We find it now somewhat conventional and artificial. His real home is not amid the scenery of the actual world but amid the ideal scenes of his marvelous fancy. His style is unique. It is intentionally archaic, and does not quite represent the English either of his own or of any other time. In the mastery of verse he is unsurpassed. No sweeter music than his was ever drawn from English speech. His power as a metrist is admirably displayed in his pure lyrics and in the so-called Spenserian stanza. The latter is one of the most perfect instruments of poetic expression ever devised. It is a stanza of nine lines, eight iambic pentameters and a final iambic hexameter, with rhyme order *a b a b b c b c c*. It is the stanza used in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and will be illustrated in our discussion of that poem. Spenser's achievement in varying its music and in linking its varied sweetness through one of the longest poems in the language is little short of marvelous. In fine, if there are any words which sum up the effect of Spenser's poetry, they are these two — picture and music.

Spenser's first important work was the *Shepherd's Cal-*

endar, published in 1579, just after his return from the North of England and just before his departure for Ireland. It consists of a series of artificial pastorals, dealing with the months of the year. Somewhat imitative in style and thought, it is a beautiful poem but not a great masterpiece. It gave, however, decided evidence of poetic genius, and served to establish his reputation. A volume entitled *Complaints* contained poems on such subjects as the *Ruins of Time*, *Tears of the Muses*, *Virgil's Gnat*, *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, *Ruins of Rome*, *Muipotmos*, and three *Visions*. A pastoral poem entitled *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* celebrated his visit to London in 1591. In this same year were published *Astrophel*, a pastoral elegy on the death of Sir Philip Sidney; the *Amoretti*, a series of beautiful love sonnets; and *Epithalamion*, his own wedding-hymn. The latter has a high and pure note of personal passion; and as poetry, it is incomparable in its kind, except with his own *Prothalamion*, published in the following year in honor of the double marriage of Lady Elizabeth and Lady Katherine Somerset, daughters of the Earl of Worcester. Delightful as poetry and typical of Spenser's character and genius are his *Four Hymns* — to Love, to Beauty, to Heavenly Love, and to Heavenly Beauty. These, together with the last books of his *Faerie Queene*, bring his poetical work to a close in 1596, three years before his death.

Spenser's Minor Poems

It has been said that "the *Calendar* and the *Sonnets*, the *Epithalamium* and the *Hymns*, are but the chapels and chantries of the cathedral of the *Faerie Queene*."[1] This beautifully expresses the idea that the *Faerie Queene* is the greatest and most typical product of Spenser's genius, the work in which are summed up and gathered together all the qualities and characteristics of his poetry. If we confine our thought to purely poetical

The Faerie Queene

[1] Saintsbury's *Short History of English Literature*, p. 268.

merits, it would be difficult to name a greater single poem in the English language. In its own class, as an allegory, it is undoubtedly supreme. Its allegorical significance is two-fold — ethical and historical. On the ethical side, we see in its characters representatives of the moral virtues and of the vices that oppose them; on the historical side, these same characters become representative of the actual men and women of Spenser's time.

Its Plan

The plan of the work was an immense and an elaborate one. There were to be twenty-four books — twelve devoted to the twelve private virtues and twelve devoted to the twelve public virtues. Each virtue was to be represented by a knight called upon to oppose himself to certain evils. These knights were to accomplish their several adventures, and be finally successful through the help of Prince Arthur, with whose marriage to Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, the poem was to culminate. Only six books, about one-fourth of this vast scheme, were actually completed. Each book is practically a separate poem. As it stands, then, the *Faerie Queene* consists of six complete books and the fragment of a seventh. The first book deals with the Legend of the Red Cross Knight, or of Holiness; the second, with the Legend of Sir Guyon, or of Temperance; the third, with the Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity; the fourth, with the Legend of Cambel and Triamond, or of Friendship; the fifth, with the Legend of Artegall, or of Justice; the sixth, with the Legend of Sir Calidore, or of Courtesie. The fragment, consisting of two cantos and two stanzas, deals with the subject of Mutability, and was probably intended as part of a book on Constancy. Each of the complete books consists of twelve cantos, composed in Spenserian stanzas. In addition to the virtues represented by the several knights, Prince Arthur represents the comprehensive virtue of Magnanimity.

The poem, even in its uncompleted condition, is one of

the longest in the language. The interest of it is threefold. It is, first, a great moral allegory, setting up lofty ideals of virtue. It is, secondly, a great historical allegory, reflecting as in a magic mirror the men and the life of the age. Queen Elizabeth is there, in the person of Gloriana, or Glory, the Faerie Queene; Mary Queen of Scots is there, in the person of the false Duessa, who represents also the Catholic Church; Lord Leicester is there, in the person of Prince Arthur; there, also, in various characters, are Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Grey of Wilton, Sir Walter Raleigh, and many others. Great movements of the time are also represented — the political conflict with Spain, the religious conflict with Rome, the struggle of England for self-mastery and for independence of foreign domination. History is not obtruded upon us as we follow the adventures of knights and ladies; but the reader familiar with historical persons and events will find himself reminded of them on many a page. The third interest of the work is that of a great masterpiece of poetic art, unrolling before us a splendid panorama of imaginative pictures to the music of rhythmic speech.

Its Interest

The poem is typical of Spenser in its largeness and freedom, in its ideality and beauty, in its pictorial and musical power, in its ethical and religious character. His various excellencies are displayed with more or less of fulness in his minor poems; but we have the complete and adequate revelation of his genius only in the *Faerie Queene*. In earlier poems of the age, the spirit of the Renaissance and the Reformation is reflected only in a fragmentary and inadequate way. But the great intellectual and moral ferment is going on, and at length we come to Spenser — "sage and serious Spenser" — in whom the most exquisite gift of pure poetry is united with a moral elevation as severe as it is beautiful.

Its Typical Character

There could hardly be any poem more finely typical than the *Faerie Queene* of the blended might of the two great literary forces of the age. One may dip almost at random into the great poem and find fit evidence of Spenser's genius. The following brief passage will illustrate the character of the Spenserian stanza and its musical capabilities, the poetic quality of Spenser's conceptions, and the spiritual elevation of his sentiments. It is from the first book, and the Red Cross Knight has just been led by the sage Contemplation "to the highest mount":

From thence, far off he unto him did shew
A litle path, that was both steepe and long,
Which to a goodly citie led his vew;
Whose wals and towres were builded high and strong
Of perle and precious stone, that earthly tong
Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell;
Too high a ditty for my simple song:
The Citie of the Great King hight[1] it well,
Wherein eternall peace and happinesse doth dwell.

As he thereon stood gazing, he might see
The blessed angels to and fro descend
From highest heaven in gladsome companee,
And with great joy into that citie wend,
As commonly as frend does with his frend.
Whereat he wondred much, and gan enquere,
What stately building durst so high extend
Her lofty towres unto the starry sphere,
And what unknowen nation there empeopled were.

"Faire knight," quoth he, "Hierusalem that is,
The New Hierusalem, that God has built
For those to dwell in, that are chosen his,
His chosen people purg'd from sinfull guilt
With pretious blood, which cruelly was spilt
On cursed tree, of that unspotted Lam,
That for the sinnes of al the world was kilt:
Now are they saints all in that citie sam,[2]
More dear unto their God than younglings to their dam."

[1] Was called. [2] Together.

"Till now," said then the knight, "I weened well,
That great Cleopolis[1] where I have beene,
In which that fairest Faerie Queene doth dwell,
The fairest citie was, that might be seene;
And that bright towre all built of christall clene,
Panthea,[2] seemd the brightest thing that was:
But now by proofe all otherwise I weene;
For this great citie that does far surpas,
And this bright angels towre quite dims that towre of glas."

If we dwell upon Spenser as the representative poet of his time, it is because of his supreme excellence rather than because there is any dearth of genuine poets and poetry. Indeed, there is a decided embarrassment of riches; and it is not possible to do more than hint at the varied, abundant, and exquisite poetic work of this remarkable generation.

Poetry Contemporary with Spenser

Outside of the drama and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the best and most characteristic work of the age was in lyric poetry. Its chief theme was love — human love, full of the Renaissance delight in life and beauty — divine love, inspired by the religious fervor of the Reformation. Spenser himself stands first in this field, and next to him is probably Sir Philip Sidney. In the relations of actual life, Spenser was but one of the satellites of his noble and distinguished friend; but in poetry, he is the central sun, and even Sidney is but one of his humble followers. Nevertheless, Sidney is a lyric poet of excellent quality. If he does not capture the "fine careless rapture" of some of the best Elizabethan songs, he is capable of a rich and full lyric music; and in his sonnets, he yields the palm only to Shakespeare and possibly Spenser. His *Astrophel and Stella* is a cycle of sonnets, apparently reflecting his unrewarded, if not unrequited, love for the beautiful Penelope

Lyric Poetry

Sidney

[1] London. [2] A tower in London.

Devereux. To these, the personal passion, the tone of pathos, the lofty poetic imagination, the high moral seriousness of a large nature, give a charm hardly to be matched. Probably the best purely lyric work of the age is to be found scattered through the various song-books and through the works of the great Elizabethan dramatists. These lyrics were really written to be sung to music, and they have an ease and a sweetness of melody that give them a grace beyond the reach of art. Some poets, like Thomas Campion, are known for a goodly number of such songs; some keep their fame with posterity chiefly by virtue of a single success, as in the case of Sir Edward Dyer's "My mind to me a kingdom is"; still others are entirely unknown, and we have only their inimitable work in evidence of the wide diffusion of the lyric gift during the last years of Elizabeth's reign. Among the writers of dramatic songs, Shakespeare stands first, as he does in most other respects; but he is followed at not too great a distance by Lyly, Peele, Greene, Lodge, Marlowe, and other dramatic writers. Sonnet writing was one of the favorite poetic occupations of the age, and whole series or cycles of sonnets were produced by many poets. We have already mentioned Spenser's *Amoretti* and Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*. The most notable example of all is to be found in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Samuel Daniel's *Delia* and Michael Drayton's *Idea* may serve as still further illustrations.

Songs

Sonnet Cycles

Daniel and Drayton remind us of the popularity of still another kind of poetry — the historical or patriotic. We have observed the historical interest in Spenser's *Faerie Queene;* and, indeed, nothing is more striking in the age than the enthusiasm — partly patriotic, partly religious, and partly personal — for England and England's queen. The growing number of historical or

Historical Poetry

chronicle plays in the field of drama illustrates this same interest on another side. The first purely patriotic poem of note is William Warner's *Albion's England*. The historical type of poetry, however, is best represented by Daniel and Drayton. Daniel's chief historical poems are the *Complaint of Rosamond* and the *Civil Wars of York and Lancaster*. Among other things, Drayton wrote the *Barons' Wars*, *England's Heroical Epistles*, the famous *Ballad of Agincourt*, and somewhat later, the *Poly-olbion*, a huge work of nearly 100,000 lines, describing the "tracts, mountains, forests, and other parts of this renowned isle of Britain, with intermixture of the most remarkable stories, antiquities, wonders, pleasures, and commodities of the same, digested into a poem." One may well think that all this needed considerable digestion. Drayton fitly calls it a "strange herculean task." In fact, these historical poems — though interesting as evidences of patriotic spirit — are unfortunate in their subject-matter. Spenser was much better advised by his finer poetic instinct. Nevertheless, it is characteristic of the historical poets and of their age that they were able to write passably good poetry even on the most unpromising themes. The same may be said of the philosophical and satirical poetry which developed somewhat later.

Warner

Daniel

Drayton

Practically contemporary with Spenser were the early dramatists whose work prepared the way for the supreme dramatic art of Shakespeare. Most, if not all, of them were university men, and they were called as a group the "University Wits." The first of these is John Lyly, the author of *Euphues*. He wrote much in prose, but his work is anything but prosaic. Indeed, it may rather be characterized as classical, fanciful, witty, courtly, romantic, interspersed with charming lyrics. There is little real dramatic power. His

The University Wits

Lyly

Endymion is an allegorical compliment to Queen Elizabeth.

Kyd

Thomas Kyd is best known as the author of a blood-and-thunder drama called the *Spanish Tragedy*. Thomas Nash wrote with Marlowe a play called *Dido* and a prose comedy, *Will Summer's Testament*. Thomas Lodge wrote *Marius and Sylla* and did other dramatic work, but is better known as a charming prose-writer, romancer, and lyrist. With George Peele, we come to work of much better dramatic and poetic quality. His best play, *David and Bethsabe*, is written in blank verse of much grace and sweetness, and is a decidedly interesting drama. Robert Greene is inferior to Peele as a poet; but, at least in his *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, he shows considerable skill in the creation of natural character.

Nash

Lodge

Peele

Greene

The last and greatest of the "University Wits" is Christopher Marlowe. Born in the same year with Shakespeare (1564), he began his literary career at twenty-three years of age, and was dead at twenty-nine, stabbed in the eye in a tavern brawl. Canterbury was his birthplace, and he received his early education there at the King's School, under the shadow of Canterbury Cathedral. Later, he went to Cambridge University. In London, a wild and brilliant dramatic career was the precursor of an early death. Considering the shortness of his life and the period at which his work was done, Marlowe's achievements are among the most remarkable in English literature. Four great tragedies stand to his credit — besides other work of less merit — and all of them are productions of singular power. Each of these may be said to represent some dominating idea or ruling passion.

Marlowe

Tamburlaine deals with the career of the Scythian shepherd king who was termed "the Scourge of God."

It is a tragedy of conquest, and portrays the lust for tyrannical and unrestrained power. In one scene Tamburlaine appears in his chariot, drawn by captive kings, whom he scourges with his whip, while he cries:

Tamburlaine

> Holla, ye pamper'd jades of Asia!
> What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day,
> And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
> And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine?
>
> * * * * *
>
> The horse that guide the golden eye of heaven,
> And blow the morning from their nostrils,
> Making their fiery gait above the clouds,
> Are not so honour'd in their governor
> As you, ye slaves, in mighty Tamburlaine.

This is bombast, but it is also poetry.

Doctor Faustus deals with the mediæval legend afterward handled in Goethe's *Faust*, and portrays the lust for knowledge and pleasure. The play, in spite of its exaggeration and comparative formlessness, is probably Marlowe's masterpiece. In spirit, it represents the man, with his mingled genius and sensuality; and it represents the Renaissance, with its passion for knowledge and its delight in the joy of living. Faustus, in order to know and to enjoy, sells his soul to the Devil. When, at last, his hour comes, the tragic situation is one of terrible intensity:

Doctor Faustus

> The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
> The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
> O, I'll leap up to heaven! — Who pulls me down? —
> See, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
> One drop of blood will save me: O my Christ! —
> Rend not my heart for naming of my Christ;
> Yet will I call on him: O, spare me, Lucifer!

The Jew of Malta has for its central figure an avaricious and cruel Jew, and portrays the lust for wealth and for

vengeance. Barabas is a monster whose greed knows no bounds, and whose hate knows no pity. After committing the most horrible crimes, he comes to his death by being precipitated into a boiling caldron which he had prepared for his enemies. Such lines as these fitly express the spirit that moves him :

Jew of Malta

> For so I live, perish may all the world!
>
> Why, is not this
> A kingly kind of trade, to purchase towns
> By treachery and sell 'em by deceit?
>
> Die, life! fly, soul! tongue, curse thy fill, and die!

Edward II portrays the agony of a weak and impotent king. It is perhaps the best of Marlowe's plays in dramatic construction, but lacks something of the vigor and boldness of imagination that we have found so characteristic of Marlowe. The other plays here treated deal with various conceptions of power ; *Edward II* is rather Marlowe's conception of the tragedy of weakness where power should exist.

Edward II

Marlowe deals with great types of human passion rather than with veritable human characters. He did not know, like Shakespeare, how to combine the type and the individual in one living personality. Indeed, his chief gift is a poetic rather than a dramatic one. As a poet, he ranks with Spenser and Shakespeare ; in the creation of lifelike character and in the construction of dramatic plot, he is inferior to many of the later dramatists. We need to remember, however, that he was a pioneer, and that later playwrights learned much from him as to how they might better his example. He first taught them, for example, the use of the " mighty line " which has been the greatest achievement of English metre. No less true is it that he, more than any other single man, determined that English drama should emancipate itself from

Marlowe's Genius and Influence

the tyranny of classical rules and models, and should assert the freedom of the modern romantic spirit. Henceforward, its limitations were to be set only by the poetic imagination on the one side and by the multitudinous variety of human life on the other. Marlowe's distinguishing qualities are boldness, energy, vitality, enthusiasm, rather than delicacy, subtlety, or refinement. His faults and limitations are the defects of his qualities. It has been often asserted that he lacked humor; but although he is undoubtedly far behind most of the other great dramatists in this particular, he has a grim and grotesque humor of his own. In addition to the dramas just noted, he wrote the *Massacre of Paris*, collaborated with Nash in *Dido* and with Shakespeare in *Henry VI*. His fine lyric gift is illustrated by his *Passionate Shepherd to his Love*; and in *Hero and Leander*, he displays high capabilities as a narrative and descriptive poet. Here as elsewhere he manifests that passionate love of beauty which is the best evidence of his poetic inspiration. Marlowe wrote drama chiefly because he had fallen upon a dramatic age and because the field of drama offered the readiest way to literary fame for one who had a high ambitious heart but neither position nor influence. In pure poetry, he might well have rivalled Spenser, as in dramatic poetry he did rival in some respects even Shakespeare himself. His brief prologue to *Tamburlaine*, his first drama, sounds like a proud and at least half-contemptuous challenge to his fellow-dramatists and to the public at large:

> From jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits,
> And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
> We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
> Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
> Threatening the world with high astounding terms,
> And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.
> View but his picture in this tragic glass,
> And then applaud his fortunes as you please.

As we approach the consideration of Shakespeare, it is important to emphasize anew the fact that he was not an isolated literary phenomenon, but that his work comes as the culmination of a long course of literary and dramatic development. As we have seen, the modern drama, like the ancient, arises out of religion. From the ritualistic ceremonies and saintly legends of the mediæval church sprang the Mysteries and the Miracle Plays. This dramatic type was distinctly a product of the Middle Ages and reached its perfection in the fifteenth century, more than a hundred years before Shakespeare was born. These mediæval plays, however, continued to be acted throughout the sixteenth century; and there can be no doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with them and that he had opportunity to witness their presentation. It is quite within the range of probability that he had seen enacted in his boyhood the plays of the Coventry cycle; for Coventry was but twenty miles from his home at Stratford. The Mysteries and Miracles were followed by the Moralities and Interludes; and these, too, were frequently presented during Shakespeare's lifetime. Kenilworth Castle was still nearer to his home than Coventry; and at Kenilworth, in 1575, when Shakespeare was a boy of eleven, occurred the great revels in honor of Queen Elizabeth, with accompaniment of pageants, plays, and various sorts of dramatic entertainment. About a generation before Shakespeare's birth, was produced the first English comedy; and the first tragedy was acted in 1561, only three years before Shakespeare came upon the stage of life. From this time dramatic development was rapid. Classical influences produced the "Senecan drama"; historical interest gave rise to the chronicle plays; all sorts of dramatic experiments were proving, selecting, and perfecting the forms of drama that were fittest to survive. The "University Wits," with their wide learning and with

Drama before Shakespeare

their dramatic skill, demonstrated the literary and acting qualities of the new dramatic types. Marlowe, especially, brought really great genius to bear upon dramatic creation, and even where he failed himself, showed others the road. Shakespeare's instrument was ready to his hands; it remained for him to use it, with a genius that understood all its powers and was splendidly adapted to all its capabilities.

Not alone to obscure or famous workmen in the field of dramatic development must the genius of Shakespeare acknowledge a debt. He is in many more senses "the heir of all the ages." During its long and strange history, the English language had been battered and smelted and forged and filed and polished, until it was perhaps the most perfect literary instrument ever created. Many poets, with Chaucer and Spenser as their chiefs, had conspired to prove the power of this language in the realms of the higher imagination, and had set models of poetic expression which even the genius of Shakespeare must exert itself to surpass. Two races had combined their peculiar qualities to make the race out of which the greatest of dramatists sprang; and we are told that Shakespeare had in his own veins both Saxon and Norman blood. This new race, moreover, had been making centuries of splendid history, to enrich Elizabethan England and to make its very soil and air full of poetic inspiration. The Renaissance had opened wide the gates of a new intellectual life, and had fired men's souls with the passion for knowledge, with the passion for achievement, and with the passion for poetry. The Reformation had stirred anew the deeper springs of the English moral nature and had given to English life a new seriousness as well as a new significance. By way of more immediate influence upon Shakespeare's art, the stage had become a recognized social institution. The age was dramatic in its life; and it called for the dramatic

Preparation for Shakespeare

presentation of that life. Shakespeare felt the power and the impulse to portray human character and to set it in action upon the stage. He found existing all the conditions favorable to his great achievement. He found the audience already gathered for the spectacle.

Shakespeare's Life

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, in 1564, the sixth year of Queen Elizabeth's reign. We know comparatively little about his life, and that little is not the most important. Of knowledge that throws real light upon his work, we have next to nothing. In one sense, this is a real loss and disappointment; for men naturally have an eager desire for information concerning the greatest of all poets and dramatists. From another point of view the loss does not seem so great. We have Shakespeare's work, and that work is so extremely objective and so little personal that it does not stand in much need of interpretation from biographical facts. What manner of man Shakespeare must have been, we can understand from his work; and that is what we chiefly wish to know. Nevertheless, biographical data have their interest, and it is desirable to note the main points in his career. Not least in importance is the fact that his boyhood years were spent in the beautiful "heart of England." Here he learned to know nature, as his works fully attest. If he had known only that human life of which he was so consummate a master, he would still have been a great dramatist; but much of its subtlest charm and most poetic suggestion would be missing from his work. In this quiet country life, he doubtless developed his marvelous powers of observation, and probably learned to know men and women under primitive natural conditions before he came to study them in the more complicated relations of the larger world. There was much, too, in his surroundings to kindle the poetic imagination of the growing boy. Warwickshire was a historic and romantic

land, great and interesting figures crossed Stratford bridge, strolling players brought to the little country town the crude dramatic productions of the day. We have no actual record of Shakespeare's experiences in such directions as these; but we can hardly err in assuming that such conditions had their influence upon his character and genius. Tradition tells us that he attended the Stratford Grammar School; and there he doubtless received the ordinary education of the day. In addition to religious training, Latin was the ordinary staple of intellectual discipline. Ben Jonson tells us that Shakespeare had "small Latin and less Greek"; but Jonson was a classical scholar to whom the ordinary schoolboy's training in these languages would seem of little importance. Small as it was, it doubtless served to give Shakespeare some outlook into the thought and literature of the ancient world, to put him in touch with the intellectual spirit of his age. At the age of eighteen, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a woman several years older than himself. The children of this marriage were Susanna and the twins Hamnet and Judith. Some few years later, he went up to try his fortunes in London. Tradition tells us that his going was accelerated on account of a deer-stealing episode in the park of Sir Thomas Lucy, a local magistrate; and some verses are extant in which Shakespeare is said to have ridiculed the good knight.

Whether impelled by this local difficulty, by the needs of his growing family, or by the promptings of his own genius, Shakespeare found in London the opportunities for his great career. His first connection with the theatre is said to have been a very humble one; but he found there his proper atmosphere, and his genius quickly made itself felt. He became an actor, then a reviser of old plays for the stage, next an original playwright, and finally a theatrical manager and

Shakespeare's Dramatic Career

owner. Before he was thirty, he was well known as a dramatist. There is good evidence of his familiar association with eminent dramatists and with other great men of his day, and he attracted the favorable notice of Queen Elizabeth. He grew prosperous and acquired considerable property in his native Stratford. For many years he lived mostly in London, but visited his old home from time to time. At about the age of fifty, he retired to Stratford, gave up his dramatic career, and passed his last years in the quiet life of a country gentleman. He died in 1616 at the age of fifty-two, and was buried in the chancel of the Stratford parish church. These bare facts of his life tell us little of his inward experience. The spiritual history of the man we must read, if at all, in his works.

Shakespeare's Miscellaneous Poems

The whole body of Shakespeare's writings falls naturally into three divisions, corresponding to three different manifestations of his poetic or dramatic power. These divisions consist of his miscellaneous poems, his sonnets, and his dramas. His first known poem was *Venus and Adonis*. He called it "the first heir of my invention," and dedicated it to his noble friend and patron, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. It is above all things a poem of youth, but of youth endowed with genius and filled with poetic passion. Sensuousness is the word that best expresses its dominating quality. We feel that the poet was alive to all the physical beauty of the world about him, that all his senses were avenues of fresh delight. Whatever faults the poem may have are simply the excess of the youthful poetic temperament. Its merits are such as form the proper groundwork for his later poetic and dramatic achievements. The poem is filled with the charm of rural nature, made vital by the sympathetic treatment of passionate love. What an eye for natural detail and what a faculty for concrete imagery are illustrated in the description of the wild boar :

Stratford-on-Avon

On his bow-back he hath a battle set
Of bristly pikes, that ever threat his foes;
His eyes, like glow-worms, shine when he doth fret;
His snout digs sepulchres where'er he goes.

What power of imaginative suggestion in the words:

Whereat amazed, as one that unaware
Hath dropp'd a precious jewel in the flood.

Lucrece is a bitterly tragic story, going beyond *Venus and Adonis* in seriousness and depth, but characterized by many of the same qualities. The reader is here more disturbed by the fanciful conceits and puns, such as,

So I at each sad strain will strain a tear.

On the other hand there is a growing sententiousness of expression which illustrates Shakespeare's own growth in worldly wisdom. In the following stanza, almost every line is a separate aphorism, all circling around the same general idea:

'Tis double death to drown in ken of shore;
He ten times pines that pines beholding food;
To see the salve doth make the wound ache more;
Great grief grieves most at that would do it good;
Deep woes roll forward like a gentle flood,
  Who, being stopp'd, the bounding banks o'erflows;
  Grief dallied with nor law nor limit knows.

Minor poems of the same group are *A Lover's Complaint*, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, and *The Phœnix and the Turtle*.

Shakespeare's Sonnets

If *Venus and Adonis* displays the poet's earthly and sensual part, the *Sonnets* may be said to illustrate his transition to a higher plane of life and thought. They are moved by strong passion, but they take a vastly wider sweep of thought and of poetic invention. Their theme is love — the love of man for man and the love of man for woman; and that theme is treated with a poetic power matched only by the profound knowl-

edge of the human heart. The whole number of the *Sonnets* is one hundred and fifty-four. The first one hundred and twenty-six are addresed to a certain noble and beautiful youth, "a man right fair"; and the remainder are addressed to a certain dark lady, "a woman coloured ill." The young man is praised for his noble qualities of mind and person, is warned against the temptations that beset his rank, is urged to marry and to perpetuate himself in his offspring.

> From fairest creatures we desire increase,
> That thereby beauty's rose might never die.

He is continually addressed in language of passionate tenderness, language that bespeaks a love "passing the love of women." Even in the friend's absence and alienation, this love remains constant. It desires to see the loved one redeemed from evil courses and faithful to his own best self.

> O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
> By that sweet ornament which truth doth give.

The sonnets addressed to the "dark woman" seem to imply on her part an irresistible fascination, but a fickle, selfish, and impure heart. She has been false to the poet, she has come between him and his friend, yet he can not break away from her evil spell. It may well be conceived how many phases of love these situations involved and what opportunities were given to Shakespeare for showing his unparalleled insight into the workings of the human heart. The question remains whether the *Sonnets* reflect actual personal experiences of Shakespeare's life. Did he here "unlock his heart," or did he not? Some have seen in these poems merely a poet's flattery of a noble and influential patron. Others have regarded them as mere literary exercises, in which the poet studied and expressed those human moods which in his dramas he was

to portray on a larger scale. The difficulty is one which our limited knowledge of Shakespeare's life does not enable us to solve. The personal interpretation has been most common and seems most natural; and there are many passages which appear to carry a personal meaning. Whatever view be taken, the thought, the feeling, the knowledge of the human heart, and above all the exquisite poetry are unquestionably Shakespeare's. If the *Sonnets* be personal, they reveal the stain on Shakespeare's character of an unholy love; they show him as a man who had both sinned and suffered. On the other hand, they show him as one who had struggled up out of the mire toward a nobler plane of living and a larger sympathy with all human weakness. Something of this is expressed in his own words:

> Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there
> And made myself a motley to the view,
> Gor'd mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
> Made old offences of affections new;
> Most true it is that I have look'd on truth
> Askance and strangely: but, by all above,
> These blenches gave my heart another youth.

One of the most beautiful of the *Sonnets*, and the one perhaps whose sentiment is most typical of the whole series, is here given in full:

> Let me not to the marriage of true minds
> Admit impediments. Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove:
> O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
> It is the star to every wandering bark,
> Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
> Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
> If this be error and upon me prov'd,
> I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

Shakespeare's crowning work is to be found in his dramas, and it is these that call for fullest consideration. The common classification divides them into comedies, tragedies, and history or chronicle plays. Significant as these divisions are, it is more important for our present purpose that we should group the plays with reference to the several periods of Shakespeare's life which they illustrate. This will enable us to see how the work in some degree reflects the genius, the character, and the experience of the man. Following the suggestive outline of Professor Brandl, we may note five periods of Shakespeare's dramatic career, together with the considerable group of dramas belonging to each.

Shakespeare's Dramas

The first period probably covers approximately the years from 1588 to 1594. It is known as the period of Shakespeare's dramatic apprenticeship — the period in which he was reshaping old plays, watching the work of other men, learning the requirements and capabilities of the stage, making his first original experiments, trying his own powers in various directions. All three classes of dramas are represented. Among comedies we find *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream;* among tragedies, *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet;* among histories, *Henry VI* (three parts), *Richard III*, and *Richard II*. It so happens that one play in each of these three classes stands out far above the rest — something more than prentice work, filled rather with promise of the supreme masterpieces to come. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is pure sport of the fancy. Human life is portrayed, from noble to clown, but it is human life played upon by the whimsical magic of fairy sprites. Puck

First Dramatic Period

misleads and confuses the romantic lovers; Titania, the fairy queen, is enamored of bully Bottom, the weaver, who has been transformed into an ass; all sorts of fantastic happenings are possible in the poetic atmosphere of this moonlight wood. The spirit of the drama is suggested by such lines as these:

> *Puck.* What fools these mortals be.
>
> *Theseus.* The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.

Romeo and Juliet is the extremely beautiful and poetical tragedy of youthful passion. Against the dark background of hatred and feud between the two houses of Montague and Capulet, the fair young lovers stand. They meet, they love, they yield themselves to each other as though love were its own defence and had no need to fear the thunderbolt. They are encompassed, however, by forces which they can not break through; and the dark fate which holds them in its circle allows only that they should die together. *Richard III* is one of the best acting dramas among Shakespeare's historical plays. Though somewhat crude as compared with his best work, it is a wonderfully impressive production. Richard is a tremendous figure, and the action is guided by the motives of ambition, cruelty, and remorse. In addition to the dramas mentioned, the miscellaneous poems also belong to this period.

Second Dramatic Period

Shakespeare's second period is called by Brandl the Falstaff Period. It is otherwise described as the period of Shakespeare's great comedies, of his rapid growth in dramatic art, of his broader and richer knowledge of human life. The *Sonnets* belong to this period, and they indicate that it was a time of transition from youth to mature manhood. The years covered are from about 1595 to about 1600. One notable feature of the period is that it contains no tragedies. Its comedies

are *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Much Ado About Nothing;* its histories are *King John*, *Henry IV* (two parts), and *Henry V.* Again one play in each class is decidedly superior to the others. *The Merchant of Venice* is the greatest of Shakespeare's comedies, the greatest comedy of the world. Shylock is the grandest figure that the dramatist has thus far created. The victory of the Christians over the despised but implacable Jew makes him a tragic victim in the midst of the joyous and brilliant life around him. In Portia, Shakespeare has gone beyond Juliet, and has portrayed one of his noblest and most richly endowed women. The comedy is bright with humor, beautiful with romance, rich with poetry; but it is also deep and serious in its underlying conception of life. Christian contempt breeds Jewish hatred. Revenge through subtlety and cunning is the natural impulse of the oppressed race. The superior race becomes proud, contemptuous, arrogant, and cruel in its superiority. In the antagonism between the two races, power is on the side of the Christians. They pass over to happiness and light and laughter at Belmont, while the thwarted and beaten Jew slinks away to his kennel in the Ghetto. Such are some of the striking features of this masterly drama. In *Henry IV*, we have Shakespeare's greatest historical play. Here three notable figures stand in significant relation to each other. In the centre is Prince Hal, spending his youth in wild dissipation, but cherishing high and noble purposes in his heart. On the one side of him is the superb comic figure of Falstaff, associate of his folly and riotous living. On the other side is Hotspur, inciting him by high example to the emulation of noble deeds. Prince Hal sows his wild oats, but at the crisis plays the man and shows himself in due time to be a wise, valiant, and upright king. One can hardly help comparing his career with Shake-

speare's own. We have some reason to suppose that Shakespeare also sowed his wild oats and had opportunity to see "by means of the Evil that Good is best." He knew well that the sowing of wild oats brings its proper harvest; but he also knew the possibilities of human redemption from the ways of folly and sin.

Third Dramatic Period

We have seen in Shakespeare's second period the evidences of a broadening and deepening conception of human life. It is this more serious view of the world that is characteristic of his third period, extending from 1601 to 1604. It is fittingly designated as the Hamlet Period. The comedies of the period are *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*; the tragedies are *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. The first-named comedy is the best of its group. It is a beautiful pastoral romance. Not the least significant thing about it is the way in which, amid all its lightness and gayety, it strikes the deeper note. This is illustrated by the well-known passage beginning, "All the world's a stage." It appears also in the character of the "melancholy Jaques," who is a dim anticipation of Hamlet. *Measure for Measure* is almost tragic in its bitterness. *Julius Cæsar* is the greatest of Shakespeare's Roman dramas. The other two tragedies are the dramas most characteristic of the period. In *Hamlet*, "the world is out of joint," and the tragedy of human life is deep and incurable. That tragedy lies in Hamlet's own nature. He is brave, he is resolute; but in him "the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." It is not that he is incapable of vigorous and decisive action; he can act as swiftly and directly as the best when he is absolutely sure of his grounds. His difficulty is that he sees too clearly all the consequences and implications of his deed. In him we have a finely organized, intellectual, and imaginative temperament hampering the power

of action and of will. He realizes his own defect, and, impatient at himself, acts at times with a sudden rashness. Caught at last in the toils, he falls a victim to his own most noble temperament. He brings down his enemies with him in his fall; but he must perforce leave to others the task of setting the world to rights. *Othello* has commonly been interpreted as a tragedy of jealousy; but it is rather a tragedy of conflict between three great forces — jealousy, honor, and wedded love. Othello is not a type of the jealous spirit — a negro savage breaking through the restraints of civilized life. He is not at all by nature a jealous man. The true exemplar of jealousy in the drama is Iago. By the most devilish ingenuity he persuades Othello of the infidelity of Desdemona and rouses him to action. The spirit in which Othello kills Desdemona is well expressed in his own words:

> For naught I did in hate, but all in honour.

Honor and love struggle for the mastery in his great soul. He would fain avoid the task that he feels to be laid upon him, but his sense of duty and of justice is too strong. When his awful deed is done and he realizes his fatal mistake, it is love that triumphs in his soul. These words should be his vindication:

> When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
> Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
> Nor set down aught in malice; then must you speak
> Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
> Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
> Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
> Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe.

Fourth Dramatic Period

From 1605 to 1608 extends a fourth period which is in many ways a continuation of the third. The sense of tragedy in human life grows still deeper. A real bitterness against the world seems to have

come into the poet's soul. He is on the verge of pessimism and misanthropy. The cheerful and hopeful view of life seems for the time to have passed utterly away. It is the Lear Period. Here are the tragedies, *Coriolanus*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*; here, also, are two dramas, the one a comedy and the other a tragedy, which Brandl characterizes as satirical dramas, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens*. These last two plays, in their bitterness and misanthropy, are in a sense the most characteristic of the period. They show Shakespeare's extreme reach in this direction; and they show also that even Shakespeare could not create great work in such a spirit. The greatest dramas of the period are the two mighty tragedies, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare has drawn a dark and awful picture of the ingratitude of children toward a father. The old king has divided his kingdom between his two eldest daughters, casting off his youngest child, Cordelia, because she will not stoop to flatter him in his folly. The cruelty of his children drives Lear to madness and despair. There is no more terrible and pathetic picture in literature than that of the mad king, bareheaded in the tempest, with no companion save his poor faithful fool. The story of Gloster and his cruel son affords both parallel and contrast to the main action. The meaning of the drama lies in the words:

> How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child.

Its cruelties suggest the question of Lear, "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" *Macbeth* is a tragedy of ambition, of crime, of remorse, of retribution. The witches upon the barren heath, with their "supernatural soliciting," have lodged in Macbeth's mind the tempting suggestion that he shall be king. With the encouragement and help of his wife, he plans and

accomplishes the murder of the good King Duncan. One crime necessitates another; and first he murders Banquo and then annihilates the family of Macduff. The ghost of Banquo, sitting at his table, invisible to all but him, marks the beginning of his terrible punishment. Like Richard III, he has all the courage of a man and a soldier, can truly say, "what man dare, I dare"; but the guilt in his heart makes him afraid of shadows. Lady Macbeth, too, is haunted by the same remorse; she walks in her sleep, rubbing her hands in agony, and crying, "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." When her death is announced to Macbeth, he replies in a tone of despairing pessimism:

> She should have died hereafter;
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time,
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

Fortunately for Shakespeare and for the world, his mood of bitterness does not last. He does not cease to regard life seriously, he does not entirely escape from the sense of gloom and tragedy; but he passes on into a serener mood,

> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened.[1]

This fifth period lies between the years 1608 and 1613. It has been called the period of the Romances; it

[1] Wordsworth, *Lines composed near Tintern Abbey.*

contains three "romance-comedies," — *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* — and a "romance-history," *Henry VIII*. Shakespeare had always been a romantic poet; but here the word "romantic" seems to take on a larger and higher meaning. The poet turns away from the heart-breaking realities of the actual world to a realm of pure and serene imagination of which he alone is the creator and the potent lord. The typical play of the period is *The Tempest*. It is in some sense an epitome of all that he has done. Here is human life, from Prospero the seer to Trinculo the drunken jester, from Ferdinand the prince to Miranda "so perfect and so peerless." Here, also, is Ariel the "tricksy spirit," and here Caliban the half-beast. The human life is real, but it is surrounded with an atmosphere of enchantment such as exists only in Prospero's magic isle. The wonders of the play are a type of the wonders which Shakespeare's imagination has conjured up before the world. He has scooped out of nothingness a new realm of dreams which he has peopled with figures almost as real as those of actual life. He has taught us in *The Tempest* that human life itself is a dream,

Fifth Dramatic Period

> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

With such words as these Shakespeare closes his great career, and goes home to his quiet life and quiet death at Stratford. "The rest is silence." "Like Prospero, he has broken his staff and cast his book into the sea, into a depth which the plummet will never sound." But his work remains.

He is the largest figure in the world's literature — preëminently great as a poet, as a dramatist, as an artist in form, as a seer and interpreter of human life. The great business of a dramatist is to create living human characters that shall be at once individual and typical, and to bring these characters into such relations with each other as shall produce a true and harmonious picture of human life. Shakespeare's genius was adequate to all the demands of such a task. He had an unequalled knowledge of humanity, a deep and true insight into life and character. The subtlety of his analysis was matched only by the force and vividness of his creative power in the portrayal of living men and women. In his almost infinite variety there is truly "God's plenty." No man has ever had such breadth and intensity of artistic sympathy; and no man has ever been more objective and impartial in his treatment of all sorts and conditions of men. The range of his dramatic power is amazing; but his mastery of form seems always commensurate with his powers of conception. His stage is the world, his characters are types of universal mankind, his subject is the human soul. In his portrayal, he seems to mingle and fuse apparently contradictory elements. His imagination unites the realistic with the romantic, combines the humorous and grotesque with what is most deeply tragic. The development of his art — and doubtless of his character — was toward self-confidence, self-mastery, serenity, a generous but profound morality. If any man was ever in harmony with nature, it was he. Consciously or unconsciously, he understood the world in which he lived, sympathized with it, and had the power to portray it. As a pure poet, he is almost equally great. He was "of imagination all compact." He had the poet's passion for beauty and the poet's gift of music. Without these special powers, he might still have been a great dramatist; but his dra-

Shakespeare's Genius

matic work is immeasurably exalted by his genius as a poet. It is the glory of his art that he is at once supremely poetic and supremely true.

Ben Jonson

Ben Jonson — probably, all things considered, the greatest of Shakespeare's dramatic contemporaries — was a younger man than Shakespeare by nearly ten years, and lived for over twenty years after Shakespeare's death. The best dramatic work of the two men, however, was substantially contemporary, and their intimate personal association naturally links them together. Jonson's genius is in very great contrast with that of Shakespeare and at almost the opposite extreme from that of Marlowe. He was probably not a university man; but, nevertheless, he was perhaps quite the most learned poet of his age. The foundations of his scholarship were well laid by an excellent education at Westminster School, under the walls of Westminster Abbey in London; and upon this foundation he zealously built by his own lifelong efforts as a student. His learning was chiefly classical, as was natural in that age of the Renaissance; and it united with the natural bent of Jonson's mind to make him the great classical dramatist in an age of romantic writers. We have observed the tendency to conform English drama to classical models — a tendency that was resisted and overcome chiefly by Marlowe and Shakespeare. With this classical tendency Jonson was largely in sympathy; and if all the Elizabethan dramatists had been of his mind, the character of English drama would have been far different. Jonson, moreover, was less a born genius than a conscious and trained artist. He was not, like Marlowe, swept away by his passion; rather, he thoroughly understood his business as a dramatist, and accomplished his results with forethought and deliberation. The common antithesis has been that Jonson had art while Shakespeare had nature,

and it is as true as any such general statement can well be. Still another point of difference between Jonson and most other Elizabethan dramatists lies in the fact that he was very much of a realist. His experience had been such as to give him a wide and accurate knowledge of men and things. He was a keen and shrewd observer, and his mind was stored with such superficial knowledge of life and character as observation can give. In particular, he was well acquainted with the life of London, and had an inclination and an aptitude for the portrayal of its oddities and whimsicalities — what he called its "humours." There is nothing of this in Marlowe; there is little in Shakespeare, although he — thoroughgoing romanticist as he was — knew how in his own way to reach the essential realities of life. It may be further observed that Jonson, like Shakespeare, knew the theatre, and was therefore a practical playwright as well as a theoretical artist. This has given to his best plays an acting quality which is lacking in the dramas of Marlowe and of some later as well as earlier writers. The personal characteristics of the man are scarcely less interesting than his genius, and have at least an indirect relation to his literary work. He was a burly figure — direct, honest, and independent. His nature was aggressive and pugnacious, and in the course of his life he had many quarrels on his hands, literary and otherwise. It is reported that he killed two men in duels and that he came near being hanged. He was in every way a commanding personality and came nearer than any other man to dominating the great circle in which he moved. Withal, he was genial and convivial, a central figure in the tavern combats of wit. Speaking of Shakespeare, Thomas Fuller writes: "Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; Master Jonson, like the former, was built

far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." In a word, Jonson was a man to be loved, hated, but never ignored. His epitaph, carved in three separate places in Westminster Abbey, is one of the most appropriate and suggestive ever written: "O rare Ben Johnson!"

Jonson's Dramas

Jonson's first play was a comedy with the characteristic title, *Every Man in his Humour.* It deals with certain phases of London life, and illustrates his realism, his treatment of "humours," and his observance of classical rules. This was shortly followed by *Every Man out of his Humour.* Other plays of the same general type are *The Silent Woman* and *The Alchemist.* The latter is probably his masterpiece in comedy. Its theme is quackery, and its central figures are three finely contrasted impostors—Subtle, Face, and Dol Common. They are banded together to dupe "not one or two gulls, but a whole flock of them." The notable figure of the play is the famous Sir Epicure Mammon, a singular compound of luxury, lust, credulity, greed, and fertile imagination. The plot becomes very complicated, as the various dupes all flock to the house at the same time and yet must be kept from knowledge of each other. Jonson weaves these various threads of interest into a most masterly plot, and leads up with great skill to the humorous catastrophe. *Volpone*, or *The Fox*, is not so much the treatment of a "humour" as of a master passion. Its central figure is an avaricious Venetian nobleman. There is in it more of romantic atmosphere than in most of Jonson's dramas. Representative of his more purely classical work and also of his method in tragedy, are his *Sejanus* and his *Catiline.* Nowhere is the contrast between him and Shake-

speare more striking. Jonson brought to bear all his learning, aimed at scrupulous fidelity to historical fact, sought to portray Romans and Roman life as they actually had been; he carefully avoided mingling comedy with tragedy. Shakespeare, on the other hand, was very little concerned about historical accuracy, exercised a large freedom in portraying men simply as men, and had no hesitation in mingling the humorous and the tragic as they are mingled in actual life. No plays seem to have been more popular on the stage than Jonson's. This appears somewhat strange considering the romantic tendencies of the age; but it is due perhaps in part to Jonson's personal popularity and possibly in still greater measure to the naturalness of the characters and the skilful construction of the plots. It is certainly not due to their poetic charm, for in Jonson's best acting plays there is remarkably little poetry. Yet Jonson was a genuine poet. This is shown in some of his minor plays, and it is shown still more emphatically in his *Masques*. The masque was a sort of lyrical and mythological dramatic production, usually presented with the accompaniment of gorgeous costume and of elaborate scenery and stage machinery. Jonson wrote many masques of much lyrical beauty; and his work in this kind is the best in English literature with the single exception of Milton's *Comus*, written three years before Jonson's death.

Jonson's Masques

Jonson wrote some noble poetry entirely outside of dramatic lines. The most of this was gathered up in two volumes known as *The Forest* and *Underwoods*. The best of it is in the form of personal odes and of light and graceful lyric pieces. The former show Jonson as a man of fine moral dignity, of religious nature, of humble and reverent spirit, of manly temper. The latter are so surprisingly beautiful and delicate that it seems hard at first thought to believe that they could have

Jonson's Poems

been written by the same strong hand that wrote the plays. Perhaps the best known of his lighter lyrics is that beginning:

Drink to me only with thine eyes.

Jonson was a prose-writer also, his most important work bearing the title of *Timber, or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter.* It consists of notes, thoughts, aphorisms, and short essays, and expresses his ideas upon subjects ethical, rhetorical, critical, literary, artistic, educational, political, and historical. His style is more plain and direct than most written in his age, and shows more approach toward the method of modern prose.

Jonson's Prose

The names of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher are inseparably linked together in literary history. Fifty-two plays are attributed to them, and most of these were the result of their joint authorship. It is the common tradition that Fletcher's genius was the more creative and Beaumont's the more critical. However this may be, the work of the two is thoroughly welded together and bears a unique stamp. It is as typically romantic as Jonson's is typically classical. As a whole, it is poetical, as romantic drama ought to be. The plays were very popular upon the stage, and this popularity was justified by their admirable construction and excellent acting qualities. On the moral side there is a decided lowering of tone, and some of the plays are extremely coarse. Many of the characters are natural and lifelike, and fill the stage with bright and joyous figures. Sometimes, however, there is exaggeration, distortion, and vulgarity in the treatment of character. Beaumont and Fletcher know little or nothing of those deeper laws of life of which Shakespeare was the great portrayer and revealer. They have little of that elevation and dignity which marks the best work of Jonson. Some of their finest sentiments are put into the mouths of their

Beaumont and Fletcher

worst villains, and life seems ordered more by the dictates of romantic fancy than by its own inevitable laws. In spite of all limitations, however, their work has an undoubted and continuing fascination. It represents drama in its decline from the moral and poetic and artistic height of Shakespeare; but it still belongs to the great age, before the drama had fallen into decay.

The best work of Beaumont and Fletcher was in romantic comedy, lying between their tragic work on the one side and their broad farcical comedy on the other.

Philaster

No single play is more representative than *Philaster*, which might almost be called a tragicomedy. It deals with the love of Philaster for the Princess Arethusa and his groundless jealousy of the page Bellario. Bellario finally turns out to be the beautiful and noble lady Euphrasia, who, because of her love for Philaster, has long followed him in the disguise of a page. The play ends with the marriage of Philaster and Arethusa and with the elevation of Philaster to the kingship, of which he is the rightful heir. There are some strong scenes and some vigorous characters. The plot is in the main rapid and interesting. The situations are dramatic and varied, ranging from the purely romantic to the vividly realistic. The character of Euphrasia is a charming creation — romantic, beautiful, and affecting. Her pathetic situation at the close, after she has been the means of bringing the lovers together, adds the touch of tragedy which deepens the effect of the whole drama.

The dramatic product of the Age of Shakespeare must have been immense. We know that many plays — probably the majority — have been lost; and yet we

Minor Dramatic Contemporaries of Shakespeare

still retain the names and the works — in some cases voluminous — of more than thirty dramatists. Many of these are to us mere shadows, except for their works; and in many cases the authorship

of the plays is a matter of great uncertainty. The briefest possible mention of a few of the most prominent among Shakespeare's dramatic contemporaries must suffice for the present purpose.

George Chapman is best known to posterity as the translator of Homer. His work in this direction has been highly esteemed down to our own day, and has even been called, by Saintsbury, "the best translation into English verse of any classic, ancient or modern, except FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyam*." In original poetry he displays considerable power, but falls under the charge of unnaturalness and obscurity. His dramatic works make the same impression of great though unregulated power. Many of them are of the history or chronicle type, and deal with almost contemporary French history. His tragic efforts have something of Marlowe's bombastic rant, without Marlowe's excuse. In comedy he is among the best of the minor dramatists.

George Chapman

John Marston was a satirical poet, and the strain of bitter and gloomy sarcasm runs through most of his dramas. His most typical work is *The Malcontent*, a satirical play of the same general type as Molière's *Misanthrope*. Like Chapman, he seems to imitate Marlowe's thunder without Marlowe's power. The practice of collaboration among the Elizabethan dramatists is well illustrated by the fact that Jonson, Chapman, and Marston united in the production of *Eastward Ho*, a play which seems to have given offence to King James because of a slur on the Scots.

John Marston

The height of Shakespeare is reached by many ascents, and Thomas Dekker approaches him on the side of his poetry, his humor, and his tenderness. We know practically nothing of Dekker from any external evidence; but from his certain work we can shape a fairly distinct conception of his character and genius.

Thomas Dekker

His plays are gay, sweet, pathetic, and sometimes touched with charming fancy — as in his *Old Fortunatus*, dealing with the familiar fairy-tale of the wishing-cap and the inexhaustible purse. His blank verse is often beautiful, his dramatic lyrics are worthy to be mentioned with those of Shakespeare and of Beaumont and Fletcher, and what is perhaps his greatest praise, no minor dramatist of the age surpasses him in the treatment of women.

Thomas Heywood

Thomas Heywood was called by Charles Lamb "a prose Shakespeare," by which phrase Lamb seems to have meant, not that Heywood was a master of poetic and imaginative prose, but that he was able to treat well in a prosaic fashion those more ordinary and prosaic aspects of life which Shakespeare could clothe with the charm of poetic fancy. Thus understood, the characterization is just, and constitutes no mean praise. Heywood's most famous and typical work is *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. That he was an exceedingly voluminous writer is shown by his claim to have had "a whole hand or a main finger in two hundred and twenty plays." He is not to be confounded with John Heywood, the pre-Elizabethan writer of interludes.

Thomas Middleton

Thomas Middleton was much more poetical and had a wider range of dramatic ability. Most of his plays are comedies of contemporary manners and hold a fair rank with the many other plays of this type. *The Spanish Gypsy* is a romantic comedy of much finer quality. In tragedy Middleton was inclined toward the drama of blood and violence. His two masterpieces are *Women Beware Women* and *The Changeling*, in which gloomy horror is not much relieved by crude and farcical comedy. *The Witch* is best known because of its interesting association with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

The last and in some respects the greatest of the contemporaries of Shakespeare who can be dealt with here

is John Webster. Shakespeare aside, he is unmatched for pure poetry in drama except by Marlowe. No less eminent is his terrible tragic power; and in the creation of splendid types of character that yet are thoroughly human, Shakespeare alone is his superior. Webster's dramas are not pleasant reading — they are too ghastly, too horrible, too full of death and blood; they have too little of naturalness and of orderly arrangement in the plot. But they are vivid, impressive, and tremendously forcible; and they display a poetic imagination that ranges from pathetic to sublime. His two greatest plays are *Vittoria Corombona*, or *The White Devil*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Both deal with Italian themes; and those who are disposed to criticise Webster too severely for the horrors which he serves up so freely should at least remember that those horrors find large justification in the facts of Italian life and history during the sixteenth century.

John Webster

Some of the dramatic work just described was written during the last years of Elizabeth's reign, which ended in 1603; but most of it was produced during the reign of James I, which continued until 1625. The poetry written between these two dates has been already in part anticipated; for the Elizabethan lyric poetry still continued with only gradual change of quality, and the later works of the historical poets, Daniel and Drayton, belong to this later period. Reminding ourselves of this overlapping of periods, which is one of the marked features of this crowded age, we may take up the thread of poetic development. Some of the best poetry of the time was written by the dramatists, and has already been mentioned or alluded to. Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, of course, stand in the first rank. Jonson's lyric poems add much to the poetic total; and Chapman's original and translated work is of real importance. We may also re-

Jacobean Poetry

mind ourselves again of the exquisite songs of such dramatists as Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Dekker.

Perhaps the first name that ought to be mentioned after these is that of Sir Walter Raleigh — a name unmatched for romantic charm except by that of Sir Philip Sidney. Raleigh was a true Elizabethan; and many of his achievements and some of his literary productions belong to the earlier reign. Nevertheless, although he was over fifty years of age when Elizabeth died, and although his name is forever associated with hers, as a literary figure he belongs chiefly to the reign of James. It can hardly be doubted that he had sufficient genius to have given him a place among the greatest poets of the age — to have ranked him even beside his friend Spenser; but his was a life chiefly devoted to action and adventure, and literature claimed him mainly in those days which he spent in disgrace and imprisonment. The few lyrics that are certainly his show a mingling of lofty and dignified emotion with pure lyric music. Several of these connect themselves pretty clearly with his well-known reverses of fortune, and tradition tells us that some of his verses were written on the night before he was beheaded. The following lines are said to have been found in his Bible:

Sir Walter Raleigh

> Even such is time, that takes in trust
> Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
> And pays us but with earth and dust;
> Who, in the dark and silent grave,
> When we have wandered all our ways,
> Shuts up the story of our days;
> But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
> My God shall raise me up, I trust!

A very different name is that of John Donne, famous preacher, theologian, Dean of St. Paul's, and metaphysical poet. Donne is regarded by most competent authorities

as a really great poet; but his poetry can hardly be said to make a very strong appeal to the ordinary reader. It is beyond question, however, that it did exert a powerful influence upon the development of English poetry. While as a preacher Donne is associated with the religious spirit of the age, as a poet he is a child of the Renaissance. He is so through his earlier passionate love poetry; he is so, too, in the pathetic meditation on death which grows out of an intense love for life; he is so to some extent in his poetic form. His later productions were more religious and philosophical. As a whole, his poetry is charged with intense thought and with intense feeling. The description of him as a "metaphysical poet" implies an excessive intellectual ingenuity, which makes his poetic images at times merely fantastic, and which is not conducive to direct, sincere, and simple poetic expression. Largely through his influence, so-called "conceits," clever and ingenious tricks of language, became a fashion with later poets. One of the less objectionable of his own appears in the following lines:

John Donne

> Our two souls therefore, which are one,
> Though I must go, endure not yet
> A breach, but an expansion,
> Like gold to airy thinness beat.

This, though fanciful, is not unpoetical. Immediately afterward, however, he compares the two souls to a pair of compasses. What redeems Donne's poetry and what probably makes it most esteemed by his admirers, is the occasional splendid flash of genuine poetic imagination, lighting up the obscurity of his verse as with a sudden glare of lightning.

One of the most genuine and most charming poets of the early seventeenth century was William Browne. His principal work is *Britannia's Pastorals*. Besides this, he wrote *The Shepherd's Pipe*, *The*

William Browne

Inner Temple Masque, and a varied collection of minor poems. His poetry has much of the Elizabethan and Renaissance spirit. His conceptions are classical, he is possessed by the love of beauty, and his verse is often finely musical. In all this, he was an acknowledged disciple of Spenser, and gives us occasion to note that Spenser's influence united with that of Ben Jonson and Donne to determine the character of English poetry during this generation and afterward. What is new and original in Browne is his poetical treatment of nature. He writes of it in the prevailing classical fashion, and his poetry is full of the nymphs and spirits of wood and water; but he knew nature directly, and his descriptions are often full of freshness and naturalness as well as of poetic charm. He has a true artistic instinct for music and for color. He combines in an interesting way the high moral tone of Puritanism with Renaissance delight in beauty.

George Wither

A poet associated with Browne through intimate personal friendship and through some similarity in poetic work is George Wither. They were of nearly equal age; but Wither's life was the longer by nearly a quarter of a century. Although he lived well through the age of Milton, most of his best poetry was written in his early life, the chief exception being a collection of sacred songs entitled *Hallelujah*. The work that connects him most closely with Browne is his *Shepherd's Hunting* and his collaboration with Browne in the latter's *Shepherd's Pipe*. His poetical work was doubtless the better for Browne's influence. Wither's nature was the sterner of the two, as is illustrated by his satire entitled *Abuses Stript and Whipt* and by his religious poetry. He became more and more of a Puritan, and in latter life expressed repentance for his often beautiful and always innocent earlier poetry. Doubtless his love for beauty, in nature, in woman, in poetry, and in life, seemed to him a frivolous

and even sinful indulgence. The names of the two poetic friends are thus linked together in an old couplet:

> And long may England's Thespian springs be known
> By lovely Wither and by bonny Browne.

The Scotch poetry of the period is well represented by William Drummond, friend and follower of Ben Jonson. From his beautiful and romantic home on the bank of the river Esk, near Edinburgh, he is always known as Drummond of Hawthornden. Jonson visited him there in 1619; and from the visit arose Drummond's famous *Conversations with Ben Jonson*, which contained some rather indiscreet passages. His poetry as a whole is that of a skilful writer rather than that of the born poet. Yet it is not altogether without passion and depth. His love poetry is inspired by sorrow over the death of his betrothed bride; and his sacred poetry is the outcome of a serious religious nature. His elegies and pastorals are of less poetic value. Probably his best formal work is in his sonnets, though he had an excellent gift for pure lyric expression.

Drummond of Hawthornden

Turning from Jacobean poetry to Jacobean prose, we come at once upon one of the most striking and important figures of the age. The generation to which Shakespeare belonged produced a variety of splendid types in various departments of literature — types like Sidney, Raleigh, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare himself. Its type of pure and cold intelligence is Francis Bacon, Lord High Chancellor, Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, greatest philosopher and greatest scientist of his age. With the lawyer, the judge, the statesman, the noble, the scholar, and the investigator, we have not here much to do; for these characters of the man have only an indirect association with literature. Nor are we more concerned with the controversy concerning his personal character. Pope called him "the wisest,

Francis Bacon

brightest, meanest of mankind." The epigram is both exaggerated and uncharitable, but it suggests something of the astonishing contrasts to be found in Bacon's nature. He was a son of the Renaissance, in some of his best qualities as in some of his worst. He had its largeness and its eagerness of intelligence, its love of learning, its freedom of spirit, though he perhaps lacked something of its generous enthusiasm. His faults were those of too much intellect and too little heart.

Bacon's Works

The larger part of Bacon's life belongs to the reign of Elizabeth; but his greatest achievements, both literary and other, fall within the reign of James I. His philosophical and scientific works — those upon which he expected his fame chiefly to rest — were written in Latin, and it is only incidentally that he becomes a writer of English prose. Indeed, the limitations of Bacon's purely literary instinct are well shown by his opinion that English was not a safe medium through which to hand down a great work to posterity. With magnificent intellectual audacity, he declared, "I have taken all knowledge to be my province"; and his literary plan was commensurate with this declaration. He projected a great work in Latin which was to be called the *Instauratio Magna Scientiarum*, and was to cover the whole field of natural philosophy. Only the second part of this, the *Novum Organum*, was ever completed. As an introduction to the whole, he wrote in English the famous *Advancement of Learning*, which he afterward translated into Latin. His other important English works are his *Essays*, his *History of Henry VII*, and his *New Atlantis*, the last an uncompleted philosophical romance of the same general type as More's *Utopia*. It is one of the ironies of literary history that the English language which Bacon despised should be the medium through which he is most generally known to posterity and through which he has a name in litera-

ture as a great master of prose style. "These modern languages," he declared, "will at one time or the other play the bankrupt with books." Yet it is by virtue of his English writings, and more especially of his *Essays*, that he is accounted the central figure in the prose literature of his age. When we consider this fact, we may understand that decided limitations must be set to the greatness of his purely literary fame. Take him for all in all, he is one of the greatest figures in history. In English literature, great as he is, he is less great than he has commonly been accounted.

Bacon's Essays

The *Essays*, as to their matter, might be called a supreme product of purely worldly wisdom. They are close-packed with thought, and it is the thought of a man who has pondered deeply on men and things and who has had wide experience of human life; but Bacon's words are the words of prudence and sagacity rather than of high principle or of a fine idealism. Little of the loftier, more religious, more poetic side of human nature is to be found in them, but much of keen insight and of shrewd advice. The style fits the substance. It is learned, but it is not abstruse or involved. It lacks music, but it has directness, compactness, and pith. It is intellectual and frequently heavy with weight of thought, but it is clear and forcible. Sometimes it is simple and almost plain; sometimes it is ornate and figurative; but even its imaginative quality has a curious air of intellectual ingenuity, seems born of reason rather than of emotion. Latin quotation is frequent; it is as though, even here, he hesitated to commit himself fully to the use of his mother tongue. Nowhere is it truer that the style is the man; for Bacon has here expressed himself with all the naturalness and sincerity of which his nature was capable. Everywhere we see the working of his "chemical brain"; everywhere we feel the lack of any passion but the

passion of the intellect. It is thus that he writes "Of Studies":

Studies serve for Delight, for Ornament, and for Ability. Their Chiefe Use for Delight, is in Privatenesse and Retiring; For Ornament, is in Discourse; And for Ability, is in the Judgement and Disposition of Businesse. . . . To spend too much Time in *Studies*, is Sloth; To use them too much for Ornament, is Affectation; To make Judgement wholly by their Rules is the Humour of a Scholler. . . . Crafty Men Contemne *Studies;* Simple Men Admire them; And Wise Men Use them. . . . Some *Bookes* are to be Tasted, Others to be Swallowed, and Some Few to be Chewed and Digested; that is, some *Bookes* are to be read onely in Parts; Others to be read but not Curiously; And some Few to be read wholly, and with Diligence and Attention. . . . Reading maketh a Full Man; Conference a Ready Man; And Writing an Exact Man. And therefore, If a Man Write little, he had need have a Great memory; If he Conferre little, he had need have a Present Wit; And if he Reade little, he had need have much Cunning, to seeme to know that he doth not. *Histories* make Men Wise; *Poets* Witty; The *Mathematicks* Subtill; *Naturall Philosophy* deepe; *Morall* Grave; *Logick* and *Rhetorick* Able to Contend. *Abeunt studia in Mores.*

In addition to Bacon there is a considerable group of minor prose-writers, only the most prominent of whom can be here mentioned. Ben Jonson's work in prose has already been considered. Sir Walter Raleigh falls to be mentioned here chiefly by virtue of his *History of the World.* It is not great history; it is not great literature; as a whole, it is not written in a great style; but it places Raleigh among the notable prose-writers of his time because of occasional brief passages which display the touch of a master. It is these, together with similar happy things in his poetry, which make us regret that Raleigh's life could not have been given to literature. One of his finest bursts of eloquence occurs in the concluding passage of the *History.* It has not been often surpassed by any writer of English prose.

Raleigh

O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and

whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised; thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words — *Hic jacet!*

An interesting type of prose literature is represented by Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters*, written, in fact, by several hands. The type was borrowed from Greek literature, but had a natural association with the portrayal of "humours" in the comedy of Ben Jonson and his contemporaries. The "Character" is a short sketch of a familiar type of life and manners, and is usually analytic, didactic, and ethical in purpose. It is said that over two hundred publications of the kind were put forth during the seventeenth century. They are an interesting anticipation of some aspects of the modern novel. Another typical book is Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. It is typical in its vast learning; for learning was now the chief remaining evidence of the Renaissance influence in literature. It is typical also in its serious and exhaustive treatment of "melancholy"; for this was a melancholy generation. Men saw the high hopes and splendid enthusiasms of the early Renaissance fading away; learning seemed the chief good still left, and even "much study" was "a weariness of the flesh."

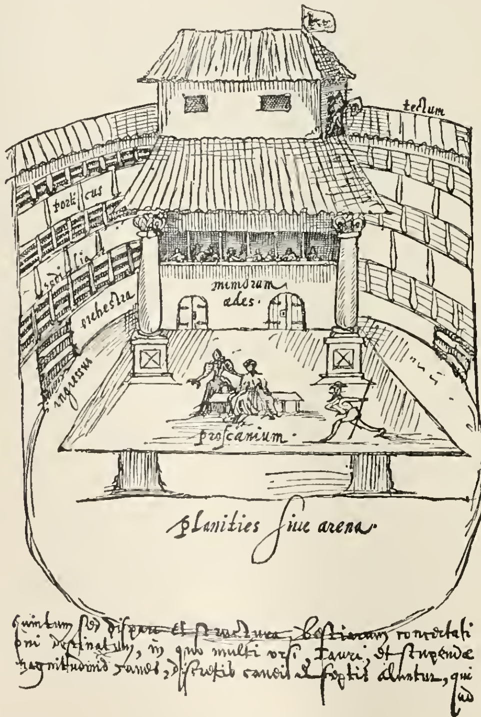
Overbury's Characters

Burton's Anatomy

We must class among the minor prose-writers that remarkable group of men who in 1611, at the order of King James, produced the Authorized Version of the Bible. Nevertheless, they gave shape to the most perfect of all the great monuments of English prose. At the basis of their success lay their magnificent model, in its various forms of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Then they allowed themselves to feel the full influence of the splendid English translations of Wyclif, Tyndale, and later revisers. Lastly, they lived in an age

Authorized Version

of stately and musical prose, remote enough from our time to have something of archaic flavor, near enough to be in all essentials our own modern speech. This wonderful book largely created the conditions out of which Puritanism arose in the next generation; it entered into the life of the English race, to mold their literature as well as their religious thought; it is still alive after three centuries, more powerful in literary influence than any other book, because nearer to the hearts of the people.



INTERIOR OF SWAN THEATER

After a sketch made in 1596

John Milton

CHAPTER IX

THE AGE OF MILTON (1625-1660)

We have observed during the reign of James I the decline of those forces and influences which grew out of the Renaissance, and have seen how the temper of the age was affected by the growing intellectuality and the growing melancholy. Men felt that they had dreamed a glorious dream and had at length seen it "die away, and fade into the light of common day." The power and the glory were not yet quite gone; for they were still to touch the lighter poetry of the coming generation with an afterglow of beauty and to shed their magic charm around the young steps of Milton. The Renaissance was still a power to be reckoned with in English literature. Nevertheless, its old strength could never be quite renewed, and literature had need of something to supplant or to supplement its influence. The time was not yet fully ripe for an entirely different age with other men and other manners. Such new power as came was due to the quickening and intensifying of a force which had been long in existence — that religious spirit which had entered into English life with the Reformation and which had never ceased to exert a strong though quiet influence. As we have had already many occasions to see, it had been operative during the whole of the sixteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth; but up to this time it had been subordinate to the Renaissance as a literary force. It had served to exalt beauty and to deepen thought and feeling; it had enriched poetry and had restrained the excesses of the drama by a sense

Decline of Renaissance

Religious Influence

of moral law; but it had never quite ranked as the supreme guiding impulse to literary creation. Now it was to take the chief place and to be the dominating influence in life and in literature. The Renaissance influence was henceforth to sink into the place of secondary importance until the time should come for its complete extinction.

Renaissance and Reformation

The relation between the Renaissance and the Reformation is an interesting one. There had always been more or less of opposition between them. The one was essentially intellectual, the other essentially spiritual; the one found its delight in the lust of the eye and the pride of life, while the other had set its affections on the things that are above; the one rejoiced in all human powers and dreamed of man's dominion over the empire of this world, while the other counted the nations of the earth but as the small dust of the balance and looked for a city which hath foundations. Yet on the whole these two great forces had moved in the same direction. At first they had worked toward the common end of freedom and expansion in thought, the one asserting liberty of intelligence, the other asserting liberty of conscience. Later and within the field of literature, they had attained to a splendid harmony in the best work of Spenser and of Shakespeare. During the reign of James I, they had drawn apart and had more and more emphasized their growing differences. Now, during the Age of Milton, they were to stand in an attitude of open mutual hostility. In the large nature of Milton himself there was a certain reconcilement of their conflicting claims; but even the genius of Milton found it impossible permanently to maintain the double allegiance. This hostility is accounted for by the steady decline in influence and aggressiveness of Renaissance forces on the one side, and by the increasing narrowness, severity, and intolerance of religion on the other. The religious type now coming to its full develop-

ment was that which we know as Puritanism; and the very word is a synonym for harshness, austerity, and sternness, as it is also for loftiness of spirit, devotion to duty, and purity of life. The conflict that arose manifested itself in fierce religious controversy, in bloody civil war, and in two widely divergent types of literary production. We call it the Age of Puritanism, but in reality the age was divided between the Puritan and the Cavalier. In many respects it is a very different age from that which immediately preceded it. The guiding impulses of literature are still the same; but they have changed their relation to each other and have in a measure modified their original character. As a consequence, the temper of life and of literature is seriously affected. The Age of Shakespeare had been an age of joyous and abundant life modified by serious religious feeling; the Age of Milton is an age of religious austerity mitigated by a half-defiant gayety. It is "merry England" no longer, but there are still heard some echoes of the old laughter.

Puritan and Cavalier

We have already seen the great drama of the Age of Shakespeare verging toward its decline. The Puritan period saw its utter decay. It was chiefly a product of the Renaissance, and naturally lost its power with the failure of the old forces. In addition to this, however, it had to contend with the active hostility of the Puritan temper. The Puritans hated "stage plays," and did all they could to discourage this "ungodly" form of amusement. A considerable number of dramatists, however, still continued their work, and a considerable body of plays was produced. The two greatest dramatists of this later time are Philip Massinger and John Ford Massinger still displays the skill of a good dramatic craftsman and has no small ability in the treatment of character. There is, however, a manifest decrease of poetic power and of those flashes of inspiration

Later Drama

Philip Massinger

which characterize so many of the older dramatists, from Marlowe to Webster. Massinger's principal work is a comedy entitled *A New Way to Pay Old Debts.* In it occurs the famous character of Sir Giles Overreach. This comedy is very much superior to any other of Massinger's plays; but apart from it, his most effective work is in tragedy. Ford is a better poet than Massinger, though an inferior playwright. His *Broken Heart* is typical of his powers and of his defects. It has an intensity of tragic power that makes it extremely affecting; but it is too horrible, too bloody, and too chaotic. His most powerful situations seem forced and unnatural. There is a certain morbidness in his genius that is itself a symptom of decay. Great as are his powers of terror and pathos, the drama in his hands is visibly approaching the end of its splendid career. It is carried on still by a number of inferior dramatists; but at last, in 1648, the Puritans order the closing of the theatres, and the career of the great romantic drama is run. As a whole, it is probably unequalled by any other single body of work in the world's literature.

John Ford

The leading men of this age poured forth a flood of prose writing in many kinds. Much of it was inspired by the religious and political conflicts of the time, but philosophy and history were also well represented. Among such writings we are, of course, chiefly concerned with those that have a literary flavor in the substance or in the style. Apart from Milton, whose prose work will be best considered in connection with his poetry, four leading writers will serve to give us an idea of what was being accomplished.

Prose-writers

Jeremy Taylor was one of the greatest pulpit orators and one of the greatest prose-writers of the seventeenth century. Saintsbury characterizes him as "in almost all ways the chief of English orators on

Jeremy Taylor

sacred subjects"; and Emerson names him "the Shakespeare of divines." Taylor was not so much a great theologian, a great thinker, or a great scholar, as he was a great orator and rhetorician. His supreme gift is that of imagination, and his style is rich with imagery and picturesque description. He has also a poet's delight in beautiful things, and answers to our ordinary conception of what is meant by a prose poet. Grace, tenderness, persuasiveness, are also his. Next to his picturesqueness, his style is chiefly remarkable for its music. His faults are those of looseness, discursiveness, lack of simplicity, and lack of logic. Such works as his *Holy Living*, his *Holy Dying*, his *Liberty of Prophesying*, and his volume of sermons entitled *The Golden Grove* become literary masterpieces by virtue of his inimitable richness and beauty of expression. The following is one of Taylor's most famous and most characteristic sentences:

For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings: till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministries here below.

Thomas Fuller

Thomas Fuller was also a divine, but one of very different type from Taylor. Among other works he wrote *The Holy State*, *The Profane State*, and a *History of the Worthies of England*. The latter is his best known and most characteristic production. Fuller was a man entirely serious and reverent in his main purpose; but he had a unique turn of mind, and his style is everywhere characterized by a humorous quaintness. He has been thought frivolous, but he is rather odd and

naïve. All this gives a decided charm to his style for those who are not repelled by his genial eccentricity. How natural and incorrigible a habit of the man his quaintness was, is well illustrated by the epitaph which he wrote for himself, "Here lies Fuller's earth."

Sir Thomas Browne

Something of the same quaintness and humor, though qualified by a deeper and loftier habit of thought, is to be found in Sir Thomas Browne, a Norwich physician. His best known and most admired works are entitled *Religio Medici* and *Urn Burial.* These themes do not seem very promising for literature; but the books contain passages which no writer of English prose has ever surpassed. Browne was a man of remarkable learning, and his style is often heavy with learned word and phrase; but he had, like Jeremy Taylor, that combination of poetic imagination and verbal melody of which only the greatest masters of prose style are capable. Taylor's style soars and sings; Browne's moves with the stately and solemn pomp of a dead march. Not often has English prose heard a nobler music than that of this famous sentence from his *Urn Burial:*

> Now since these dead bones have already out-lasted the living ones of Methusaleh, and, in a yard under ground and thin walls of clay, outworn all the strong and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests: what prince can promise such diuturnity unto his relicks, or might not gladly say,
>
> *Sic ego componi versus in ossa velim?*

Izaak Walton

How different a figure from any of these is the dear old fisherman, Izaak Walton. He has all their quaintness, but possesses a sweetness and a charm that are quite his own. His atmosphere is not the atmosphere of books, but that of the outdoor world of rural nature. His *Complete Angler* is one of the best known books of its century. Walton takes the reader with him on his fishing excursions, and makes him feel his own love

for the quiet beauties of nature and the charm of English rural life. The clear brook, the flowering meadow, the wayside sights and sounds, the country inn, all have their delight for him; and the mere catching of fish is only a pleasant incident to these higher enjoyments. In his quiet pages "the drums and tramplings" of civil war seem very far off, and fierce religious controversies are easily forgotten. How different was his lot from that of John Milton, who was compelled to spend many of his best years in the very thick of the political and religious conflicts of his age, and whose prose writings constantly echo the jarring noises of the great struggle.

Cavalier Lyrists

Turning from prose to poetry, our attention is first attracted by the little group of singers known as the Cavalier Lyrists. Their poetic inheritance is from the lyric poetry of the Age of Elizabeth, although the Elizabethan lyric music takes on in their verse a gayety, a gallantry, a dashing vivacity, that we feel to be new and unique. Their inspiration is mostly love for woman and reckless loyalty to their king. They are genuine poets, although their poetry is distinctly of the lightest and airiest sort. They have no sympathy with the Puritan temper, even if their bright spirits are sometimes touched by its gloom. Their characteristic note is one of careless, brilliant, and audacious gayety. They take from Ben Jonson their lyric ease and grace, from Donne their fantastic "quips and cranks."

Thomas Carew

Thomas Carew is the earliest of the numerous and gallant band of Cavalier singers who dallied with the beauty of love and poetry amid the horrors of civil war. Carew was a courtier, a thoroughgoing Royalist, and at his best an exquisite poet. It is he who makes the transition from Elizabethan song to the typically Cavalier poetry. What he is capable of in purely lyric verse, a single stanza from one of his best love poems may serve to show:

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose,
For in your beauty's orient deep
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Sir John Suckling and Richard Lovelace are usually coupled together as the most typical of Cavalier poets.

Suckling and Lovelace

They were alike in their brilliant and careless lives, in their worship of love and beauty, in their devotion to poetry and to royalty, and in their unhappy fates. Suckling was tortured by the Spanish Inquisition, and probably committed suicide in exile. Lovelace died in poverty and ruin. Both poets live by virtue of a few matchless songs. Similar as they are in many ways, the poetic tone of each is peculiar. Suckling has an air of sprightly impudence clothed in the easy manner of a gentleman. One of his best known songs is the following:

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
  Prithee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
  Looking ill prevail?
  Prithee, why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
  Prithee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't win her,
  Saying nothing do't?
  Prithee, why so mute?

Quit, quit, for shame, this will not move:
  This cannot take her.
If of herself she will not love,
  Nothing can make her:
  The devil take her!

Lovelace has an equal air of gallantry and even more carelessness of expression, but he has the greater seriousness and occasionally strikes a really noble note. Nothing of his is better than the brief song, *Going to the Wars:*

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field,
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore, —
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

It is to Lovelace, too, that we owe the beautiful lines,

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.

Robert Herrick

Somewhat apart from these poets — a country parson and not a courtier — was Robert Herrick. Nevertheless, his verse represents essentially the same spirit as theirs — the spirit of more or less conscious reaction and protest against the severity and gloom of Puritanism. There is no sunnier poetry in English than much of Robert Herrick's. There is no lyric poetry of the lighter kind dealing with common things in sweeter, daintier, and more perfect verse. His range is not wide, his flight is not high; but within his limits, he has a mastery of the music of words that is almost absolute. His acknowledged poetic master is Ben Jonson, for whom he displays a kind of quaint idolatry. A vein of coarseness in his character is shown by his epigrams, which are neither clean nor witty. All this, however, he keeps out of his purely lyric work. A simple and almost childlike delight in the beauty of nature and of common things is his best and most characteristic trait. It is displayed to the full in the multitude of charming little poems which are grouped under the general title of *Hesperides*. This quality is all the more remarkable in view of the fact

that Herrick was after all a very worldly sort of person and rather grumbled at his enforced exile from the world in a little country parsonage. He did not take his religious duties too seriously; and yet he was in his own way a sincerely if not deeply religious man. This is shown by his poems called *Noble Numbers*, which deal with religious themes in a genuine and poetical way. This may be illustrated by a few stanzas from *The Litany:*

> In the hour of my distress,
> When temptations me oppress,
> And when I my sins confess,
> Sweet Spirit, comfort me!
>
> * * * * *
>
> When the house doth sigh and weep,
> And the world is drown'd in sleep,
> Yet mine eyes the watch do keep,
> Sweet Spirit, comfort me!
>
> * * * * *
>
> When the passing-bell doth toll,
> And the furies in a shoal
> Come to fright a parting soul,
> Sweet Spirit, comfort me!
>
> * * * * *
>
> When the Judgment is reveal'd,
> And that open'd which was seal'd;
> When to Thee I have appeal'd,
> Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

His sensuous and somewhat pagan nature must have been rather terrified by the fierce and gloomy religion of the Puritans. He was incapable either of their harshness or of their spiritual exaltation. Still there is, even in his lighter and gayer poems, a frequent haunting sense of the transitory nature of all worldly love and beauty. In a charming poem *To the Virgins*, he says:

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

Perhaps no single quotation from Herrick could give us a better idea of the man, the poet, and his poetic themes than the introduction to the *Hesperides:*

> I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers,
> Of April, May, of June, and July-flowers;
> I sing of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,
> Of bride-grooms, brides, and of their bridal-cakes.
> I write of Youth, of Love; — and have access
> By these, to sing of cleanly wantonness:
> I sing of dews, of rains, and, piece by piece,
> Of balm, of oil, of spice, and ambergris.
> I sing of times trans-shifting; and I write
> How roses first came red, and lilies white.
> I write of groves, of twilights, and I sing
> The court of Mab, and of the Fairy King.
> I write of Hell; I sing, and ever shall
> Of Heaven, — and hope to have it after all.

Religious Poets

Very different in temper from Herrick are three poets of a distinctively religious character. Their work is indeed at the opposite extreme from that of the Cavalier poets. As the latter approach Milton on the lighter and more beautiful side of his poetic genius, so these religious poets approach him on the loftier and austerer side. While they were not all Puritans in the stricter sense of the term, they do as a group represent the prevailing Puritan temper.

George Herbert

A country clergyman of opposite type from Herrick was George Herbert. His deep piety is manifest in his work as in his life, and the man's whole nature seems to have been set in the direction of holy thought and action. There is in him no note of religious conflict, except it be the conflict against sin in his own members. Indeed, it is the spirit of religious peace for which he yearns — a peace which the world of his day was certainly not disposed to give. Herbert is a true poet, very even in quality, but seldom inspired. The main body of his work

is included in a single volume called *The Temple.* The influence of Donne is everywhere apparent in the fantastic conceits with which his poems are filled. This tendency appears in his general arrangement of the poems to correspond with the structure of a church — beginning with the porch — and with the succession of church services and festivals. It appears in the titles of individual poems — such as *The Collar* and *The Pulley* — and in separate poetic fancies. In spite of this defect, Herbert's poetry is attractive; and his very conceits not seldom have a quaint charm of their own. The chief value of his poetry lies in its reflection of the deep religious earnestness of the man and of the spiritual and poetic aspiration of a consecrated nature.

Richard Crashaw

Likewise much given to conceits was Richard Crashaw, a poetical disciple of Herbert. He represents the passionate fervor of the religious nature rather than its intellectual struggles. His temperament naturally carried him over to Catholicism; and after being expelled from Cambridge in 1644, he went to Italy, and died there as canon of Loretto in 1650. As a poet Crashaw was very unequal. At his worst, he is very bad indeed. At his best — which is all too seldom — he equals almost any poet of his age save Milton, and is not unworthy to be named even with that great master of poetry. His *Flaming Heart* and *Hymn to St. Theresa* have passages that are sweetly and nobly musical. Of such lines as these, no poet need be ashamed:

> O thou undaunted daughter of desire!
>
> By thy large draughts of intellectual day.
>
> By the full kingdom of that final kiss.

He was a skilful Latin poet, and the reputed author of a really poetical conceit on the miracle of Cana which appears thus in English:

> The conscious water saw its God and blushed.

Crashaw's poems of divine love form an interesting contrast with a charming earlier poem entitled *Wishes to his Supposed Mistress*,

> Whoe'er she be,
> That not impossible she
> That shall command my heart and me.

All of them taken together illustrate the range of which he was capable.

Henry Vaughan was another disciple of Herbert, even closer to his master than was Crashaw. Vaughan has been characterized as a religious mystic. As a poet, he often falls below Herbert, and as often rises above him. He feels the mysteries of nature, of the human soul, and of the spiritual world, and sometimes gives to these in his poetry a finely simple and musical expression. When he ceases to be merely meditative and becomes really inspired by religious and poetic feeling, he rises to the level of the best of English sacred poets. He suggests association, too, with the great poets of nature; for he is able to convey a sense of spiritual communion with the objects of the natural world. Such lines as these are typical of his poetic manner:

Henry Vaughan

> I saw Eternity the other night,
> Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
> All calm, as it was bright.
>
> Dear, beauteous Death! the jewel of the just,
> Shining no where, but in the dark;
> What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
> Could man outlook that mark!

Before coming to Milton it is necessary to consider two poets who have some natural association with each other, but who do not belong specifically either to the group of Cavalier Lyrists or to the group of religious poets. These are Cowley and Waller. Abraham Cowley was in his day regarded as the greatest of English

Abraham Cowley

poets. Seventy years after his death in 1667, Pope asked, "Who now reads Cowley?" A few there are who read him even yet, for the sake of some really fine poetry, and perhaps still more for the sake of his historical position. For Cowley is one of the links between the old poetry and the new. He looks backward toward the romantic poetry of the Age of Shakespeare and toward the metaphysical poetry of Donne; he looks forward toward the coming age and anticipates in some measure the peculiarities of the so-called classical school. Like all the other poets thus far mentioned in this period, he was a Royalist; but this fact does not count for much in his poetry. He sometimes approaches the lyric ease of the Cavalier poets; but he is often heavy, cumbersome, and involved. In such work as his *Pindarique Odes*, the style is not seldom musical and often free even to excess and obscurity; but on the other hand, he seems to have been attracted by the finish and monotony of the classical couplet. He writes of love, but, as Samuel Johnson said, like "a philosophical rhymer who had only heard of another sex." He preceded Milton in the production of a Biblical epic, the *Davideis*, but his imagination was not adequate to the satisfactory achievement of so great a task. Certain things about Cowley are decidedly attractive. One of these is his evidently sincere longing for an honorable and cultured retirement in the companionship of books and of the beauties of nature. This is expressed in a poem called *The Wish*, which he claimed to have written at thirteen and which his maturer judgment considered worthy of preservation among his works. It is expressed in later poems, notably in his *On Solitude*. It is expressed, too, in his prose writings; for it may be here observed that Cowley was one of the most notable essayists of his day, although his prose belongs to his later life and will call for notice in the next period. Another admirable trait of

Cowley is a generous disposition to appreciate and openly to praise the virtues and abilities of other men. Various illustrations might be given, but none better than his poem *On the Death of Mr. Crashaw*, which begins:

> Poet and Saint! to thee alone are given
> The two most sacred names of earth and Heaven,
> The hard and rarest union which can be
> Next that of godhead with humanity.

The total effect of Cowley's work is to leave the impression that he was a man of remarkable but ineffectual powers. There are few things more pathetic than to be almost a great genius.

Edmund Waller

Edmund Waller is generally accounted the earliest writer to anticipate the classical period in its use of the heroic couplet and in its refinement and neatness of poetic form. The heroic couplet is as old as Chaucer; but in the hands of Waller and his successors, it took on such finish, such precision, such regularity, and withal such brilliancy, as to make it practically the instrument of new metrical effects. Less uncertain than Cowley, Waller persisted in the new fashion until greater men came to reënforce him and to better his example. His light is now lost in theirs, but he still retains something of the glory that attaches to the harbinger of a new and successful movement. In middle life, he was deemed only second to Cowley; after Cowley's death, his fame rose still higher; and when he himself died in 1687 at a great age, and in the full tide of the new movement, he was for a brief time regarded as the greatest English poet. He appears to have been somewhat of a time-server; for he was in favor under Charles I, under Cromwell, and again under Charles II. He keeps his interest with posterity chiefly as the first English classical poet before the Age of Classicism. This is his most famous couplet:

> The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made.

It remains to consider John Milton, one of the very greatest poets of English or any other literature, and the man in whose genius are gathered up and intensified all the literary powers and capabilities manifested in his age. Milton is a typical example of the union of the finest poetic genius with great intellectual ability and with high moral character. The man, the thinker, and the poet are alike preëminently great. His intellectual depth and force made him the chosen literary champion of Puritanism, as Oliver Cromwell was its champion in the fields of war and statecraft. In pure poetry, also, he gained a strength, solidity, and breadth of thought which did not, it is true, constitute his poetic genius, but which gave a firm foundation upon which that genius might rest. His intellectual powers, moreover, were trained by the best educational discipline of his age and by his own profound and long-continued study. He was one of the most learned poets of his own or of any other time. His religious nature and his interest in great moral questions had also an incalculable influence upon his work. No poetry is loftier, purer, more serious, than his. No prose writing oftener displays the nobility of a lofty spirit or enthusiasm for a great cause. Milton is austere, harsh, even bigoted in controversy; but no one can doubt the sincerity of his convictions or his whole-souled fidelity to what he conceived as duty. He had many of the faults, but he had also the noblest virtues, of the Puritan. His intellectual and moral qualities concern us here chiefly as they are related to his poetic genius. What that genius itself was able to accomplish, we shall have occasion to see.

Milton's Genius and Character

We may here observe that it made him not only the greatest, but in many ways the most representative, literary figure of his age. There was much in him of the Elizabethan past. His genius was most

Milton and his Age

nearly akin to that of Spenser — "sage and serious Spenser" — whom he loved and admired. He felt the influence also of Ben Jonson, but fortunately escaped that of Donne. To a certain extent he was in sympathy with the growing classicism of the age — at least in its general spirit — for he was a superb poetic artist, and his work helped to cultivate the ever increasing appreciation for perfect literary form. He was a representative prose-writer, and his style has many qualities in common with that of Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Browne, and other leading prose-writers of his day. He had a gift of lyric music as pure and fine as that of any Cavalier poet, though it was dedicated to a higher service. As a religious poet, he is not only the greatest in his age but the greatest in the literature. What other poets could do well, he could in his own way do better ; and if we had only Milton left to us, we should be able to make reasonable conjecture as to all that was accomplished in literature in his age. When all is said, however, Milton is one of the most individual of poets. His work has a quality which that of no other man of his time possesses. It is the product of a larger, a loftier, a more gifted, a more consecrated, nature — it is Miltonic.

Milton's Early Life

Milton was born in London in 1608. His home atmosphere was one of culture and refinement as well as of genuine piety. That his father was a musical composer and that Milton was trained in music, doubtless meant much to the development of that poetic genius which was to unlock so many harmonies of English speech. Besides his home training, he received a good preliminary education at St. Paul's School in London. From here he went to Christ's College, Cambridge, where his beautiful face, his gentle manners, and his delicate spirit made him known as "the Lady of Christ's." He had already chosen his career, and in the years immediately following his departure from the Uni-

versity, he deliberately set himself to the task of training himself as a poet. Amid the quiet woods of Horton, he gave himself up to study and to meditation, to communion with nature and fellowship with the great dead, in the faith "that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy." Here his poetical career began. From this point we can probably consider Milton to best advantage by observing and comparing the three distinct periods of his literary life. These mark three strongly contrasted phases of his character, his genius, and his work.

Milton's early poetic period covers some ten years of poetic production, extending from about his twentieth to about his thirtieth year. His first notable poem, the *Hymn on the Nativity*, was written in his twenty-first year, in 1629, while he was still at Cambridge. It strikes the high and serious note that was to characterize all his poetry. This period also includes a number of sonnets, one of the finest being written in 1631 and entitled *On his being arrived at the Age of Twenty-three.* It is like a consecration and a pledge that his high poetic gifts shall be used

Early Poetic Period

As ever in my great task-master's eye.

The period is made illustrious, however, by four great masterpieces, each well-nigh perfect in its kind.

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso* are companion poems, the one dealing with the cheerful man, the other with the melancholy or meditative man. Alike in formal plan, they are finely contrasted in tone and sentiment. One follows the course of the day from sunrise until evening, painting its rural sights and

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso

sounds. The other watches out the night with the lonely and pensive scholar, setting noble thoughts to noble music. They are typical of the two opposed yet harmonious sides of Milton's nature — the one finding joy in all the beauty and sweetness of the world, the other seeking an even higher delight in the glory of lofty thought and spiritual contemplation. Milton knew and experienced the truth that the basis of the poetic nature is sensuousness and passion; he illustrates also the greater truth that the highest heavens of poetry are open only to the noble mind and the exalted spirit. All of Milton, at least in germ, lies in these two matchless poems of his youth.

Comus

A similar mingling of qualities is to be found in *Comus*, a masque or lyrical drama. The Lady who is the heroine of the piece is lost at night in the forest and falls in with Comus — god of revelry and son of Circe the enchantress — and his bestial crew. He endeavors, by the power of his enchantments, to transform her also into the likeness of a beast, but is not able to exercise his debasing power upon her stainless purity. This work is thought by some critics to be Milton's masterpiece. It is certainly one of the most delicately beautiful poems in the language, weaving together the charms of blank verse, of exquisite lyric measures, of suggestive imagery, and of large poetic conception. With all this is matched the noblest intellectual and moral spirit. The poem is a superb exaltation of virtue.

Lycidas

Lycidas is one of the few supremely great elegies. It is in form a pastoral poem, in which one shepherd mourns the death of another. Behind this familiar and conventional classic disguise, Milton laments the death of Edward King, a college friend. The poem is beautiful simply as a pastoral, but this does not constitute its real greatness. Neither does it lay hold of us chiefly

as an expression of intense personal grief; for Milton does not seem to have been very intimate with King or to have felt any deep sense of personal loss. King was something of a poet and also a student for the ministry; and these facts gave Milton occasion to rebuke the degeneracy of poetry and especially of the clergy in his age. The poets are too light and frivolous; they love too well merely

> To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair.

The shepherds of the people are "blind mouths," ignorant and greedy; and the poet warns them to beware of the sword of vengeance. It is this high and stern rebuke that makes the poem unique, that intensifies its expression at times to a white heat of passion. Here for the first time in Milton's poetry is the austere tone of the Puritan, a tone severe yet noble, harsh yet truly poetical.

In most of the poetry of this earlier period, Milton is akin to the Elizabethan age and the spirit of the Renaissance, and is a pure poet. He has a true delight in beauty; he shows a wonderful sweetness and variety in his music; he joys in the pleasures of sense, while he is at the same time interested in higher concerns; he loves and portrays nature, but still after the somewhat artificial manner of the Elizabethans; he shows in *Comus* a romantic tendency, which is still further illustrated by the purpose that he long cherished of writing a poem on the basis of the Arthurian legends; he even attempts, in *Comus*, something in dramatic form, though dramatic creation was essentially foreign to his genius. Even in his earlier poetry, however, Milton adds something to these Elizabethan and Renaissance characteristics. His religious feeling is manifest in the *Hymn on the Nativity*, in the sonnets, in paraphrases of the Psalms, and in many of the minor poems. His learning is manifest everywhere, particularly in his Latin poetry, much of

Quality of Earlier Poetry

which was written while he was still at Cambridge. In *Lycidas*, as we have seen, there is a note of seriousness and pathos of a new kind. All of these characteristics, however, are as yet subordinated to his poetical instinct. Soon he is to be called away from poetry to enter the arena of civil and religious conflict.

Second, or Prose Period

For about twenty years Milton forsook the ways of poetry and became one of the important figures in a great political and religious movement. A few sonnets make almost the whole extent of his poetical production, though it is certain that he did not cease to meditate on his great poetic designs. The prose writings which made the principal literary occupation of these years were mainly controversial, and his controversies were for the most part either religious or political. Nearly all of them were directly associated with the party conflicts of the time. In large part, his subject-matter was of interest only to his own age, and possessed but slight literary interest even from that point of view. Occasionally, however, Milton rises to the height of some great argument in a way that gives his prose something of the nobility and impressiveness of his great poetry. Milton's prose style has many and serious limitations. It is not humorous, it is not even genial; for Milton, in the heat of intellectual battle, was a thoroughgoing Puritan, though he of course represented Puritanism on its loftiest and most beautiful side. It is comparatively unobservant of the great laws of prose, although Milton is in poetry one of the finest of literary artists. Learned diction, periodic structure, long and involved sentences, all unite to make it cumbersome and difficult. Milton was not unaware of his own limitations in the field of prose controversy. He says: "I should not choose this manner of writing, wherein knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as

I may account, but of my left hand." Yet the great poet could hardly help, now and again, pouring out into his prose sentences some of the splendid music of his verse; and when his passion for liberty, for truth, for duty, finds fitting utterance, few writers of English prose are capable of such magnificent harmonies of language. Among his noblest prose works, both for matter and style, are his *Areopagitica*, a speech on the liberty of the press, and his *Defense of the English People*, a justification of the execution of Charles I. In these and other writings, we may study Milton's relation to his age and also the relation of this middle period of his life to the rest of his career. His learning and his intellectual power here found opportunity to manifest themselves, and his great moral earnestness was also called into action. He spoke noble and great words for literature and for the freedom of human thought, but the greatest of all his powers was allowed to slumber or at least to brood in silence. In poetry, Milton is the great artist; in his prose, he forgets his art in advocating his cause, and it is only in those fortunate moments when some great thought burns within him that he rises to his heights of eloquence. Yet the period was not fruitless. In it we see the man strongly revealed, and realize how great he was even in spite of such limitations. We see him, too, undergoing a transformation. Not altogether a fortunate one for poetry, it must be confessed; for the ethereal music of *Comus* is to be heard no more, and the stern note of *Lycidas* has become stronger and deeper. Yet there is to be compensation; for the later poetry is to have a depth, a solemnity, a grandeur, a sublimity, which the earlier work promised, indeed, but did not quite possess.

Milton's public career came to an end with the Restoration of Charles II, in 1660. He lived, however, for fourteen years after that, "blind, old, and lonely," withdrawn

from public notice and devoted again to the great tasks of poetry. The change, though in many ways sorrowful for him, was a happy one for literature. The poetry of this period includes his great epic, *Paradise Lost*, its companion poem, *Paradise Regained*, and his noble drama, *Samson Agonistes*. It is in marked contrast with the poetry of his early life. As we have seen, that earlier poetry was joyous, bright, full of delight in beauty, though full of earnestness and power — in a word, Elizabethan. The later poetry is serious, sombre, full of deep moral earnestness, beautiful with the beauty of profound thought and of lofty spiritual conception — in a word, Puritan. The music of the one was light, graceful, varied ; that of the other is the music of deep and solemn organ tones reverberating among the arches of a vast cathedral. The one is of value as pure poetry ; the other, because it adds to poetry the value of philosophical thought and religious emotion. The one is full of the spirit of the Renaissance ; the other is typical of the strong, stern, gloomy English nature, which is yet able to clothe its deep seriousness of thought and feeling in the garment of immortal beauty. With Milton's later verse, the influence of the Renaissance dies away as a controlling force in English literature. The influence of the Reformation, transformed into the extreme religious type of Puritanism, here reaches its culmination. The reign of Puritanism, however, is to be short ; and with Milton, it speaks its greatest, if not quite its latest, word.

Later Poetic Period

Paradise Lost is generally esteemed to be Milton's master poetic work, contesting the palm with Dante's *Divina Commedia* for the honor of being named as the greatest epic of the modern world. It deals professedly with the fall of our first parents and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden; but, in fact, its scheme is much vaster than that. We have the fall of

Paradise Lost

Lucifer and the rebel angels from Heaven and their erection of a rival kingdom in Hell; the creation of the universe and of man; the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve; the entrance into the world of sin and death; the prophetic vision of human history and of the promised redemption of mankind. All Milton's conceptions are in harmony with this tremendous plan, and he succeeds in giving to it the interest of a mighty cosmic drama. He is less vivid and concrete than Dante, but he does not lose himself in vagueness. Above all he possesses in a supreme degree the power of suggesting by his imagery the inconceivable immensity and awful mystery of his sublime visions. The form of the poem fitly matches its great argument. Milton's blank verse is probably the most unique in the language and hardly less than the most musical and sonorous. It is modulated to something of his old-time sweetness in the descriptions of Eden, or when the legions of Hell move over the burning plains

> In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
> Of flutes and soft recorders.

Again, it is like

> Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds,

or rings with the noise of

> A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
> Frighted the reign of Chaos and old night.

Most characteristic of all, it rolls and swells and reverberates like the pealing of great organ music, as in the magnificent invocation to light that opens the third book of the poem. This same passage may illustrate Milton's masterly skill in the building of the poetic paragraph. It possesses a symmetry and completeness of its own that make it like a perfect piece of music. The harmonies of rhyme linked together into a perfect stanza could not create a whole more finished and more self-contained. Milton knew and used all the capacities of his great instrument, and added

to the sublimity of his divine conceptions all the power that the music of speech can yield.

Paradise Regained completes the scheme of *Paradise Lost.* It tells of the redemption foretold in Eden and foreseen in the prophetic description of the Archangel Michael. The theme of the poem is really the Temptation of Christ and his victory over Satan. Adam's sin had

Paradise Regained

> Brought death into the world, and all our woe.

In the later poem, Milton sings

> Recover'd Paradise to all mankind.
> By one man's firm obedience fully try'd
> Through all temptation, and the tempter foil'd.

The brief gospel narrative of the Temptation is expanded into four books of splendid poetry. The work consists mostly of dialogue, and is therefore much inferior to *Paradise Lost* in the interest of action and character. It is inferior, too, in music and in richness of language. Its power is more restrained, but the power is there. Some good judges of poetry seem even to have preferred it to *Paradise Lost*, but this has not been the general estimate.

Samson Agonistes, Milton's last great work, is a drama. His model was not the drama of Shakespeare, but that of the Greeks. The story is that of Samson, "blind among enemies," seeking his own death in the destruction of the Philistine lords. The tragedy is an impressive one, and is all the more pathetic because Samson is fitly typical of Milton himself, great in his blindness and in the shadow of approaching death. He, too, had fallen upon evil days; he, too, was lonely and dishonored amid the triumph of his foes. The bitterness of his soul speaks out in his last great poem. All the old sweetness has gone out of his music, all the old richness has disappeared from his style; but the majesty, the sublimity, the godlike power,

Samson Agonistes

are still there. It is the noble close of one of the noblest poetic careers in the history of the English literature.

Milton is undoubtedly one of the very greatest poets of England and of the world. He was a man of truly poetical nature; but he was also possessed of great intellectual power and of great moral character. These the spirit of his age was able to use to the detriment of his poetic work; but they nevertheless contributed in the end to exalt his poetic fame. He was a revealer of the mingled strength and beauty, sternness and tenderness, gloom and glory, of the English race. He was a poet speaking for the deep religious feeling of mankind. We may safely reject the theory of Taine that he was a great poet in spite of the fact that he was a Puritan, and hold rather with Green that he was a great poet because he was a Puritan. This may be to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, and to the French a riddle; but if so, it is the riddle of all English poetry — the riddle of Samson, "out of the strong came forth sweetness." Neither Englishmen nor Puritans may strike the world as very poetical; but after all, the English race has produced the world's greatest poetry, not in spite of the fact that it was English, but because it was English.

Milton's Greatness

Christs College, Cambridge

John Dryden.

BOOK IV

CLASSICISM (1660–1780)

CHAPTER X

THE AGE OF DRYDEN (1660–1700)

THERE came a day when the intellectual enthusiasm of the Renaissance and the spiritual fervor of the Reformation had spent their force. Men grew tired of the "unchartered freedom" of poetic feeling and imagination, grew tired also of that religious intensity which made the Puritan desire to worship God in his own way and made him desire also that all other men should worship God in the same way. There came, naturally enough, a reaction which was destined to change for a time the whole face of literature. So far, the religious spirit had been a great literary impulse from the very beginning of English literature. The spirit of romance had been powerful ever since the Norman Conquest, though greatly modified by the Renaissance. Now, men desired to be neither religious nor romantic. If this had been all, the attitude would have been merely a negative one, and therefore incapable of producing any great literary results. The movement, however, had a positive side as well, and thus became genuinely fruitful.

Decline of Older Impulses

The new impulse which now became operative was what we ordinarily call Classicism. Men were no longer genuinely inspired by the ancient writers, as in the days of the Renaissance. They sought to follow them in formal fashion, and they succeeded in following them only afar off. It has been truly said that the clas-

Rise of Classicism

sical movement was more Latin than Greek, and more French than Latin. On the face of it, it is more distinctly foreign than any other movement that has greatly affected English literature. Looking deeper, we shall see that what power it had was due to the fact that it found something already in the English nature which was in harmony with its spirit. The early Elizabethan dramatists had endeavored to conform English drama to Senecan models, but had found themselves swept away by the great tide of romanticism. Ben Jonson had stood for classic "art" as opposed to Shakespeare's wild "nature," but had found most of his contemporaries on Shakespeare's side. The followers of Jonson had carried on the classic tradition, but had not made much headway. Milton had cultivated a classic refinement of style, but had found this phase of his genius overshadowed by greater elements. Now, at last, in the exhaustion of powers greater in themselves and more consonant with the English character, the day of the classicist had come, and whatever of classic instinct was latent in the English nature was to have its opportunity. The prevailing French influence strengthened and encouraged this tendency, but did not create it. What seems at first sight like a movement entirely from without, is seen to be for the most part an attempt on the part of the English race to develop powers hitherto repressed and to try its strength in ways hitherto barred. That this is really the weaker side of the racial character accounts for the comparative inferiority of the literature of the classical period; that the strongest instincts of the race led it in other directions, accounts for the powerful and complete reaction which finally came.

Meaning of Classicism

What is Classicism? That is a difficult question to answer briefly; for the term is used in many ways and really means many things. As applied to the literature under consideration, Classicism is

essentially literary conformity. Classicists belong to the established church of literature and are intolerant of literary heresy. Its reverence for authority, its finish of form, its repression of passion and imagination, its exaltation of reason, its regularity and restraint, its essentially prosaic temper — these are some of the characteristics of Classicism. During the three generations of its dominance, Classicism set up three great literary autocrats — John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson. The literary autocrat is of the essence of the classical spirit. There are no such autocrats elsewhere in the literature. Ben Jonson approaches nearest to the type; and as we have just noted, Ben Jonson was a prophet of Classicism.

Religion and Politics

On the religious side, it might appear as though the tendency of the age was a revolt against too much restraint rather than a reaction against too much freedom. In a sense it was so; but the opposition to Puritanism was a revolt against its severity, its harshness, its intolerance, its rigid standards of personal conduct, rather than against its religious authority. Religious authority had the unquestioned, if sometimes too nominal, assent of the age. Puritanism, indeed, in spite of its own tyrannies, really represented freedom of conscience more than did any other phase of religious thought in the seventeenth century. Men turned from Puritanism to accept the easy-going and conventional authority of the Established Church. They accepted that as they accepted the same sort of authority in literature. Puritanism was nonconformity; and the age was returning to the established order of things both in literature and in religion. Much the same is true in politics. After Cromwell and the Commonwealth, after an interval of republicanism tempered by tyranny, the age returned to the comfortable doctrine of the divine right of kings. When this in its turn became too oppressive, they dethroned James II, but only to set

up in his place a more masterful, though more sensible, king. The sum of the whole matter is this — that the age desired the rule of recognized and established, though not too harsh and unreasonable, authority in church, in state, and in literature. It was this generally prevailing spirit that gave Classicism so easy a victory and made it so widely effective.

Results of Classicism

The literary results of Classicism are by no means insignificant. The Restoration drama, the poetry of Dryden and Pope, the prose of Swift, Addison, Steele, and Defoe, are among its most characteristic products. The movement began in the Age of Dryden, and reached its culmination in the Age of Pope; but it had so much of genuine vitality that its influence remained powerful through still another generation. The names of Goldsmith and Samuel Johnson will serve to show that the classical spirit was a force to be reckoned with until as late as the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century. The period falls naturally into three divisions, corresponding with the literary lives of Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. It is the literature of the Age of Dryden that we are first to consider.

Survival of Puritanism

We have seen that Classicism had begun to develop in literature long before the date of the Restoration. It is quite as apparent that Puritanism did not suddenly cease when the Restoration had come. The two periods overlap each other; and although there was a marked change in English life with the year 1660, literature still continued to bear some impress of Puritan influences and ideals. Most noteworthy of all is the case of Milton, who lived and wrote for fourteen years after the return of Charles II. The typical representative, however, of the continuance of Puritan sentiment into the very heart

John Bunyan

of the Restoration Period is John Bunyan. Different as they were, therefore, in life, in temperament, and in genius, it is fitting that Milton and

Bunyan should be closely associated with each other in literary history. The one was the great poet of Puritanism; the other was like the voice of one crying in the spiritual wilderness of a degenerate age.

Bunyan was some twenty years younger than Milton, and was over thirty at the date of the Restoration. He had therefore grown to manhood under the Puritan rule. His first literary work of importance, however, his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, was not produced until 1666; and the first part of his masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, appeared some twelve years later. Bunyan's literary career, therefore, belongs distinctly to the Restoration Period, although his character and genius were shaped under Puritan auspices and by Puritan ideals. Classicism had little or no influence upon him, nor did he learn his marvelous style from French models. His school of literary art was the English Bible, that great Authorized Version which Puritanism had learned by heart. His style, therefore, is more akin to the vigorous and imaginative prose of the previous generation than to the more finished, more intellectual, more modern prose of his immediate contemporaries.

Bunyan's Training

Still another reason for the unique character of Bunyan's work lies in the fact that he was quite apart from the main literary currents of his day. He was the son of a poor country tinker, and followed his father's somewhat vagabond trade. The schooling that fell to his portion was very slight; and his literary path was lighted only by the Bible and by his own remarkable genius. His early life seemed to him a very sinful one, though his sins would appear to have been created or at least greatly magnified by his Puritan temper and by his vivid imagination. At any rate, he underwent a spiritual struggle in which the terrors of sin and the fear of damnation hung over his soul like a dark and awful cloud.

Bunyan's Life

At last he felt that the grace of God had been extended to him and that his sins had been pardoned. He became a preacher and religious writer; and his warnings of sin and of God's wrath are mingled with an exalted delight in the divine mercy and in the heavenly beauty of a Christlike life. Arrested for illegal preaching, he suffered imprisonment for twelve years. Lying in Bedford jail, he had those marvelous visions which grew into his great allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress.*

Bunyan's Genius

By some such process, Bunyan's genius grew into consciousness of itself. He was a born literary artist. Few men have had a more vivid imagination. The creatures of his fancy seemed almost more real to him than the beings of the actual world. He had, too, the power of graphic portrayal, whereby his ideal visions were embodied and conveyed in language. He was the master of a style unsurpassed for simplicity, directness, force, vividness, and homely beauty. Humble and unlearned as he was, he stands as the greatest writer of English prose in his generation. Other men were more refined, more scholarly, more elegant; but none is his equal for naturalness, earnestness, sincerity, and power. Moreover, his are the only prose works of his age outside of the drama which are genuine works of literary art, true products of creative imagination.

Pilgrim's Progress

Bunyan's unquestioned masterpiece is *The Pilgrim's Progress.* It is an allegory of the soul's journey from this sinful world to the safety and joy of the heavenly kingdom. It is the greatest prose allegory of English literature and perhaps of the world. No higher praise could be given it than to say that it deserves to stand beside Spenser's great poetic allegory, *The Faerie Queene.* Like that, it has the added attraction of a fascinating story, but its appeal has been even broader. Spenser is "the poet's poet"; Bunyan appeals to common

men and women, old and young, learned and unlearned, literary and unliterary. Perhaps no other book except the Bible has been more widely spread or more generally known. In its vivid pictures, we may see the reflection of Bunyan's own religious experiences and of his attitude toward his age. Christian fleeing from the City of Destruction might well seem a type of Bunyan himself, endeavoring to escape from the licentiousness, the frivolity, and the wicked folly of his time. In the immortal picture of Vanity Fair, the age might have seen its face as in a mirror. Christian's imprisonment in the Doubting Castle of Giant Despair reminds us of his own weary confinement. Indeed, one may well conceive that the production of such a book needed the conjunction of just such a man and just such an age.

Bunyan wrote another great allegory, *The Holy War*, but it does not equal *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Perhaps the work which stands nearest to his masterpiece is his *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. The one is a great romance; the other is a brief but powerful transcript from real life. It is interesting, not only for its dramatic effectiveness, but also as containing many of the features that were later to constitute the modern novel. Both in this work and in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan shows his power to conceive lifelike characters, to invent striking incidents, to create impressive scenes, to construct a well-ordered plot. *Mr. Badman* is inferior in the latter respect; but if the distinctive features of the two books could have been united, we should have had something very like a great novel.

Bunyan's Minor Works

John Dryden was the typical literary figure of his time. Practically all that the Age of the Restoration was may be seen or guessed in him. He represents its Classicism — its desire for finished, restrained, orderly expression. He represents its moral — or rather

John Dryden

its immoral — temper, while at the same time he represents what it retained of true and manly religious spirit. Its gayety, its brilliance, its wit, together with its more solid intellectual qualities, are to be found in him. The literature of the age may be divided into miscellaneous prose, poetry, and drama; and in each of these departments, Dryden is the central figure. Nothing is more impressive than the range of his literary work, unless it be its excellence in every kind.

Dryden's literary career began with the publication, in 1659, of his *Heroic Stanzas*, written on the death of Oliver Cromwell. Only the next year, he wrote his *Astræa Redux*, or *Justice Returned*, welcoming the Restoration of Charles II. This desertion of the Puritan cause is not really so bad as it seems. Dryden had been a Puritan chiefly through family associations and traditions; his enthusiasm for the Puritan cause had never been very fervid; and in becoming a Royalist, he was probably following the natural tendency of his own temperament. In 1667 he published his first long poem, *Annus Mirabilis*, or the *Wonderful Year*, commemorating the sea victories over the Dutch and the great fire of London in 1666. At the same time, he was making his beginnings in prose, by means of critical prefaces to his dramas, and of his Essay on the Historical Poem, introductory to the *Annus Mirabilis*. His most famous critical work, the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, was published separately in 1667.

Early Poetry and Prose

Dryden had already written several dramas; and about this time, he ceased from poetry and turned his energies for a time entirely to dramatic writing. It was in connection with the stage that he achieved the successes that firmly established his reputation. Drama was the favorite literary form of the Restoration. The demand for plays was very great; and Dryden,

Dramatic Work

as a professional man of letters rather than a strongly individual genius, was tempted to seek that form of literary expression which was most largely and immediately profitable. Up to 1681 he had written some twenty dramas. His best abilities did not lie in this direction; but his perfection of literary talent gave him a large measure of success, and his strong personality made him a recognized leader. He wrote so-called heroic plays, tragedies, comedies, and tragi-comedies. Among his best-known dramas are *The Maiden Queen*, *Tyrannic Love*, *All for Love*, and *The Spanish Friar*. Dryden's dramatic faults are extravagance and bombast in the style, unnaturalness in the characters, and lack of dramatic effectiveness in the plots. Such defects would seem almost fatal to good drama; but Dryden counterbalanced them in some degree by his literary adroitness and by his genuine poetic talent. It is curious to note that Dryden wrote many of his plays in the favorite heroic couplet. He led the fashion in this respect, and was the leader also in the return to blank verse.

In 1681 Dryden forsook the drama and did not return to it until late in his life. He was now fifty years of age and had not yet produced a single work that can be called a great masterpiece. He had, however, attained to a fine mastery of all the arts of literary expression, and was now ready for the great works of his life. In 1681 he began the most wonderful series of political verse satires in the English language, by the publication of *Absalom and Achitophel*. In the next year he produced *The Medal* and *Mac Flecknoe*. These works place Dryden among the very first of English satirists. His special gift, a gift in which he has never been excelled, is that of drawing a satirical portrait. His sketches in this kind are all the more effective because of Dryden's disposition to do justice to any good qualities which he may

Satires

recognize in his victim. Following the satires, he turned his attention to religious subjects, and wrote, in 1682, his *Religio Laici*, or *A Layman's Faith*, setting forth his adherence to the Church of England. Only five years later, after the accession of James II, who was a Roman Catholic, Dryden celebrated his own conversion to Catholicism by writing *The Hind and the Panther*, a remarkable allegorical poem, in which the hind represents the Roman Catholic Church and the panther the Church of England. In this change of religion, Dryden can not wholly escape the charge of self-interest; but on the other hand, there is little doubt that it was in harmony with his own character and convictions. It is to be noted to his credit that upon the accession of the Protestant William of Orange in 1688, he remained steadfastly true to his new faith.

Religious Poetry

By the Revolution of 1688, through which James II was driven into exile and William and Mary were seated on the English throne, Dryden lost his positions as poet-laureate and historiographer-royal, together with all other aid and countenance from the government. This reverse of fortune compelled him in his later years to the greatest activity of his life. He engaged first in translation from the classics, his chief work in this kind being a translation of all of Virgil. In addition to this, he translated from Theocritus, Lucretius, Horace, Homer, Persius, Juvenal, Ovid, and Plutarch. What was more important, he continued his noble work in lyric poetry, begun before the Revolution. His most notable lyrics are his *Elegy on Anne Killigrew*, his first *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, and his *Alexander's Feast*, or second song for St. Cecilia's Day. Between 1690 and 1694 he wrote five more plays, thus closing his dramatic labors. In 1698 he began his *Fables*, and in March, 1700, published *Fables*,

Dryden's Old Age

Translations

Lyrics

Fables

Ancient and Modern, translated into Verse, from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer, with Original Poems by Mr. Dryden. In a fine preface he gives us his last piece of literary criticism. The *Fables* was Dryden's last book; for on the 1st of May, 1700, just as he was approaching the limit of his threescore years and ten, he died in London. He was given a splendid public funeral, and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

Dryden's Literary Rank

Dryden was a man of supreme talent rather than of great spontaneous genius. As we have seen, he was preeminently a man of his age. He was, however, something more than the greatest figure in a comparatively inferior literary period. He is one of the great poets of English literature. Though not of supreme stature, he is still one of the race of giants. A not unworthy successor of Milton, he hands on the tradition of great English poetry to the men who have made illustrious the literature of the last two hundred years. He possessed many noble qualities which raised him above the level of his age and made him worthy to rank with the great ones of the literature. Strength and solidity of mind, accuracy and comprehensiveness of scholarship, astonishing fluency and versatility, masterly skill as a literary workman, brilliant wit, keenness of discrimination and insight, an imagination vivid if not original, a poetic sense real if not profound — these are some of the qualities that made Dryden great. A noble poet, an almost unsurpassed satirist, a skilful dramatist, an accomplished literary critic, a master of English prose — these are some of his titles to honor.

Restoration Prose

The prose of the Restoration marks a decline from the fervor and imaginative splendor of the early seventeenth-century style; but it marks a distinct advance in the direction of the more modern prose virtues of clearness, order, and precision. Classicism operated

to restrain and to deaden poetry, but its influence on prose was in many ways advantageous. Prose before had vainly endeavored to reach the levels of poetry; now poetry for a time was brought down to the level of prose, and the distinctively prose virtues were cultivated. The final result was that each form of expression better learned its own powers and limitations. Thereafter, each developed in its own proper direction. The typical prose-writer of the age was Dryden, and no other man save Bunyan rises to great distinction in this field. There were, however, several men who were writing prose of admirable quality.

Abraham Cowley

One of the earliest of these was Abraham Cowley, whose poetical work, contemporary with that of Milton, has already been considered. In his *Discourse, by Way of Vision, Concerning the Government of Oliver Cromwell,* he shows the transition from the old style to the new. His *Essays* are in the later manner. The subjects of Cowley's interest are shown by some of the titles: *Of Greatness, Of Myself, Of Liberty, Of Solitude, Of Obscurity, The Garden.* Probably no man of the time — not even Dryden — has a more modern air or a more finished and elegant style than Sir William Temple.

Sir William Temple

Temple was a statesman, a diplomat, a cultured gentleman, a man of retired leisure, and wrote on a considerable variety of topics suggested by his public or private interests and ranging from gardening to diplomacy, from gout to Greek learning. Probably his most famous single sentence is this:

> When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over.

Minor Prose

Other writers there were — in divinity, in philosophy, in history, and in science — whose style illustrated in one way or another the tendencies of the age; but it would carry us too far afield to cite individual

cases. They were not strictly men of letters, and their service to literature was purely incidental. Perhaps the chief service of them all as a body was in subordinating style to matter and thus bringing it nearer to the modern ideal of the function of good prose, namely, to be the clear and transparent medium for the untrammelled expression of the thought. If, aside from the work of Bunyan, the Age of the Restoration produced no great masterpiece of prose literature, it did much to make prose style an adequate medium for great literary expression.

Restoration Poetry

In poetry, also, the name of Dryden must be set in the first place. He was, indeed, first without even a near rival. No one was his equal as an original poet; no one was his equal as a translator. Two minor poets will serve to illustrate the rather scant poetical production of the period.

Andrew Marvell

Andrew Marvell was like John Bunyan in being a belated Puritan, living far on into the Restoration Period; but he was a far different type of man from the inspired tinker of Bedford. Marvell had been associated with the Puritan party and had been prominent in public life. Among other positions he held under Cromwell that of joint Latin secretary with Milton. After the Restoration he remained in public life, sitting in Parliament an austere and incorruptible patriot among base and venal politicians. His earlier poetry was descriptive and lyrical, and contains much that is beautiful and melodious. His later work, following the fashion of the later time, was satirical. His satire is severe and even savage, but he never attained to anything of that finish and brilliancy in satire which characterized the work of Dryden, to anything of that quality which lifts satire above the interest of a mere passing day, and makes it immortal.

Samuel Butler was also a satirist, and one of very different fashion. He, too, lacked Dryden's perfect art in satire, as he also lacked either Dryden's or Marvell's poetical gift; but his work had decided effectiveness in its own way, and gains added interest from its historical relations. No poet better represents the revolt against Puritanism. His masterpiece — for it is a masterpiece of its sort — is a mock-epic poem called *Hudibras*. It is a ridiculous lampoon of the vices and peculiarities of the extreme Puritan. Sir Hudibras and his squire Ralpho were suggested by Don Quixote and Sancho Panza; but their adventures are mainly of Butler's own devising. The first part of the work was published in 1663. It became extremely popular with the court party; and under the influence of this popularity, Butler extended it from time to time until as late as 1678. As a whole, it possesses no great literary merit, either in construction of plot or in conception of characters; but Butler had a keen and bitter wit, and parts of the poem are shrewdly satirical and vividly grotesque. Among other things he says that the Puritans

Samuel Butler

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to.

A sort of remote echo of the beautiful lyric poetry of the earlier Cavalier poets is heard in the poems of a number of brilliant but profligate Restoration versifiers. One of the most charming is a song of Sir Charles Sedley, beginning

Sedley

> Love still has something of the sea,
> From whence his Mother rose.

An *Epitaph on Charles II*, by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, is exceedingly apt to its subject, and has probably never been surpassed in its kind:

Rochester

Here lies our Sovereign Lord the King,
Whose word no man relies on,
Who never said a foolish thing,
And never did a wise one.

The theatres, which had been closed during the Puritan domination, were immediately opened at the Restoration. Dramatic spectacles became immensely popular, and the demand for dramatic work was great. We have already seen that Dryden yielded to this demand almost entirely for about fifteen years. He was by no means alone. Indeed, a large number of writers, of greater or less ability, were attracted to the drama, and an extensive body of dramatic work was produced. Most of it was marked by two striking characteristics — brilliancy of treatment and profligacy of manners. The English drama has never displayed greater finish or wit, and it has never descended to a lower moral level. Dryden himself was no exception to this general rule, being in this, as in so many other respects, the creature of his age.

Restoration Drama

One of the most striking exceptions was Thomas Otway, the most successful writer of tragedy in the period. His two principal works, *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*, are not unworthy of the Elizabethan dramatic tradition. Otway was inferior in genius to most of his great predecessors; but he still retained something of their quality. He had much of their tragic intensity, much of their romantic spirit, and not a little of their gift of true poetry. He knew how to strike the note of terror and the note of pathos. His feeling is sincere, his characters are natural, his plots are interesting. When he endeavors to introduce a comic element into his work, he is decidedly unfortunate and not untouched by the prevailing coarseness; but within his own field, he is a true though limited master.

Thomas Otway

It is in comedy that the characteristic features of the

age are seen. There were many writers, but four of them stand out with unusual prominence. The first of these is William Wycherley, who probably represents the fashionable life of the age at its basest if not at its most immoral. Macaulay characterizes Wycherley's *Country Wife* as "one of the most profligate and heartless of human compositions," and says of his *Plain-Dealer* that it is "equally immoral and equally well-written." Wycherley had wit and dramatic skill, but these do not save his immorality from being somewhat brutal as well as flagrant.

William Wycherley

William Congreve was greater in almost every respect. Probably no more brilliant dialogue or more sparkling wit than his has been seen in English comedy. His characters are natural; his plots are interesting, though sacrificed somewhat to his dialogue. His immorality is less heartless than Wycherley's, but its greater refinement does not save his work from being both cynical and corrupt. This immoral element is a part of the very texture of his plays and can not be eradicated; but if we could imagine them as existing at all without it, such plays as *The Double-Dealer*, *Love for Love*, and *The Way of the World* would be among the best as well as among the most brilliant of English comedies of manners.

William Congreve

Sir John Vanbrugh at his best approaches Congreve, but is much more unequal. *The Relapse*, *The Provoked Wife*, and *The Confederacy* are his three noteworthy plays. The latter carries us a little way into the eighteenth century.

Sir John Vanbrugh

The same may be said of the best productions of George Farquhar, such as *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Farquhar is no model of morality; but the plays just mentioned are a decided improvement over those of his contemporaries, as well as over his own early efforts. He is more frank, more good-natured, characterized by genial humor rather

George Farquhar

than by biting wit. *The Recruiting Officer* contains the character of Captain Plume — said to be drawn from Farquhar himself — and that of Sergeant Kite — the singer of "Over the hills and far away." *The Beaux' Stratagem* gives us Boniface, the inn-keeper, and Lady Bountiful. It is probably the very best of Restoration comedies; and Farquhar's death at twenty-nine probably cut short the promise of still better work in both the artistic sense and the moral.

Elstow Church and Green, 1658

CHAPTER XI

THE AGE OF POPE (1700–1740)

The Age of Dryden, as we have seen, was characterized by a reaction against Puritanism and by the development of Classicism. The former movement tended toward frivolity, licentiousness, and practical if not theoretical irreligion. Looseness of life did not necessarily involve unbelief, but it did involve practical unrighteousness. The classical movement tended toward repression of emotion, of imagination, and of originality — toward undue emphasis upon the literary value of mere reason, and toward formal excellence and finish of style. With reference to these movements — the religious and the literary — the Age of Pope marked both reaction and advance. The reaction appeared chiefly on the religious side, and it was a reaction which meant decided improvement in life and incidentally in the moral tone of literature. The Age of Pope was not a religious age, it did not experience any great revival of morality or of Christian zeal; but it did perceive that the previous generation had gone too far, that its spirit was destructive of human society and of the highest values in literature, and that effort must be made to bring back a purer moral tone. This effort was consciously and effectively made, and the literature of this age became in consequence vastly cleaner, both in thought and in speech. There was no reversion to Puritanism; the men of the time had little taste for that. But there was a reaction against moral lawlessness; and the age took a middle ground between Puritan strictness and

Moral Reaction

A Pope

Restoration licentiousness. It can not be said that this produced an age of pure living and of high ideals. Corruption and bribery were common in politics. Drunkenness, brutality, and crime were prevalent to an alarming extent. The reformation was perhaps too much a matter of form, of profession, and of theory, rather than of spirit. Nevertheless, there was a gain, and the reaction against Restoration excess involved a real advance toward a recognition of higher standards.

Advance in Classicism

This reaction on the moral side was accompanied by an unquestionable advance on the side of Classicism. Conformity to recognized literary authority was still further emphasized, individuality was still further repressed; and the age doubtless felt that this, like the effort for greater morality, was in the interest of social order as well as for the advantage of literature. Originality became less and less; order, regularity, critical authority, became more and more. Imagination and passion were restrained, in order that mere expression might be polished and refined to the last degree. The effort was, not to say something new, but to say something better than it had ever been said before. It might be supposed that this would be utterly fatal to great literary creation, and its tendency unquestionably was in that direction. Nevertheless, the age did great things for literature, and even opened up new literary highways. This is probably due chiefly to the fact that the age possessed a number of men of remarkable literary ability, too great to be altogether bound and hindered even by the rules which they had set for themselves. Genius has not seldom found its own instinctive way, in spite of theory and prescription. Moreover, this age was already beginning to be unconsciously stirred by certain human forces that were later to overthrow Classicism and to shape the literature of the coming time. Nor must we think of Classicism itself as

altogether a negative influence. It had positive virtues which helped to give an added efficiency to literature, and which, as we shall see, were to make real contribution toward literary development.

Classicism and Poetry

The worst effect of Classicism was felt in poetry. Great poetry lives and moves in the realm of passion and imagination; and when these are restrained, its wings are clipped. There is no poet of the age, therefore, spreading "ample pinion," and

> Sailing with supreme dominion
> Thro' the azure deep of air.

But there is at least one — Alexander Pope — who spreads abroad the ample fan of the peacock's gorgeous feathers and struts with measured stride across the smooth green sward. Prose, on the contrary, drew decided advantage from these same conditions. What it needed was, not the high passion of Milton or the golden imagery of Jeremy Taylor, but just those qualities of regularity, precision, directness, and reason which this age was so well fitted to provide. As a prose period, this is one of the most notable in English literature; and to its classical influences we owe it in large measure that our modern English prose approaches the admirable clearness and lucidity of the French rather than the comparative formlessness of the German. Our own earlier prose-writers, great as many of them undoubtedly were, were headed in the wrong direction; and English prose style needed just such discipline and guidance as it was now to receive, in order that it might henceforth take its own proper path and develop its own natural powers. Prose has not altogether ceased to soar, on due occasion; but in the main, its proper function is pedestrian, and its daily business is to serve as the useful servant of the world's thought. In view of this important mission, it was decid-

edly worth while that one period of our literary history should be devoted chiefly to learning the lesson of a serviceable prose style. That lesson the literature has never forgotten..

The most unique genius of the age, and beyond doubt its great prose-writer, was Jonathan Swift. He was of English parentage, and of decidedly English character and genius; but the accidents of his life determined that he should be much associated with Ireland, and this association was to have important bearings upon his literary work. He was born in Dublin in 1667, and received his education first at Kilkenny School and afterward at Trinity College, Dublin. It will thus appear that he was Irish by place of birth and by education, and that all of his early life was passed in Ireland. After leaving college, however, he went to England, where he served for nearly ten years as private secretary to Sir William Temple, whom we have already met as one of the prose-writers of the Restoration Period. Temple was a distant relative of Swift, and was doubtless as willing as he was able to be of service to the young man in the beginnings of his literary career. The association, however, was not in all respects a happy one; Swift had a terribly proud and imperious nature and could ill brook the relation of a mere underling to any man. Consequently, he entered the church and became the incumbent of a small Irish parish. Little satisfied with his new life, he soon returned to Temple's service; but on the death of the latter in 1699, he went to Ireland again. A mission for the Archbishop of Dublin finally brought him to London, where his vigorous personality and great literary ability soon made him an almost indispensable political instrument to some of the Tory leaders. They held out to him the hope of a bishopric; but the opposition of Queen Anne is said to have frustrated this plan. His

Jonathan Swift: Life

important services were finally rewarded — in a fashion bitterly disappointing to him — with the deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. This took him to Ireland again; and there he lived for the remaining thirty years or more of his life. What seemed to him like exile was occasionally broken by visits to his friends in England. After terrible physical suffering and some five years of madness, he died in Dublin in 1745.

Swift's Genius and Character

Swift was a man of astonishing genius, and might have been eminent in almost any intellectual pursuit. He was primarily a man of action, and turned to literature mainly as an instrument for advancing his practical ends. He found it, too, a medium through which he might pour forth the passion of his intense nature and the vivid experience of his strange career. His literary work, therefore, is closely associated with the events of his life and often needs the illumination which those events throw upon it. On the whole, his was a disappointed life, and the note of bitterness and resentment is a familiar one in his writings. Aside from his actual physical ills and personal sorrows, the secret of his pessimism is probably to be found in his proud and imperious temper. He was conscious of immense powers, he felt a half contempt for some of the greatest men of his time even while he was compelled to court their favor; and it was only natural that such a spirit should scorn a patronage that often seemed like unwilling charity and should bitterly resent an ingratitude that blighted his ambitious dreams. His pessimism grew into a gigantic contempt for the whole despicable race of men. His personal grievances were magnified until they distorted for him the true proportions of human life. His own diseased eye discolored his vision of the world. The literary weapon that he knew so well how to wield became an instrument of fierce and scornful vengeance. He carried satire to the extreme of

coarse vituperation, and even penned some of the most disgusting passages in English. His clerical robes seemed to be forgotten as he waded in the mire. Apparently, he had no conscience about wounding the sensibilities of others or about contaminating his own mind. Such description may seem exaggerated, but it is not too strong to present one side of Swift's nature. Yet we must remember that it is only one side — the side on which he was most faulty and most human. There were nobler and more generous phases of his character; and these, too, find frequent expression in his literary works as well as in the acts of his life. What Swift might have been as a happy, successful, prosperous, courted, and abundantly honored man, the brief period of his political career gives us some opportunity to conjecture. It is just possible that, lacking the spur, he might not have run the race. It seems more probable that his love of applause, his spirit of emulation, his proud consciousness of his own masterful powers, would themselves have been a sufficient stimulus, and that the world would have been the gainer by a literary product not less powerful and much more genial and humane. Such Swift might have been. What he was and did is part of England's literary history, and the nature of that record some consideration of his literary work will give us further opportunity to see.

Battle of the Books

His first important production, *The Battle of the Books*, was written during the time of his service with Sir William Temple; and it connects itself with a famous controversy, in which Temple was engaged, over the comparative merits of ancient and modern literature. Swift, like Temple, was on the side of the ancients. The work portrays, in characteristically vivid and vigorous fashion, an imaginary battle between the ancient and the modern books in St. James's Library. Here Swift displays his wide range of learning and his remarkable

powers in allegory and in satire. The famous phrase "sweetness and light" is found in this work.

His *Tale of a Tub*, written at about the same time, is also an allegorical satire. It deals with religion, representing Romanism by Peter, Lutheranism and Anglicanism by Martin, and Calvinism by Jack. These characters were, of course, suggested by St. Peter, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. They are represented as three brothers who quarrelled over their inheritance. The work has an air of irreverence, though Swift probably meant no disrespect to true religion. At any rate, it was this book that is said to have lost him his bishopric. On the literary side, Swift here appears as a supreme master of irony. No wonder that the politicians of his day both feared and courted a man who could wield so terrible a weapon. They perceived, too, that he commanded the most finished and powerful prose style that had yet been written in English.

A Tale of a Tub

During the years immediately following, Swift displayed his great abilities in a number of minor papers and pamphlets. His rather cruel humor is well illustrated by a huge practical joke perpetrated upon one Partridge, a professed astrologer and the publisher of a popular almanac. Swift wrote a prediction that Partridge would die on a certain day. After the day had passed, he published a circumstantial account of Partridge's death, and solemnly maintained the joke against the vigorous protests of the unhappy victim. In the same jesting spirit he wrote an ironical *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, urging with mock seriousness that after all Christianity was not such a bad thing and ought to be retained. His political pamphlets were masterly examples of their kind; but they do not quite keep their interest for the present day except as specimens of Swift's style.

Papers and Pamphlets

During this period he wrote his famous *Journal to Stella*, a series of letters to Esther Johnson, a young woman whom he had first met in the household of Sir William Temple, and who maintained for him a lifelong attachment. His precise relations to her and to another woman known as "Vanessa" are little understood. In the *Journal* Swift "unlocks his heart." It was in effect a private diary, written partly in cipher and never intended for publication; and its revelations are of the most intimate sort. The men and manners of his time, his personal daily experiences in London, are graphically described. His vanity, his imperiousness, his ambition, are here; but here, also, is a playful tenderness in singular contrast with his ordinary fierce and contemptuous attitude toward the world. After Swift's death there was found among his papers a little package with the inscription, "only a woman's hair."

Journal to Stella

The more generous side of Swift's nature is also shown by his interest in the Irish people and by his literary labors in their behalf. An excellent illustration is found in *The Drapier's Letters*. The English government had licensed a speculator to issue debased half-pence for circulation in Ireland. This seemed to Swift like base and contemptible robbery; and he poured forth all the resources of his sarcasm in a successful effort to defeat the scheme. His financial wisdom in the matter is doubtful enough; but his generous championship made him a popular hero in Ireland. A later brief work is entitled a *Modest Proposal for preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burden*. The "modesty" of the proposal may be judged from the fact that he pretended to advocate the fattening of Irish children for the English market, that they might be served up as delicacies on the tables of the rich. No work better displays Swift's almost supernatural gift of irony.

The Drapier's Letters

Modest Proposal

The most famous result of Swift's literary activity is his *Gulliver's Travels*. It is at once a bitter satire, a parable of human life, and a series of fascinating romantic stories. Captain Lemuel Gulliver, a bluff and honest sailor, undertakes four different voyages, on each of which he meets with marvelous adventures. On the first voyage, he is shipwrecked on the coast of the Lilliputians, a people averaging some six inches in height. The story is as interesting as a child's wonder-book; but when we see ordinary human motives reduced to this diminutive scale and read of the petty Lilliputian conflicts over politics and religion, we become aware of Swift's satirical intention. He makes his kind ridiculous by comparing their pompous activities and ambitions with those of an ant-hill.

Gulliver's Travels

First Voyage

Gulliver's second voyage brings him to Brobdingnag, the land of giants sixty feet in height. The story is still fascinating, but the satire is reversed. Gulliver is now himself the contemptible figure; and as he tells the king of Brobdingnag about his own land and people, we are made to feel the incredulous scorn of a high and generous nature for beings who could be so base and despicable. Actions and motives to which we are accustomed in human society are here looked at through other eyes and from a nobler point of view, and human dignity shrinks into a very little thing.

Second Voyage

The third voyage is less interesting as a mere story, while the satire becomes more prominent, more bitter, and more detailed. In Laputa, the flying island, we meet with a race of mathematical philosophers, lost in abstract speculations. At the academy of Lagado, we are introduced to learned men who spend their lives on all sorts of futile projects, such as trying to extract sunbeams from cucumbers. Glubdubdrib is the island of sorcerers or magicians; and here Gulliver has an op-

Third Voyage

portunity to conjure up the spirits of the great dead and to compare them with the degenerate moderns. In Luggnagg, he sees the Struldbrugs, a race of immortals grown horrible and loathsome in their immortality. It is to this, Swift would tell us, that humanity would come if death did not mercifully cut it off.

The most terrible satire of all is reserved for the last voyage. Here Gulliver tells of the Houyhnhnms, a gentle and intelligent race of horses who look with loathing contempt upon the Yahoos, an utterly debased type of human beings. Gulliver himself is merely tolerated as an unusually good specimen of these filthy and degraded animals. It is with an almost demoniac laughter that Swift thus heaps scorn and contempt upon the race to which he belongs. This is no longer a child's story. It is the terrible sarcasm of a tremendous genius made mad by his own pride and rage and disappointment. *Gulliver's Travels* is one of the most powerful and fascinating books in literature. It is also one of the most terrible.

Fourth Voyage

Swift's great genius is strikingly individual; his work shows the movements of strong passion and vivid imagination. Nevertheless, it is in its own way typical of the classical age. It is so in its prose style — so forcible and so direct, and yet so clear and so finished. It is so in its realism — in that interest in contemporary life and contemporary problems which the classical revolt from romanticism had brought with it. It is so in its intellectuality; for strong as passion is in Swift's work, passion is dominated by intelligence. It is so in its satire; for literary history makes very clear the fact that satire and Classicism have many affinities. Swift was too vehement a spirit to be unwillingly bound by any traditions or any conventions. Yet his own literary faith and practice were in essential harmony with those of his generation.

Swift and his Age

Joseph Addison affords a most striking contrast with

Swift in all personal and in most literary qualities. The distinguishing mark of his work is the mark of refined elegance, of polite amiability. A little cold he may have been, not altogether genial, perhaps with a slight tinge of well-bred malice, but always the easy and courtly gentleman. Swift's proud and aggressive nature aroused opposition and made enemies; and he ended in disappointment and despair. Addison's easy, smiling grace made only friends, and carried him very far on the road of political preferment and of literary honor. Swift longed for a bishopric and got only an Irish deanship. Addison rose to be Chief Secretary of State and married a countess. Perhaps no man ever achieved so much in political life by virtue of merely literary abilities. Nor was he undeserving of his honors. His character was pure, finished, refined, noble; and these qualities have put their stamp upon all his literary work.

Joseph Addison

Addison first came into general notice by means of a poem on the battle of Blenheim, entitled *The Campaign.* He had no special aptitude for work of so martial a character; but his literary skill was equal to the task imposed upon it, and he succeeded in producing a poem which became extremely popular. It was, to be sure, written at a time when good poetry was the greatest of rarities, and when any tolerably good poetic performance might expect to be received with admiration. Its popularity was, of course, largely due to the subject; for England was just then rejoicing over the great victory and extravagantly lauding the great Duke of Marlborough, the general whose military genius had won it. The merit of the poem consists chiefly in one fine passage. Of his other poems, we need mention only his hymns. They contain some really beautiful poetry, perhaps a little artificial, but nevertheless sincere and imaginative. Addison was not a great poet, even for his own rather unpoetical day.

Poems and Dramas

This and other limitations are apparent in his dramatic work. He wrote an opera called *Rosamund*, a comedy called *The Drummer*, and a classical tragedy called *Cato*. None of these attained a genuine dramatic success. *Cato* was vastly admired in its own day; but it now seems cold, artificial, and lifeless. Whatever of merit the dramas have, is the result of skilful literary workmanship rather than of true dramatic or poetic genius.

Addison's Prose Genius

Addison's genius was essentially that of the prose-writer, and more particularly of the periodical essayist. He had above all the gift of prose style. Dr. Johnson, in the next generation, characterized Addison's style as "familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious." The characterization is apt and sufficient; for it is just this combination of ease and elegance which still seems to our day the distinctive quality of Addison's manner. His writing is like the intimate but dignified conversation of a cultured gentleman. It makes no effort, but it never fails of its desired effect. Beyond the gift of mere style, Addison had other important qualities of a great writer. He had a refined wit and the power of delicate satire. He had keen observation of life and manners and the ability to give interest and charm to the treatment of subjects associated with daily experience. He had a delicate literary taste, and a critical faculty, acute if not profound, just if not strikingly original. Perhaps his highest literary faculty was that of graphic and lightly satirical portraiture of character. All of these qualities appear in his periodical essays, which constitute with posterity his chief claim to literary fame. These essays were written in association with Steele; and it will be best to reserve the closer consideration of them until we can consider by itself the work which the two men did together.

In the present connection, however, it is well to note

Addison's character as a moralist; for in all his work, and in his periodical essays more especially, he takes the attitude of a conscious and professed moral instructor. He was a man of pure life and of religious conviction, and he definitely set before himself the task and the duty of helping to improve the morals and the manners of his age. He dealt with manners on the side of morals and with morals on the side of manners. In this attitude, as well as in his refined and polished style, he was working in conscious or unconscious harmony with the classical spirit of his time. His satire, too, less ferocious and more urbane than that of Swift, distinctly marks his classical temper. Other evidence in the same direction is afforded by his interest in contemporary life and by the realism of his well-known portrayals of contemporary types of character.

Addison and his Age

The personality of Richard Steele is more complicated and much less easy to define. He was a scholar, he was a gentleman, he was a literary genius, he was a good and generous soul, but he was also somewhat of a vagabond. The type has not been an uncommon one in the realm of literature and art, and is perhaps best described by the word "Bohemian." Full of faults, fitful and erratic, Steele was yet one of the most lovable personalities of his age. He left the University without his degree, went into the army, and rose to the rank of captain. Entering politics, he became a member of Parliament, and later was made Sir Richard. He made two wealthy marriages; but his spendthrift habits greatly reduced his fortune. In a not very bad sense of the term, he was an adventurer, trying many things and failing in most. Among other rôles, he adopts in his writings that of the preacher of morals and religion. His life was not altogether consistent with such professions, and he was even sneered at as a hypocrite; but all that we know of

Sir Richard Steele

the man justifies our faith in his genuine if somewhat faulty sincerity. Even in his inconsistencies there is a thoroughly human quality which adds to his charm.

Steele made his first literary venture while he was still in the army by writing a book of devotion which he called *The Christian Hero*. From this path, he turned, not very consistently, to the stage, and wrote three comedies, *The Funeral*, *The Lying Lover*, and *The Tender Husband*. This list was added to some twenty years later by *The Conscious Lovers*. Steele has an interesting vein of genial comedy; but there is looseness in his plots as well as in his morals. Tenderness and good humor are his best qualities. In spite of some real success, however, it is not in his plays that Steele attains to literary excellence, but rather in his work with Addison in the field of the periodical essay. That was his true forte, and there he displayed real genius. His style is less brilliant than Addison's, but it has at its best a charming air of careless ease which even Addison could not quite match. It is rather genial than elegant, rather natural than precise. Sometimes he becomes dignified, didactic, or argumentative, but this manner does not sit so easily upon him. He shares with Addison the credit for skill in literary portraiture, and has perhaps claims to greater originality. What he suggested, Addison elaborated and sustained. He himself is very generous in his acknowledgment of indebtedness to Addison; but Addison probably owes to him something of his greater reputation. It is often difficult to separate the work of the two, and perhaps not much worth the while to try.

Steele's Literary Work

It has already been intimated that Addison and Steele worked together in originating and in bringing to its perfection the literary type known as the periodical essay. The beginning seems to have been made by Steele, who in 1709 started a periodical known as *The*

The Periodical Essay

Tatler. It consisted of a series of papers or essays treating various subjects associated with contemporary life and manners. Addison was a frequent contributor, and in this way he and Steele came to form the sort of literary partnership which has forever associated their names with each other. *The Tatler* was rather short-lived, but was almost immediately succeeded by *The Spectator*. This is the most famous representative of a large number of similar periodicals published in this and the next generation, and may serve as a type of the rest. It was published at first on every week-day and afterward three times a week. The six hundred and thirty-five papers were by many hands, but the great majority of them were written by either Addison or Steele. They are on a great variety of topics, from party patches to pin-money, from Westminster Abbey to the Royal Exchange, from lovers to lawyers, from impudence to immortality, from female flirts to henpecked husbands, from literary criticism to fox-hunting. Many of them deal with the vices and follies of the time, holding them up to mild ridicule and making them appear as violations not only of good morals but of good taste. They endeavor to sweeten morality with wit and to temper wit with morality. The age was in many ways coarse, selfish, and frivolous; and it was the aim of these men to elevate its ideas, to improve its manners, and to better its moral standards. They were preachers, but surely the most engaging and attractive and persuasive preachers that one can well imagine. They set up no impossible ideals, they uttered no fierce denunciations; they laughed gayly at the age and made it laugh at itself; passing "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," they accomplished their purpose by brilliant wit, charming good nature, vividness of fancy, and elegance of style.

The Spectator

The greatest achievement associated with *The Spectator*

is contained in the so-called *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*. In the introductory paper of the periodical, Addison had sketched the imaginary portrait of the supposed author of the succeeding essays, whom he called "the Spectator," and had alluded to a certain club called the Spectator Club, in which the essays were to be discussed previous to their publication. Steele took up this idea in the second paper, and presented brief but graphic character-sketches of the several members of the club — the Templar, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry, Will Honeycomb, the Clergyman, and most important of all, the good Tory Squire, Sir Roger de Coverley. These members of the club represent respectively the law, trade and commerce, the army, the ladies, the church, and the country interest; each class of society is to have its spokesman, so that none shall be treated unfairly. In a score of later papers, Steele's genuine creation is still further elaborated. We see Sir Roger at the club, on his country estate, among his servants and friends, at church, in love, on the hunting field, in town, at the theatre, at Westminster Abbey; and, finally, we have a touching account of his death. Here are almost all the elements of a novel, though the novel is not yet born. Lifelike characters and interesting incidents are here; further than this, the novel demands only a definite plot and a unified picture of human life. In the power of character-portrayal, Addison and Steele show a skill which is to provide the novel with a most useful lesson. Moreover, they have originated a new type in literature, the English periodical essay. To have created one new type and to have partly laid the foundations for another is no mean achievement for an age which we commonly think of as lacking in literary originality. When we add to this the perfecting of prose style as an instrument of literary expression, we shall see that literature owes much to the

The De Coverley Papers

early eighteenth century, and not least to Addison and Steele. No work of the time is more typical in all of these respects than the series of essays which we call the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers.* These sketches have the classical realism, the classical finish of style, the classical conformity to good taste and good judgment, the classical facility in satire, the classical respect for recognized authority. To all this, they add the flavor of something new in literary art.

Still another great prose-writer of the age is Daniel Defoe. Defoe began his literary career as a political pamphleteer, and in this field he was second only to Swift. One of his best productions of this sort is his *Shortest Way with the Dissenters.* Though a dissenter himself, he wrote in the tone of a High Church Tory, advising the government to use the severest measures against religious nonconformists. The Tories at first took his suggestions seriously; and when they discovered that he was only laughing at them, they set him in the pillory, where he received a popular ovation. The irony of this work is very near akin to Defoe's marvelous gift of minute realism, of lending to his most extravagant fancies a deceptive air of verisimilitude — a gift in which he is even Swift's superior and in which he has probably never had an equal. This is nowhere better shown than in his *Journal of the Plague Year.* He describes the great plague of London in 1665 with the careful fidelity of a simple and honest eye-witness. The *Journal* was actually believed to have been written by such a man; but as a matter of fact, Defoe was only a young child when the events took place. This same gift of realism is still further displayed in a series of unique romances, of which one has proved to be a great masterpiece. *Captain Singleton, Memoirs of a Cavalier, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, Roxana,* and other works are interesting and important

Daniel Defoe

contributions to our early fiction; but *Robinson Crusoe* has eclipsed them all.

There is probably no romantic fiction in the world that has so much the air of truth. When *Robinson Crusoe* was written, there was nothing more to learn in this direction in preparation for the modern novel. All the powers displayed in Defoe's other works are here gathered. The conception of a man cast away on a desert island was not in itself a great invention; but Defoe knew how to devise interesting incidents, to give a natural atmosphere and a local color, to add those apparently trivial touches of realistic detail which make us feel that all this must have happened just as it is told. The style is less polished than that of Addison, less forcible than that of Swift; but it is wonderfully well adapted to its purpose of telling a simple, straightforward, yet fascinating story. The relation of *Robinson Crusoe* to the beginnings of the novel gives it an added interest. Addison and Steele had shown the way in the portrayal of natural human characters, and Defoe marks no advance in this direction. His contribution was that of realistic method. He comes nearer also to having a plot and has remarkable gifts as a mere story-teller; but in this particular he does not go beyond Bunyan and Swift. His work fails of being a novel because the incidents are simply strung on the career of a single character. A little more unity in plot, a little more fulness in the treatment of character-relations, and the novel will exist. The necessary step was a short one, though of vast importance. Defoe was not to take that step; but he, more than any other man, pointed out the way to those who were to take it in the next generation.

Robinson Crusoe

The age was preëminently one of great prose literature; and Swift, Addison, Steele, and Defoe are only the greatest in a considerable company of prose-writers. Scholars,

divines, philosophers, and politicians were all contributing to the development of prose and displaying in one way or another the qualities of style that were characteristic of the time. They do not call, however, for special consideration; for none of them produced any great masterpiece of imaginative literature, and matters of style are sufficiently illustrated by the authors already treated. All of these authors wrote some poetry as well as much prose; but none of it is of very great merit. That of Addison is the best, and Addison's poetry is rather stiff and frigid. Besides these there was a large group of professed poets, nearly all of decidedly minor rank. Matthew Prior was a writer of satirical verse tales and light love songs, and enjoyed in his day a considerable reputation and influence. John Gay, a good-natured and rather vagabond poet, produced satires, burlesques, and some excellent lyrics. James Thomson and Edward Young continued their work into the next period, and may best be considered in company with the later poets. It remains only to dwell upon the work and genius of the one shining poetic figure of the age — Alexander Pope.

Prose and Poetry

Pope is preëminently the poet of Classicism. His influence distinctly served to exalt authority in literature rather than originality. In his poetry, the real is emphasized rather than the ideal. He valued form more than substance, and followed reason rather than imagination. His style seeks always the classical regularity, correctness, and finish in expression. On another side, we see him dealing with nature chiefly as an accessory and a background. His subjects are drawn mainly from abstract thought or from contemporary society. He is artificial and stilted in diction, and becomes a genuine poet only by virtue of a remarkable aptitude for his chosen tasks and a superb literary workmanship. That he is a genuine poet — in his own way and within his own range

Alexander Pope

— may be safely maintained, even against much insinuation to the contrary.

The harmony of Pope's genius with the tendencies of his age gives him a unique position in the historical development of English poetry. He occupied in his time a position somewhat similar to that which Dryden occupied in the Age of the Restoration. He was not so unquestionably the greatest literary genius of his time, for that position belongs rather to Jonathan Swift; but he at least shared with Swift and Addison the literary primacy, and in the field of poetry his influence was supreme. He may not unfairly be regarded as the central literary figure of his day, especially in those long periods when Swift was absent in Ireland. He was classical, not alone by native genius and by the influence of the age, but by deliberate training and practice. In his early years, he fell under the influence of eminent literary men who discerned and encouraged his natural gifts. This same influence he in turn exerted upon both the poets and the prose-writers who were his contemporaries. He enjoyed throughout his life the acquaintance and in many cases the friendship of the most prominent men of his time, both literary and non-literary. His interest in all literary movements was continually alert and intense. The peculiarity of his position as almost the only great poet in a generation of great prose-writers probably served to increase his reputation and to confirm his influence. It probably modified and limited that influence in some ways; but it also made it more definite and apparent. It certainly served to define more clearly his personal genius and to emphasize his poetical eminence.

Pope in his Age

Pope's power was manifested almost exclusively in poetical work, and yet his genius had in it a large prosaic element. His limitations were scarcely less marked than his undoubted abilities. He failed in

Pope's Limitations

appreciation of the higher forms of beauty; he was deficient in spontaneity and intensity; he lacked force and passion; he had little dramatic power on the one hand and little love for nature on the other; he was almost incapable of grandeur or sublimity; he attempted no flights of lofty or splendid imagination; he was decidedly limited in his range of subjects, of ideas, and of poetic methods. Such limitations as these seem almost if not quite fatal to great poetry; but in spite of all limitations that can justly be made, the fact still remains that Pope was a poet of really high rank. He reached this goal by virtue of superb talent and training. For once, at least, a poet was made rather than born. He had, of course, many positive gifts that helped to make good the deficiencies that have been noted. Foremost among these was his exquisite sense for finish and beauty of expression. His poems display refinement of style, perfection of metre, harmony and proportion of artistic structure. His natural taste and his acquired training enabled him to give to his poetry all the advantages that careful art and well-directed effort could supply. In form, he is characterized by clearness and grace and fluency. Beyond the mere matter of form, he has also many positive and admirable qualities. His imagination may be lacking in the highest and noblest attributes, but it at least possesses in no common degree the virtues of lucidity and precision. The vividness and brilliancy of his pictures can hardly be surpassed. The sprightliness and versatility of his fancy light up many a fine passage and play over the surface of all his work. He possessed a keen and active mind, and seemed always intellectually alert. His sparkling and incisive wit made him one of the greatest of satirists. He was less just than Dryden, less powerful than Swift, less amiable than Addison — often bitter, often personal, often cruel; but his rapier blade was as swift as lightning and as sharp as a

Pope's Genius

needle. Not seldom it had a drop of venom upon the point. There are in Pope faint glimmerings of a love for nature and even for the romantic. His sensitive temperament felt already the coming of influences that were to shape and change poetry after his death; but in the main his interests were those of a classical age, and his influence was almost exclusively in classical directions. He is the most striking example in English literature of what can be achieved in poetry by literary skill and adaptability coupled with literary knowledge and discipline.

Perhaps the most instructive classification of Pope's works is that which is based on their subject-matter. One of the earliest of his great poems was the *Essay on Criticism*. It has no great critical originality, and the subject is not an especially fortunate one for poetical purposes; but Pope's literary skill was equal to the production from even such material of a work which really deserves the name of a true poem. As a brilliant statement in pointed and epigrammatic verse of the essential principles of Classicisim in literary art, it comes near to perfection. Better than any other of his works, it illustrates Pope's interest in the subject of literary criticism and his delight in the discussion of literary questions.

Literary Criticism

He is interested also, like the great prose-writers, in the life and society of his age. Out of this interest grew *The Rape of the Lock*. It is one of the most exquisite productions of light satiric fancy that has ever been penned. The gay belles, the frivolous courtiers, the fairy sylphs who guard the adornments of beauty, the stealing of the lock of hair by the fond swain, the terrible indignation and commotion, the efforts to appease the wrath and dry the tears of the despoiled lady — all make up a picture which charms the fancy, which appeals to the sense of humor, and which reflects as in a magic mirror

Life and Society

the fashionable society that gathered about the court of Queen Anne.

Romance and Nature

Pope's slight tendency toward romanticism is seen in his imitations of Chaucer and in his *Eloisa and Abelard.* His limited and somewhat conventional interest in nature appears in his *Windsor Forest.* These, however, were but subordinate and transient phases of his genius. Much more characteristic both of the man and the age was his interest in the ancient classics. Pope was by no means a good Greek scholar; yet several of his best years near the middle period of his life were devoted to the translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer.

Classical Translation

The former was the more successful of the two, and has always held its place as one of the notable poems of the eighteenth century. Though it does not reproduce either the sense or the spirit of Homer, it is in many ways a remarkable achievement. It is the astonishingly clever and finished production of a superb literary craftsman rather than the work of a scholar or of a born poet. Perhaps nowhere does Pope display to better advantage his consummate mastery of versification and expression.

Satire

Nothing is more characteristic of Pope's peculiar genius than his skill as a satirist. This satirical power is manifested almost everywhere in his original work; but it is especially represented by the *Dunciad*, or epic of the dunces. This is an extended satire on the prominent men of the age who had had the misfortune to incur the poet's dislike. Some were mere pedants, but others were genuine scholars; some were poor scribblers, but others were among the best men and writers of the day. All were alike to Pope, if he had any grudge to pay. It is this personal bitterness that sets the most decided limitations to the greatness of the work, and prevents it from rising to that largeness of view and that broadly human quality

which exalt keen satire into universal literature. The *Dunciad* is in some respects Pope's masterpiece, his most typical and representative work; but to the impartial reader of another age, it must yield the palm for perennial interest to *The Rape of the Lock*. The latter is as light as a bubble floating in the air; but its iridescent beauty is as imperishable as the diamond, because its transient and insignificant theme has been lifted above the interests of a day or a class and has been immortalized by the idealizing power of the poetic imagination. Pope wrote many shorter satires, of which the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* perhaps gives the finest example of his concentrated power. It is here that he satirizes and at the same time praises Addison under the name of Atticus.

Moral Philosophy

Pope's last great interest was that in philosophical speculation. His typical poems in this direction are his *Moral Epistles* and his *Essay on Man*. The latter ranks among his masterpieces. It is not great or original philosophy, nor did Pope have the power of a strong philosophical thinker. It is hardly to be called, as a whole, a great poem; but as a series of fine passages, as a collection of pointed aphorisms, all connected with the central theme, it is unsurpassed among Pope's writings. Scarcely anything that he has done is more characteristic of the man or of his age.

The Heroic Couplet

Any discussion of Pope as a poet would certainly be incomplete without some mention of his mastery of the heroic couplet. This form — iambic pentameter lines rhymed in pairs — was the favorite of the classical school of poets, and for a time seemed to have the field almost to itself. Pope polished and refined the couplet to the last degree, and in his hands it became an almost perfect instrument for the expression of pointed aphorism and brilliant wit. It was the use of this instrument that enabled Pope to display to the best advantage

his naturally fine gift for terse and epigrammatic utterance. No English poet, with the possible exception of Shakespeare, has said more quotable and rememberable things. Such, for instance, are the following :

> Honour and shame from no condition rise;
> Act well your part, there all the honour lies.
>
> Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
> As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.

Pope's Influence

A consideration of Pope's poetry helps to confirm and to explain our sense of his almost unlimited influence in his own day. Perhaps it will also help us to understand why that influence was so short-lived. His direct influence, at least, was very brief; for in him Classicism reached its culmination, and reaction set in even before his own death. Yet indirectly his influence has been felt even down to our own time. Later poets, greater in passion and in originality, have learned from him the value of artistic form. This influence has, of course, been greatly modified by later movements; but properly subordinated to real poetic genius, it has constituted an invaluable legacy to English literature.

Pope's Villa at Twickenham

From an old print

Sam: Johnson.

CHAPTER XII

THE AGE OF JOHNSON (1740–1780)

From a consideration of the literary achievement of the Age of Dryden and the Age of Pope, it ought to be sufficiently clear that Classicism was a living movement, arising naturally by reaction from an exhausted Romanticism, finding a proper place in the development of English life and thought, fulfilling a great mission and leaving behind it great results. The hopes and expectations of its promoters were high and sanguine, and they were in fair measure realized, although its literary product has not quite maintained the right to stand in the highest rank. Dryden and Pope were its great poets, and a company of great prose-writers helped to swell the large sum of its achievements. Yet Classicism ran but a comparatively brief career. Much as it really accomplished for English literature, it was by the very nature of the English character and genius destined to inferiority, sure sooner or later to be challenged and overthrown by other forces. The time for the challenge had now come, but not quite yet the time for the overthrow. Romanticism had prevailed in one form or another from the Norman Conquest to the Age of Dryden; and after the Age of Pope, it was soon to make itself felt again. Even before the death of Pope, this and other new tendencies had begun to dispute with the old for the literary mastery. Yet the battle was not to be easily won. The influence of Classicism did not cease in a moment; and for at least another generation we must note the continuance of classical

Continuance of Classicism

tendencies. Indeed, it was not until near the close of the eighteenth century that the conflict can be said to have been fully decided. Nowhere in the literature have we better illustration of the fact that literary periods overlap each other, that old influences persist with gradually diminishing force, while newer tendencies are gathering the strength and momentum that are finally to make them prevail. In this case, the period of transition was a comparatively long one, and the struggle between the old and the new was unusually severe. In view of the fact that the classical type of literature survived throughout the period now under survey, it seems proper to speak of the period as a classical one and to designate it by the name of Samuel Johnson, the great classical figure of the age. In more precise terms, it was a period of transition and of conflict during which Classicism asserted itself with ever decreasing power against the newer movements.

It probably did not yet appear to the men of that generation what were really the tendencies by which they were being swept onward. Some things they saw clearly enough; and still others are apparent to us as we study their work to-day, although it is not yet certain that we have reached a final interpretation of the age. It is clear that there was a definite, emphatic, and conscious revolt against the authority of Classicism — a revolt continually growing in force and effectiveness. This, however, is merely negative; and it is more important to ask what was the nature of the new impulses which reënforced the revolt against Classicism and which brought a fresh and more original spirit into literature.

Revolt against Classicism

It has been common to call the new movement a revival of Romanticism and to attribute the various phenomena of literature to a romantic reaction struggling to make headway against classical tradition. That there was a roman-

tic movement is beyond question. It was probably more striking and more productive than any other; and we shall see its influence manifested in many ways. The chief doubt is whether this interpretation is sufficiently deep and comprehensive to account for all the tendencies that literature presents to us in the age. Incidentally, the question may be raised whether the romantic movement is properly to be called a mere "revival." No doubt there was much imitation of Elizabethan poets, much drawing of water from the wells of mediæval romance. The new Romanticism, however, was in spirit something very different from that of the Age of Shakespeare or from that of the Middle Ages. The Romanticism of Shakespeare's day, for instance, had its sources in the spirit of wonder and enthusiasm created by the Renaissance. In that great awakening of the human mind, imagination was aroused to a tremendous activity, and men felt that the wildest dreams were justified by the boundless possibilities opening up before the human race. The eighteenth century was no such age of divine illusions, and its Romanticism is not to be accounted for in any such way. Other and original forces were at work; and any imitation of the past that may have characterized the writers of this later time was but a temporary expedient until the new spirit should have found its own way and wrought out its own modes of utterance. Moreover, even when the outward form was an imitation, the inward spirit was often something quite new and original. It does not seem sufficient, therefore, simply to say that there was a romantic movement, much less a romantic "revival." We must go deeper, and inquire what causes were then existing which had power to create the type of Romanticism peculiar to the eighteenth century, as the Renaissance had created the type of Romanticism peculiar to the sixteenth century.

The New Romanticism

Before doing so, we should observe that Romanticism was not the only new movement of the age and therefore not the only new tendency to be accounted for. It is important that we should note the other movements, in order that we may determine whether any of these furnishes the key to the situation or whether we must look for some underlying cause that serves to account for them all. Next in importance to Romanticism was the growing love for nature and the rise of a school of naturalistic poets. Both of these movements — the romantic and the naturalistic — the men of the age recognized. They did not, perhaps, so clearly perceive the growing emotionalism of literature, though we may discover this tendency plainly enough in such works as the novels of Richardson, Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, and the writings of the so-called "sentimental poets." Still another tendency clearer to us than to the men of the eighteenth century was a growing recognition of the worth of man as man — a recognition of the value and importance of ordinary human beings. This tendency we may venture to describe, for lack of a better expression, as a manifestation of the democratic spirit; it was not democracy, but it was one of the fruitful germs from which democracy was to grow. In literature, this spirit lies at the basis of the modern novel and appears very distinctly in such poetry as Gray's *Elegy* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. To these several movements, we may add the very noteworthy and important religious revival. Its direct influence upon literature was comparatively small, appearing chiefly in such poetry as the hymns of the Wesleys, Young's *Night Thoughts*, and the much later works of Cowper; but its influence on English life was powerful and extensive, and this must have affected literature in many indirect but effective ways.

Five Great Movements

These five movements — the romantic, the naturalistic,

the emotional, the so-called democratic, and the religious — are curiously intermingled in the literature of the age; but it does not quite seem as though any one of them could be regarded as central and fundamental and as serving to account for the others. Romanticism does not account for naturalism, or naturalism for Romanticism. Emotionalism is not logically connected with either, though it is incidentally associated with both. The so-called democratic spirit has no necessary association with the romantic tendency, and can hardly be said to account for naturalism; it was, moreover, the least definite and conscious of these movements and the one that seems most undeveloped and incidental. Later, it was to become more important; but as yet it seems to find its best interpretation in something beyond itself. Nor does the religious movement afford a clue to the central literary impulse of the age. Powerful as the religious movement was, the age was not distinctively a religious one, and the influence of religion on literature was decidedly subordinate.

Relations of these Movements

Is there, then, any principle which gives to these several tendencies the unity of a single great literary movement? As we consider the question, it becomes reasonably clear that the newer Romanticism was at bottom a passion for personal freedom, an unconscious striving forward toward that revolutionary spirit which was to make itself so strongly felt during the later years of the century. It was not so much an impulse to be romantic as it was an impulse to burst the bonds of classic restriction, to follow the instinct of individual genius, to be anything and everything that the Age of Pope had not been. Poetry turned to the study of nature under much the same impulse. There was no great passion for nature as such; but there was a strong desire to get away from the town, to escape the conventions and artificialities

Interpretation of these Movements

of life, to breathe free air, to be one's self in the midst of natural surroundings. Emotionalism, likewise, was an assertion of freedom for personal feeling. The writers of the age did not feel themselves driven to the inevitable utterance of passion that could not be suppressed; indeed, the application of the term "sentimental" to some of the leading poets implies a forced and rather self-conscious expression of emotion as a sort of poetic declaration of independence. The sense of the worth of the common man finds in this same spirit of personal freedom its bond of union with the other great tendencies of the time. Personal freedom of feeling and expression for all men involved sooner or later the recognition of the personal worth of all men. Closely allied with this same spirit was the religious movement. On the one side, it was a vigorous protest against mere conformity, authority, and formalism in religion; on the other, it was a profound sense of the eternal worth of every individual soul, because for that soul Christ had died and God's infinite love had thereby been made manifest.

Individualism

In a word, the new force was more than anything else the force of Individualism. It was so powerful an enemy of Classicism because the two are essentially opposite in their nature. Classicism leads to the exaltation of authority, of conformity, of obedience to rule; Individualism asserts the rights of personality against tradition, convention, and established order. If Romanticism was so prominent in poetry, it is because Romanticism offered the readiest poetic way for the assertion of Individualism. Even imitation of mediævalism or of the Renaissance was in the nature of a revolt, because it was imitation of that which Classicism had assumed to condemn as being too lawless and too free. In prose, the novel, with its realistic study of ordinary men and women, proved to be the best way of expressing the same individualistic

spirit. Romantic poem and realistic novel would appear to be at opposite literary extremes; but we have here the interesting and rather curious literary phenomenon of two radically different results proceeding from the same great principle of Individualism. This individualistic impulse is even more emphatically apparent in the historic life of the age than it is in literature; for literature is after all but an incomplete expression of life, and lays most emphasis upon those phases of life which are best suited to literary utterance. Yet even in literature — and in literature outside of the novel — the note of Individualism is clear. As early as the first generation of the century, even Pope felt the coming of the new spirit sufficiently to say:

An honest man's the noblest work of God.

At the end of the century there rings out, with the strength of full conviction and of poetic fervor, a voice crying:

A man's a man, for a' that.

Between these two positions lies the Age of Johnson; and through its poetry and prose we may trace the progress of the individualistic impulse, from the first faint recognition of the classical Pope to the strong assertion of the democratic Burns. The literary history of the period reflects the losing struggle of a confident and dominant Classicism against this revolutionary force of Individualism. That new force does not gain its full triumph in the present period; but it attains such a development as to make it the ruling impulse of the age which follows.

James Thomson

The first aspect of the new movement to appear prominently in literature was the poetic treatment of nature. We have previously noted that Pope, in his *Windsor Forest*, had made a faint and rather conventional beginning in this direction; and the example

had not been without its influence on other poets. Long before Pope had ceased to write, James Thomson had published his *Seasons*, the poem which better than any other marks the real beginning of the naturalistic tendency. It is not without significance that Thomson was a Scotchman. Already, as early as the fifteenth century, we have had occasion to observe the love for nature appearing in Scotch poetry, when that of England was almost devoid of any such inclination; and we may say further that Scotch influence upon English nature poetry has always been strongly marked and was particularly so during the eighteenth century. *The Seasons* is divided into four parts, entitled respectively "Spring," "Summer," "Autumn," and "Winter." Thomson treats the various aspects of the year with much poetic feeling, direct observation of nature, and power of natural description. There are a stilted utterance and a tendency to abstract moralizing which betray the classical influences under which Thomson wrote; but there are also a freshness and an originality which give large promise of what is to come. The blank-verse form of the poem is not the least of its manifestations of a new literary spirit. Blank verse was to be the badge of the younger school of poets as the heroic couplet had been the badge of the poets of the classical school. Another noteworthy poem of Thomson's allies him closely with the beginnings of the romantic movement. This is *The Castle of Indolence*, a professed and remarkably successful imitation of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. He uses the Spenserian stanza with much metrical skill and catches not a little of Spenser's poetic and romantic quality. In spite of the fact that the poem is an imitation in the matter of form and quality, it is sufficiently original in idea to make it a real contribution to English poetry as well as to the romantic verse of the period. When such a poem had been written, the romantic movement was certainly under

full headway. It is significant for the movement also that Thomson's poem was only one of a large number of Spenserian imitations by many writers.

Edward Young was rather a disciple of Milton than of Spenser; but he falls far short of Thomson's genuine success in reproducing the tone and spirit of his master. Certain more or less ineffectual tragedies, satires, and didactic poems constitute the larger number of Young's works; but his one really famous poem is the *Night Thoughts*. It is a long didactic poem in nine books, in which a spirit of sentimental melancholy broods over the vanity of human life, the consolations of religion, and the gloom of death. The rather portentous work contains a good deal of solemn rhetoric and not a little noble poetry. Its tone is characteristic of the age; for the romantic spirit was in love with mystery and gloom, and the growing emotionalism was inclined to indulge itself in tender and awful sentiments. Such indulgence was one of the accepted modes of revolt against the common sense and the commonplace of the classical period.

Edward Young

The influence of Milton is also discernible in the work of William Collins, but it is the influence of Milton's lyrics — of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* — rather than of his great epics. Here, at last, pure poetry is recovered; for the lyric music of Collins is the sweetest and most spontaneous to be found in the whole extent of the classical period — between Milton and Burns. The classic note is still heard, as notably in his *Ode to the Passions*; but there is also heard something that is new and strange. The *Ode to Evening* goes beyond the mere natural description of Thomson's *Seasons* and conveys by most subtle suggestion the feeling of the twilight hour. It is the sentiment of nature that we catch and fix as we read such words as these:

William Collins

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires;
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

The *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* is a remarkable illustration of the romantic love for the mysterious, the supernatural, the legendary, and the fanciful; and it connects Collins with the romantic movement as the *Ode to Evening* connects him with the poetical treatment of nature. The emotional element in his poetry associates him with the poets whom Classicism sneered at as "sentimental." By his *Ode to Liberty* he gains at least an indirect association with the so-called democratic tendency. He is thus seen to be in touch with nearly all the great movements of his age, and he fuses them all together into poetry that has the mark of a peculiar individualism.

Doubtless the greatest poet of the age was Thomas Gray. Like Collins, he feels the influence of Milton, and more especially of Milton's lyric poetry. Like Collins, too, he illustrates in one way or another the various influences of his time. The love of nature permeates most of his poetry and perhaps still more his remarkable letters. It is clearly in evidence in his *Ode on the Spring* and his *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*. The romantic movement is perhaps best illustrated by his Pindaric ode, *The Bard*, in which an ancient Welsh minstrel, seated on a crag of the mountains, sings in prophetic vision the doom of King Edward's race. His best-known work is the *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*. Here he displays his love for nature, his depth of sentiment, and that sympathy with common men which we have called democratic. Few poems in the language have been better known or more often read. Gray's other Pindaric ode, *The Prog-*

Thomas Gray

ress of Poesy, finely illustrates the union in him of Classicism and Individualism. It has many characteristics of the classical manner; but it rises to a higher poetic quality by virtue of more spontaneous feeling, more vivid imagination, and greater freedom in conception. Much the same is true of all his poetry. It unites a high degree of classical refinement and art with many of the qualities which spring from the work of spontaneous genius moving with great individual freedom. Gray had the trained skill of a careful literary workman, but he also had the genius of a born poet. His was a really important personality; but the individualistic qualities in his work did not exactly arise from the vigorous activity of a masterful and uncontrollable nature. Gray, indeed, was far from being a man of that type. In him and in the other poets just discussed, the strong individualistic tone was largely due to the fact that the whole age was in revolt and was encouraging its men of genius to seek and to follow new ways. A generation earlier, probably no one of them would have had the strength to lead the new movement. Their actual originality was due even more to the age than to themselves. This gave to their efforts something of artificiality and self-consciousness; for they were not as men self-impelled by a strong instinct, but rather as men who had heard and deliberately answered a call.

Influence of the Age on Gray

Such a condition of affairs was not conducive to the best and fullest work, although it was not without its advantages to men of limited powers. For Gray, at least, the age involved repression as well as encouragement. He has generally been regarded as a poet of unusually fine genius fallen upon a time which tended to check and to deaden his poetic impulses. This conception of the man is probably a true one; and it is not difficult to see at least two ways in which the age may have produced this effect upon its greatest poet. In the first

place, it was still in very large measure a classical age, while Gray's finest poetic instincts were more imaginative and emotional. Strong as the individualistic tendencies of the age were, they were not strong enough to free him from the sense of restraint which Classicism imposed; and as we have already suggested, the native force of Gray's personality was not quite adequate to such a revolt. Indeed, Gray was by nature too conscientious an artist not to feel the full weight of the critical principles with which Classicism sought to fetter the wings of genius. In the second place, the age, like the two preceding periods, was essentially prosaic in its temper, while Gray's gifts were those of the poet. Feeling the chill discouragement of an alien atmosphere, he withdrew into himself and allowed the world to hear all too little of that exquisite music which he was born to make. He contented himself with a few poems classically perfect in expression and giving evidence of a genius which in its fullest exercise might have placed him among the very greatest of English poets. As it is, probably no English poet holds so high a place as he by virtue of so small a body of poetic work.

Certain publications of the time must be considered because of the important influence which they exerted on contemporary literature rather than because they themselves possessed any great degree of original value. In

Percy's Reliques

1765 Thomas Percy published a great number of old ballads which he had collected and edited. The work is known as Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. A few years later, he translated Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, a work dealing with the Norse mythology. Both of these appealed very strongly to those who were in sympathy with the anti-classical spirit. They encouraged and justified the new romantic movement, and provided materials and inspiration for the romantic poets. Something the same may be said of James Macpherson's pre-

tended translation of Ossian, a supposed Gaelic poet of the third century. It was probably in large part a forgery; but it contained some real poetry, wild and weird in conception, passionate in feeling, and highly figurative in style. The most assured fact about the book is its powerful influence. Gray seems to have been much interested in it, as he was also in the legends of the Norse mythology. These and other books illustrate the growing spirit of Romanticism and show how eager men were for anything that would appeal to romantic sentiment.

Ossian

Another name which has certain points of association with those just mentioned, and which, like them, is forever linked with the history of the romantic movement, is that of Thomas Chatterton. This "marvellous boy," as Wordsworth called him, began his literary career at twelve years of age with poems and prose pieces which he pretended to have found in the muniment room of the old church of St. Mary Redcliffe at Bristol. During his brief career, he produced a considerable number of poems displaying much poetic beauty, love of nature, romantic spirit, and lyric feeling. They were written in an imitation of the English of the early fifteenth century, and for a time deceived some good scholars. Though now known to be Chatterton's own work, they still retain interest by virtue of their inherent merits. Indeed, their importance is heightened by our knowledge of the fact that poems of such excellence were written by one who at the time of his death was little more than a child. Chatterton may be called, if we are disposed to harshness, a literary forger. Considering his age, it is at least more charitable and probably quite as near the truth to attribute his methods to an inborn poetic and dramatic faculty exercised by one too young to appreciate the moral bearings of his deceit — a faculty, moreover, so strong as probably to

Thomas Chatterton

create in the boy's own mind an illusion of the essential reality of his poetic dreams. In any case, no one can deny that he was a true poet and that his achievement was simply astounding for one so young. Chatterton continued his work for several years at his home in Bristol, making various attempts to attract the interest of prominent men, and then went to try his literary fortunes in the metropolis. After a proud struggle with bitter poverty and disappointed ambition, he committed suicide in a London garret at the age of seventeen years and nine months. Truly he deserves to rank among those whom Shelley calls

> The inheritors of unfulfilled renown.

Forerunners of the Novel

Our review of poetical work has carried us well through the period. Reserving for the present a discussion of the poetry of Johnson and Goldsmith, we must now return to the beginning of the age to trace the development of a new form of literature — the modern novel. The novel is essentially a combination of a narrative plot with a unified and consistent picture of human life and character. From another point of view, it may be called a combination of prose romance and drama; for the prose romance lays chief stress upon pure narrative, while the interest of drama centres in the treatment of humanity. The novel differs from the romance in aiming at a more or less realistic portrayal of life; it differs from the drama in presenting that life through the medium of a story rather than upon the stage. Both of these prototypes of the novel — romance and drama — were already fully developed. The romance, illustrated by such works as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, had brought merely narrative fiction to its perfection. The great dramatists — whose name is legion — had also fully demonstrated what

could be done in the portrayal of life and character. It remained only for some one to unite the treatment of real life with the direct narrative method of presentation in order to produce the novel. Addison and Steele, in the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*, had taken a step in the right direction by presenting admirable character-sketches in prose; but in their work the plot was still lacking. *Robinson Crusoe* had made another decided contribution by giving the finest illustration of realistic method in story-telling, but without a broad treatment of life and character. All the elements were ready; and prose style, moreover, had been fully prepared to serve as the fit instrument of expression. Everything awaited the original genius or the happy chance that should bring the elements into combination and so create the second new literary type produced by the eighteenth century.

Samuel Richardson

The man was already there, and the happy chance soon came. Samuel Richardson was a prosperous printer who had already reached the age of fifty without being known to fame when his epoch-making work was produced. His preparation for his great accomplishment was as fortunate as it was unique. In his earlier days, he had associated much with women, for some of whom he had been called upon to employ his literary skill in the writing of love-letters. The knowledge of the feminine heart and the practice in letter-writing thus gained were to stand him in good stead. In attempting to compile a sort of model letter-writer at the request of a London firm of publishers, he hit upon the happy idea of connecting the letters by the thread of a story, and thus almost by accident produced in 1740 the first English novel — *Pamela*. It is the story of a young woman, Pamela Andrews, whose virtue successfully resisted the strongest temptation and who was finally rewarded by a happy marriage with her tempter. The

moral is not altogether agreeable and may perhaps serve as an illustration of the prevailing standards of the age. Eight years later, Richardson published his masterpiece, *Clarissa Harlowe*. Its theme is somewhat the same as that of *Pamela*, but Clarissa maintains a higher standard of virtue and persists in her refusal of the villain Lovelace even to her own pathetic death. His third and last work was the *History of Sir Charles Grandison* — "the character and actions of a man of true honour." All of his stories are told through the medium of a series of letters written by the principal characters. The method has its disadvantages, but it enables the author to reveal the characters and their motives directly through themselves rather than by description or explanation from without. In spite of all disadvantages, the novels were extremely popular and created a great sensation in their own day. Richardson was a man of great seriousness and simplicity, somewhat sentimental and nervous, moral in ideals and conduct. Naturally enough, he is the novelist of sentiment, of pathos, of professed morality. His insight into female character is accompanied by a power of delicate and subtle analysis and a marvelous command over the gentler emotions. He is classical in his realism; but his sentiment and his appreciation of ordinary character ally him also with the individualistic movement. With romantic and naturalistic tendencies, he has not much direct connection.

Henry Fielding

Henry Fielding began his literary career as a dramatist, but his work in that direction is of slight literary value. It doubtless helped to give him preparation for his later work by broadening his observation of life and training his skill in the portrayal of character. His first novel was *Joseph Andrews*, published in 1742. It was begun as a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. The story represents Pamela's brother Joseph, a virtuous young

man, resisting female allurements. Fielding soon came to a realization of his own powers and opportunities, grew interested in his characters for their own sake, dropped the mere parody, and finished the story in his own way. This first attempt was soon followed by *Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*; and some years later, he wrote his masterpiece, *Tom Jones*, " the history of a foundling." This is the greatest novel of the eighteenth century and one of the greatest in the literature. At times extremely coarse, it is, nevertheless, a most graphic portrayal of human life, full of vivid realism and broad humor. His last novel, *Amelia*, was published in 1751. In all his works he pursues the method of direct narration, but is much given to episodes. Fielding was a strong and manly figure, a man of many faults, but of an essentially sound nature. He was powerful in intellect and energetic in character. In these and other ways he was a strong contrast to Richardson, and the contrast is naturally extended to the work of the two men. Fielding's best insight was into the characters of men, while he had comparatively little success in the treatment of women. In power of vivid and lifelike portrayal, few novelists have been his equals. His characters are intensely human, full of his own abounding vitality and energy. The life that he portrays is undeniably coarse, and not seldom brutal; but his works are saved from the lowest depths by their humor and geniality. His realism and his gift for satire show the influence of classical ideals, but he is anything but formal and conventional. He displays the newer spirit chiefly by his sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men. He loves life and he portrays it with an unprejudiced impartiality. Vehement in feeling and full of warm human emotion, he has a ready scorn for that sentimentalism which seemed to him to verge on hypocrisy. Such work as his is great in itself and gives

fullest promise of the large achievements that were to be made in the new form of literature which he helped to create.

The third of the great novelists who began the early history of the novel was Tobias Smollett. In his hands, the new type was broadened in range, but did not display any increase in artistic skill. He may be briefly described as the novelist of wild adventure, of satire, and of cynicism. The experiences of his varied and adventurous life provided him with abundant materials for his novels. He was not a man of great original imagination, and shows the ability to reproduce rather than to invent. Like the other novelists, he was realistic; but his realism is more superficial, and is mingled with very improbable incidents. His characters are exaggerated and violent, and most of his heroes are of the same wild and vulgar type. Five novels stand to his account, and any one will give a fair idea of the rest. Their names are suggestive of their character: *Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, and *Humphrey Clinker*. The last is the best, and well illustrates Smollett's humor and vigorous movement.

Tobias Smollett

The period is notable for a series of separate masterpieces which still further illustrate the early development of the novel. One of the best of these is Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, a work characterized by a most rambling plot, but by extremely lifelike characters. In addition to his singular powers in the matter of character-portrayal, Sterne had a fine gift of delicate humor and an exquisite style. His indulgence in sentimentalism is symbolized by his *Sentimental Journey*, a mixture of travel and fiction. This work, especially, marks his connection with the newer movement and his natural antipathy to the temper of Classicism. Sterne

Laurence Sterne

was a preacher, and some of his finest passages are to be found in his *Sermons*. A very different sort of man and writer was Dr. Samuel Johnson, who made a contribution to prose fiction in the philosophical and didactic story called *Rasselas*. It is thoroughly characteristic of the great thinker and moralist and classicist, but is not very interesting, either for its plot or for its characters. The type is rather that of the romance than of the novel. Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* is also extremely romantic and has the interest of having anticipated Scott in the field of mediæval fiction. A number of similar works were written before the close of the century, but they hardly call for notice in a brief survey. It is at least interesting to note that the novel began in realism, but that it was caught by the new currents and swept in the direction of Romanticism. Not the least singular fact about this movement is that Dr. Johnson, the extreme classicist of the age, should have been an unconscious contributor. *Rasselas* is in the main a classical book, but the element of romanticism is there. The last and in many respects the best work that need engage attention here is Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. The plot has been often and justly criticised, but the work has many virtues to redeem this chief defect. It may be called a romantic novel of the pastoral type, and deserves its fame as a great and original work of genius. Its crowning excellence is to be found in its simple but masterly portrayal of lifelike characters. Goldsmith was one of the gentlest, sweetest, and most natural of men, and he has succeeded in infusing his own delightful personal qualities into his work. For sweet simplicity, charming humor, and graceful style, the eighteenth century has no better book.

Johnson's Rasselas

Walpole's Castle of Otranto

Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield

Practically all of the authors thus far discussed felt to a

greater or less extent the influence of the classical ideas which still continued to assert their authority. In the main, however, most of these authors were in sympathy with the newer spirit and showed in their work the effect of the newer tendencies. Quite the contrary is true of Samuel Johnson. He was a classicist of the classicists, and his works illustrate the continued vitality of the classical movement. His theories were classical, his practice was classical, the whole weight of his conscious influence was exerted on the classical side. The call for something new, striking, and original met with no response in him. Largely by the force of his authority, the progress of the new movements was hindered and delayed, and Classicism was given a new lease of life. He preached law rather than freedom, conformity rather than encouragement of individuality. He stands, therefore, as the typical representative of Classicism in this age, the true successor of Dryden and Pope. Yet Johnson had an indirect and unconscious relation to the individualistic movement. He did so through the very strength of his own character. His was a powerful and imposing personality, a nature too large really to be bound by any merely conventional restrictions. He believed in literary law, he preached literary law, and practised what he preached; but over and above any literary authority, he was really a law unto himself. His was a great individuality endeavoring to find expression through classical channels, and meeting with comparative failure because the channels were inadequate. He was original in spite of himself and of his critical theories. The man was much greater than his work. He lives for us not so much in what he produced as in Boswell's immortal biography. There we see and hear the man; for he is there preserved to posterity as no other literary man has ever been pre-

Samuel Johnson

His Classicism

His Individuality

served. It is said that he talked great literature superbly for thirty years. This and Boswell's picture of the man help us to understand why he exerted so tremendous an influence in spite of such a meagre literary product. His circle included some of the most able and distinguished men of the age; but Johnson was the central and the dominant figure. With the public at large, his was the greatest literary reputation and the most potent literary influence of the time.

His Influence

It is necessary to speak here of Johnson as a poet; yet in the history of poetry he fills but a small place. His most characteristic works are two satires in imitation of Juvenal. In the first, entitled *London*, his attitude is that of the rebuker of vice and the censor of manners. In *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, he is still the moralist; but his thought is more general and more philosophical. These poems contain noble and dignified passages, in harmony with Johnson's lofty character; but we can hardly claim for him the genius of a great poet. The style is thoroughly classical, less brilliant than Pope's but more weighty.

Johnson's Poetry

Johnson has already attracted our attention not only as a poet but as a writer of fiction. *Rasselas*, as we have noted, displays his characteristic qualities as a philosophical moralist and as a classical writer, while at the same time it has a romantic element that illustrates his disposition to leap the bounds of his own theories. As a general prose-writer, Johnson holds a much larger place; for it was in this field that he found his best literary expression. We have already implied that this expression was at best inadequate, and that the true greatness of the man never came to full expression at all. He was a great thinker, moralist, and critic; he was still greater as a man; but he did not possess in any remarkable degree the gifts of a great

Johnson's Prose Writings

literary artist. What he accomplished in literature was achieved through competent literary knowledge and the force of an imposing personality rather than through great literary genius. As a poet and a novelist, he is far surpassed by lesser men. Even as a miscellaneous prose-writer, he does not achieve the highest success. He was far inferior in purely literary genius, and not least in the genius for prose style, to Oliver Goldsmith, whom he petted, patronized, criticised, and bullied. Nevertheless, it is as a prose-writer that Johnson has his chief claim to literary honors. Like Goldsmith, he did much of his work as a hack writer. One of his greatest achievements was his famous *Dictionary of the English Language*, which, of course, has only an indirect association with pure literature. *The Rambler* and *The Idler* were periodicals after the model of *The Spectator;* but it need hardly be said that Johnson's periodical essays are far different in quality from those of Addison and Steele. They dealt in a ponderous philosophical fashion with questions of morals, manners, and literary criticism. Among his later works two may be mentioned. *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* records a trip to the Highlands and the Hebrides in company with James Boswell, his biographer. It is interesting as displaying Johnson's thoroughly classical temper and his slight sympathy with the grandeur of nature and with all that was wild, legendary, and romantic. We see here clearly enough that whatever association he had with the individualistic movement was an entirely unconscious one, due, not to his own natural inclinations, but to the fact that he himself was an intensely individual character. He could be more strongly individual in his conservatism than other men in their progressiveness. Probably the best and most characteristic work of his literary career is to be found in his *Lives of the English Poets*. His style is there at its finest, and he displays in

full measure his powers of philosophical criticism. The narrowness of his poetic sympathy, as well as the essential kindliness and generosity of his nature, is there apparent. Some of the very greatest of English poets find very inadequate treatment, while his best work is bestowed on some of the poorest. He utters his critical opinions in a dictatorial and sometimes severe manner, but his nature was too honest ever to be consciously unjust. Where he fails, his failure is due to the limitations of his critical insight and to the limitations of the classical temper in dealing with work outside its range. It is to be added to his credit that his good sense and strong natural intelligence not seldom break the bonds of his cherished classical theories.

Johnson's Style

Johnson's prose style is classic in its formality, in its elaboration, and in its abstract, intellectual quality; but it is, nevertheless, the characteristic product of a unique individual. Johnson is classical, but he is classical in his own way. The style of the most typical classical prose-writers is clear, simple, polished, direct; the style of Johnson is ponderous, periodic, Latinized, stately, sonorous. So individual is this style that its peculiar quality has come to be designated by the word "Johnsonese." In his later life, the simpler and more direct manner of his conversational style came to have much influence upon his writings; and in his *Lives of the Poets*, he becomes a much better model of expression than in his earlier prose works. If he could only have written as he talked, he would have been a much greater master of prose style. His two manners have been often illustrated by a famous example. He once said in conversation, "*The Rehearsal* has not wit enough to keep it sweet." That is altogether admirable; but the ponderous old scholar could not be content with anything so simple, so direct, so terse, and so forcible. His instinct for sounding phrase

led him to translate it at once into typical "Johnsonese," "It has not sufficient vitality to preserve it from putrefaction." The second form sounds almost like a parody of the first, but it is typical of Johnson's method.

We have already emphasized the fact that Johnson was greater as a man than as a writer, greater in his inspired conversation than in his formal literary expression. The immortal proof of this is contained in Boswell's *Life of Johnson.* James Boswell was a Scotchman of good family and education; but he made himself the humble friend and follower of Johnson for a series of years, noting with patience and fidelity his words, his acts, and his peculiarities of character. In this unique fashion he gathered the materials that enabled him to create the greatest biography ever written. The portrait of Johnson is drawn at full length, and with an intimacy of knowledge that would have been impossible to any other than such a combination of toady and hero-worshipper as Boswell seems to have been. His success is so great because he was willing to lose himself in his subject. Here Johnson lives and talks forever for many to whom his written works are little more than a name.

Boswell's Johnson

The conflict between Classicism and Individualism is nowhere more marked than in Oliver Goldsmith. From all that we know of him, he seems to have had the genius and the instincts of a decidedly original poet; and it is reasonable to suppose that he would have been much more nearly in harmony with the new movements if it had not been for external influences. His natural tendency in this direction, however, was restrained by the classical spirit that was still so strong in the age and more particularly by his close personal association with Dr. Johnson. The two representative poems of Goldsmith are *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village.* The former reflects his experiences as a scholarly

Oliver Goldsmith

His Poetry

vagabond on the continent, and mingles beautiful poetic description with the didactic purpose of giving "a prospect of society." The poem well illustrates Goldsmith's romantic personality; but it is, nevertheless, largely classical in style and in general conception. *The Deserted Village* bewails the decay of the peasantry, and describes the lovely village now forsaken by its former cheerful inhabitants. The pictures of the village preacher and the village schoolmaster show Goldsmith at his best. He is a true poet, uniting vivid imagination with a fine sense of beauty, delicate and tender sentiment with an exquisite gift of humor. Here, as in *The Traveller*, he is classical in style and didactic in intention; but he shows romantic feeling, is a genuine lover of nature, and by his unaffected sympathy with the poor and humble connects himself with the democratic tendency. Of the last, these lines from *The Deserted Village* are typical:

> Princes and lords may flourish or may fade;
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed can never be supplied.

Goldsmith's charming prose fiction, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, has been already mentioned in connection with our discussion of the development of the novel. It is one of the very finest creations of his literary genius, if not his masterpiece. In addition to this and to his poems, he wrote a great amount of miscellaneous prose, much of it the work of a hack writer laboring for his daily bread, but nearly all of it touched with the charm of his delightful style. For ease, for grace, and for delicate humor, Goldsmith has no superior among the prose-writers of the century. His style has all the classical virtues, but it has beyond these that inimitable magic which only genius can compass. While he does not pass

Goldsmith's Prose Writings

beyond the legitimate bounds of prose, he conveys the impression that his nature was essentially that of a born poet. Among the products of his pen, we have periodical literature, history, biography, natural science, learning, and politics; but his most characteristic prose work outside of his single novel is to be found in his charming miscellaneous *Essays*. In this field of miscellaneous prose, Goldsmith produced no single work that is noteworthy as a product of artistic imagination. It is the style alone that makes it literature; but for the sake of the style, it will continue to be read and cherished. As in the case of his novel, Goldsmith has known how to make his style express the personal qualities of one of the most lovable men in English literature; and for this reason, if for no other, it would still hold its charm.

Goldsmith's Dramas

The versatility of Goldsmith's genius is well shown by the fact that he was a great poet, a great novelist, a great master of prose style, and — we may add — a great dramatist. In drama his work consists of two famous comedies, *The Good-Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*. The latter was probably the best comedy produced since the Restoration, surpassed in the eighteenth century by no other dramatic work save that of Sheridan. Far cleaner and healthier than any of the Restoration dramas, it is not less witty and far more good-natured. It is as bright, as gay, as humorous, as sweet as Goldsmith himself.

David Hume

The development of prose in the Age of Johnson is illustrated by many names and by many varieties of writing. Especially by service in the fields of philosophy, history, and politics was it decidedly advanced and broadened. Among philosophers, David Hume was probably the most eminent, both for style and for matter. His philosophical views do not especially concern us here; but his use of prose in philosophical discussion

shows him to have been a man of considerable literary ability so far as concerns the mere matter of expression. His style is clear, hard, keen, and comparatively colorless. It was well adapted for his philosophical purpose. His *History of England* illustrates the use of his literary powers in another field. The greatest historian of the age, however, was Edward Gibbon, author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

Edward Gibbon

His historical task was a stupendous one; his work covered some fourteen hundred years of history, ranging over the whole extent of the Roman Empire and even to the regions beyond. The great labor was accomplished with such patience, industry, and skill that his work has not yet been superseded. In his way Gibbon is a master of style. Classical, cold, and intellectual, he had yet a great historical imagination, and his language moves with the stately pomp of a Roman triumph. Hume and Gibbon must suffice as representatives of a large company of miscellaneous writers. Beyond and above these, three men stand out as unquestionably greatest among the prose-writers of the age. Johnson and Goldsmith, we have already considered. The third and in many respects the greatest is Edmund Burke, philosophical thinker, maker if not writer of history, splendid master of political prose.

Edmund Burke

Like all the great prose-writers of the eighteenth century, Burke strongly felt the influence of classical tendencies. Yet he was not a slave to them. Like Johnson, he was decidedly individual, and gave to his style the coloring of his own habits of thought. There seems to have been a more or less conscious effort on the part of both these great writers to heighten and adorn in a more modern fashion the style which Classicism had tended to make plain and simple. This was not in any sense a return to the poetic prose of the seventeenth century; for these men heartily desired to

retain all that Classicism had achieved for prose style. It was rather an effort to broaden the range and increase the impressiveness of style, without destroying any measure of its practical efficiency. Burke's method of doing this was far different from that of Johnson. He was a great rhetorician, a man of splendid imagination; and his style often becomes gorgeous with imagery, rich and massy as cloth of gold. His literary methods were those of the orator; for most of his productions were written to be spoken, and others felt the influence of his oratorical habits. Yet he was not an effective speaker. Contrary to the general rule in the case of great orators, he repelled his immediate hearers, but charmed those who read his speeches in print. Of all great orators, therefore, he probably holds the largest place in literature. Other men live in traditions as to the effect which their speeches produced, while for the reader of a later day the charm has largely gone out of their words. Burke continues to live in the actual literary vitality which his speeches still retain. It is as though he had talked over the heads of his living auditors and had spoken to posterity. All this is probably due in large measure to the fact that his peculiar gifts were in reality not so much those of the orator as those of the superb rhetorician.

Burke's Style

So far as the development of Burke's style is concerned, it seems to have reversed the usual order. Most men tend to be more emotional and ornate in their earlier writings, and to become more intellectual and plain as they become more mature. There is doubtless a steady growth of intellectual power in Burke's work; but his earlier style is comparatively plain, while his most gorgeous passages occur in his later writings. This contrast is made still more emphatic by a consideration of his subject-matter. One of his earliest works was a treatise on the *Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and*

Beautiful; one of the most typical of his later works was his *Letter to a Noble Lord*. It is not a little surprising to find that the latter theme produced the richer and more imaginative style. Something of this difference is doubtless due to the purposes of the various writings and the circumstances under which they were produced. A still further probable explanation is that Burke felt the repressing influences of Classicism more strongly in his younger days, and gave freer play to his own remarkable individuality as he grew older. The conditions of the age were favorable to such a development. The force of Classicism was growing ever less and less, the forces of Individualism were becoming ever more and more; and Burke's life continued until 1797, into a time when the newer influences had gained their complete triumph.

Burke's Genius

Among Burke's most famous productions are those in which he deals with the misgovernment in India under Warren Hastings, with the French Revolution, and with the affairs of the American colonies. In these and other works, he reveals himself as an orator, a statesman, a political philosopher, and a scholar. He united great literary ability with a powerful mind, an impressive personality, a noble character, and a high devotion to truth and duty. His writings are splendid examples of logical argument, exalted by poetic imagination, enriched by vast knowledge, inspired by intense earnestness, and clothed in a diction of surpassing power and beauty. Johnson was a great and typical Englishman in every fibre of his being; Burke added to solid intellectual and moral qualities the imaginative fervor of his Irish nature.

The drama of the eighteenth century was extensive, but very little of it has permanent literary or acting value. We have already noted the dramatic work of Addison and Steele in the early part of the century. Within the Age

of Johnson several men already mentioned in other departments of literature tried their hands at dramatic work.

Eighteenth-century Drama

Thomson, the poet, wrote dramas which are now all but forgotten. Young produced a tragedy called *The Revenge*. Johnson, who appears in all forms of literature, was the author of a cold and stately classical tragedy named *Irene*. Fielding wrote a number of comedies before he found his true vocation as a novelist, but none of them would have preserved his fame to posterity. Of the many minor dramatists there is no occasion to speak. Only two men, Goldsmith and Sheridan, produced work which is of high literary quality and which still retains its interest upon the stage. Goldsmith's two comedies, *The Good-Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, have already received due attention, and it only remains to speak briefly of the dramatic work of Sheridan.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was, like Goldsmith and like Burke, an Irishman; and he had all the Irish brilliancy and wit. He was one of the most famous orators of his time, far surpassing Burke in the immediate and striking character of his oratorical effects, but as far inferior to him in the permanent literary quality of his work. His literary fame rests almost exclusively upon his dramas. His famous comedy, *The Rivals*, was written in his twenty-fourth year, and *The School for Scandal* and *The Critic* within four years thereafter. Sheridan wrote other plays, but none that equal these three. These are sufficient to maintain his reputation as one of the most brilliant of English writers of comedy. Such names as Bob Acres, Mrs. Malaprop, Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, and Sir Fretful Plagiary are among the best known in English comic drama. They give evidence of Sheridan's skill in the creation of comic characters and of his masterful ease in witty and sparkling dialogue.

Robert Burns - Poet

BOOK V

INDIVIDUALISM (1780–1832)

CHAPTER XIII

THE AGE OF BURNS (1780–1800)

The Age of Johnson was an age of transition. Classicism continued to assert its authority and to influence the character of literary work; but both its prestige and its power gradually declined before the growing strength of other forces. The Age of Burns was also in some sense an age of transition. The reign of Classicism, to be sure, was practically over, and only here and there did evidences remain that its rule had once been so exclusive and so potent. The reign of Individualism had clearly begun, with the prestige derived from a generation of successful struggle. Yet this age was not to witness the high tide of the individualistic movement, that display of its power which was to create the noblest body of English literature since the days of Shakespeare. This full manifestation of the power of Individualism in literature was to come in the early years of the nineteenth century. In the meantime, the last twenty years of the eighteenth century were to constitute a period during which individualistic tendencies should be clearly dominant, and during which there should be a still further gathering up of strength for widespread and splendid literary achievement. It is in part such considerations as these that make it desirable to set this period off by itself as a distinct interval lying between the vastly different ages of Johnson and Wordsworth, partaking to some

Character of the Age

extent of the character of each, and serving to bridge the gulf between them. The relation is in many ways analogous to that of the Age of Dryden, lying between the Age of Milton on the one hand and the Age of Pope on the other. Nor was the period lacking in a distinct literary quality of its own. Its note is not quite like that of any other time in our literary history. Its authors were men of distinct individuality, and they produced work that is decidedly unique in character.

Growth of Individualism

The age, as we have implied, illustrates the growth of Individualism. This growth is mainly along the old lines, but it is accompanied by a considerable introduction of new elements. Imagination becomes less imitative and more original; expression becomes less perfunctory and more spontaneous. We have seen that the individualistic movement during the Age of Johnson had manifested itself chiefly in five different directions — in the direction of Romanticism, in the direction of a growing love for nature, in the direction of a freer expression of emotion, in the direction of a larger and deeper interest in the common man, and in the direction of religion. The Age of Burns marks advance in all of these ways, and makes it increasingly clear that all of these tendencies find their best explanation as manifestations of the individualistic spirit.

Love for Nature

Nowhere was progress more marked than in the poetic treatment of nature. The natural description of Thomson can hardly bear comparison with the fresh, unaffected, closely observant, and tenderly sympathetic treatment of Cowper. The sentiment of nature which Collins so charmingly conveys is conveyed by Blake with a subtler and stranger magic. Above all, the poetry of Robert Burns brings us into an intimate and living contact with the natural world to which there is no parallel in the literature of the eighteenth century and perhaps no parallel elsewhere.

Romanticism in this period was partly imitative and partly original. The romance which found its inspiration in a "Gothic" mediævalism is illustrated in the novel. On the other hand, a poem like Burns's *Tam O'Shanter* suggested the unsuspected world of romance that may lie hidden in the superstitions of a countryside and in the befuddled brain of a drunken peasant. In still another direction, the mystical fancy of Blake revealed romantic realms of which he alone was the creator.

Romanticism

The emotionalism of the Age of Johnson, as we have seen, deserved to some extent the accusation of "sentimentalism." The emotionalism of the present period is not only stronger but more sincere. The poets of this age express feeling not merely as a poetic duty but because the passion of their hearts will not be refused utterance. There is no more passionate poet than Robert Burns, and it is the intensity and sincerity of his feeling that gives to his lyric music such marvelous power over the human heart.

Emotionalism

On the side of religion there was no such marked movement as the Wesleyan revival, but the age was on the whole decidedly more religious. There was reaction from the scepticism so prevalent during the eighteenth century, while Methodism and other movements had done much to purify and elevate contemporary life. The religious spirit found expression in literature. No one who reads Cowper's poetry can doubt the sincerity and depth of his religious feeling. Blake was a religious mystic. Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night* and other poems reveal the true religious sentiment that lay beneath the surface of that wild and seemingly irreverent nature. It is typical of the age as well as of the man that Burns poured out his scornful ridicule only upon the religious profession that was false and hypocritical.

Religion

Finally, the age was one which recognized as no other age had ever done the value and importance of the common man. The French Revolution set up its motto of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"; and by those ideas more than by any others the age was stirred. The standard of modern democracy had been raised; and if democracy was not yet to triumph, its spirit was in the air presaging future victory. Of these ideas, Burns, of course, was the chief poetic voice. They run through all his poetry. In such words as these, they are gathered up into brief expression:

Democratic Spirit

> Then let us pray that come it may,
> As come it will for a' that;
> That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
> May bear the gree, and a' that;
> For a' that, and a' that,
> It's coming yet, for a' that;
> That man to man, the world o'er,
> Shall brothers be for a' that.

Not only does Burns illustrate each of these separate tendencies; he more than any other man illustrates the fact that they find their deepest explanation in the intensely individualistic spirit of the age. Burns himself was a strong and vigorous personality. He believed in the individual man and in his right to work out his destiny in his own fashion. In his poetry, he voiced the faith that the individual imagination should be free, to seek its own in the realms of romance or in the common ways of the actual world; that the individual instinct should be free, to find its delight in communion with nature or in fellowship with men; that the individual heart should be free, to cherish and to voice its deepest passions; that the individual conscience should be free, to worship God according to its own dictates; that the in-

Dominance of Individualism

dividual man should be free, to find in righteous use of his freedom his own fullest development. His works and the works of the other great men who labored with him in his time afford large illustration of the fact that the dominant guiding impulse of literature in the age was the impulse of Individualism.

Literary Product of the Age

The age was not one of the largest and fullest achievement. Indeed, its literary product was comparatively limited, both in quantity and in range, although some of it was of a high order of excellence. The fountains of great inspiration were not as yet open to many men, but some few had drunk deep of the "Pierian spring." In only two departments of pure literature was any work accomplished that calls for special mention here. Sheridan was still alive; but neither he nor any one else was producing important dramatic work. In the field of great prose style, Burke continued to display his masterly powers until his death in 1797; but Burke belonged mainly to the Age of Johnson and has already been considered there. He had no compeer or worthy successor in the present period. In poetry alone was there any work of a really high order. Four poets — Cowper, Crabbe, Blake, and Burns — illustrate the age. They are of rather unequal importance; but all of them, for one reason or another, will call for definite consideration. The progress of the novel, too, will demand brief notice; for although no real masterpiece was produced, there was a development of fiction in the hands of many minor writers which forms a not uninteresting passage in the general history of the novel.

The Novel

The modern novel began in realism — in the portrayal of contemporary life and character. Its development during the Age of Johnson was mainly in the same direction, although there were, as we have seen, a few individual exceptions. The realistic type of fiction

has not at any time since altogether ceased. Perhaps its best representative in the present period was Fanny Burney, afterward Madame D'Arblay. She was a sort of female Richardson, and her *Evelina* and *Cecilia* remind us not a little of his *Clarissa Harlowe*. By her faithfulness in transcribing ordinary life and character, she affords a faint anticipation of the work of Jane Austen in the next generation. Her novels are stories of love amid the environment of polite society. This period also saw the development of an extremely romantic type of fiction. The prototype of the class was Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, mentioned in the previous chapter. While no really important work was produced, the type itself is of interest. Its chief ingredients were mystery and terror; and to produce these effects, it made use of ghosts, demons, haunted castles, secret passages, blood, intrigue, and death, together with all sorts of natural and supernatural machinery. The most famous writer of this school was Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, whose *Mysteries of Udolpho* may be taken as an excellent representative of the type. She indulges freely in the supernatural, but makes an effort to explain it by natural causes. Still more extreme in its "Gothic" character was *The Monk*, from which its author was known as "Monk" Lewis. He wrote various other stories of the same general class. William Beckford's *Vathek* is an Oriental romance, illustrating the same romantic tendencies but with a somewhat different atmosphere. A third type of novel is represented by William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*. Its author was a political philosopher, and he used the novel as an instrument of social and political reform. All three types of novel were afterward to receive a much fuller and finer development. They are interesting chiefly for this reason and because of their relation to the general movements of the age. The realistic novel illustrates the ever growing interest in ordi-

nary men and women, while the political or social novel carries this democratic spirit so far as to become revolutionary. The "Gothic" or mediæval novel is, of course, associated with the great romantic movement which has so powerfully affected all branches of literature.

William Cowper was born in the Age of Pope, lived all through the Age of Johnson without producing any literary work of note, and began his career as a poet when he was some fifty years of age, at about the beginning of the period now under review. His timid, shrinking, and somewhat morbid nature was seriously affected by an unfortunate love affair and by other experiences of his early life; and as a consequence, his mind was disordered. The promising and happy career which seemed assured to him through the powerful influence of a distinguished family was bitterly blighted, and Cowper withdrew into a rural retirement on a small allowance. All his life, he was afflicted with an extreme melancholia, passing at times over the verge of insanity. An intensely religious man, he despaired of his own salvation and believed that he was doomed to be a castaway. In his own pathetic words,

William Cowper

> I was a stricken deer that left the herd
> Long since; with many an arrow deep infixed
> My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
> To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
> There was I found by One who had Himself
> Been hurt by the archers.

Death was long in coming; for he lived until the last year of the century, carefully tended for many years by dear friends, the most devoted of whom was Mrs. Unwin. His filial tenderness toward her is expressed in his beautiful poem *To Mary*. His poetical work began during his residence at Olney, with the Unwins, and covered only about ten or twelve years. During the last ten years of

his life, he was afflicted with both bodily and mental disease, and drew toward the close of his allotted threescore years and ten in extreme misery. He died in the mood of religious despair so terribly expressed in *The Castaway*, where he likens his fate to that of a sailor lost overboard at sea.

Cowper's Early Poems

Considering the circumstances of his life and the shortness of his literary career, Cowper's work is remarkable, both in quantity and in range. It began with the *Olney Hymns*, some of which give utterance to the deepest religious faith and devotion. When we recall that he was the author of such a hymn as that beginning,

> There is a fountain fill'd with blood,

the pathos of his religious despair is vastly deepened by the contrast with his religious fervor. His next attempts were in the direction of poetical essays and satires after the manner of an earlier time. These were not very successful; but it was difficult for a man of Cowper's temperament to break suddenly or consciously with the received poetic tradition. He was to be a leader in new ways, but he was not by nature a revolutionist. The original quality in his work was the result of his peculiar individuality and of his isolation from the world rather than of any conscious revolutionary purpose. Such poems as *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, *Retirement*, and *Table Talk* show him still subject to the classical influences under which he had grown up. The personal element in them is the result of Cowper's devout religious spirit and of his delicate humor. This humor — so strange when we think of Cowper's terrible mental sufferings — is still further illustrated by *The Diverting History of John Gilpin*. The story of John Gilpin's ride is one of the best-known pieces of humor in English poetry.

Cowper's masterpiece is *The Task*. It was suggested by Lady Austin, who bade him sing of "the Sofa." Cowper did begin with that subject, and it aptly illustrates his facility in writing good blank verse on almost any theme, as well as the fact that the writing of poetry was to him chiefly an intellectual diversion from his distressing maladies. "The Task" that had been set for him grew on his hands; and he wrote a long poem dealing with various aspects of the country life that he knew so well. Here he reveals himself as a genuine and original poet of nature. His treatment is simple, unaffected, and sincere; and it is because he wrote without artifice of what he thoroughly understood that his method in the handling of nature was a revelation to his age. His treatment is not unmixed with didacticism; but he had the true feeling for nature, and a gift of minute natural description which has left the world richer by some of its most faithful and charming poetic pictures of rural sights and scenes. In addition to Cowper's religious spirit and his contribution to the poetical treatment of nature, it is altogether natural that his poetry should associate him with the emotional temper of his age. Emotionalism with him was no matter of theory or of conscious poetic intention. It sprang from the deep life sources of his nature. His religious fervor, his profound melancholy, his strong natural affection, all led him to emotional expression. His lines *To Mary* are deeply affecting. His poem *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture out of Norfolk* is touched with a melancholy tenderness. Above all, *The Castaway*, his most poignant poem, sounds the note of profound and unfeigned despair. The same awful note is heard in the conclusion of one of his lesser poems:

Cowper's Task and Other Poems

> I, tempest-tossed, and wrecked at last,
> Come home to port no more.

Much inferior to Cowper in poetic gift and also in personal interest is George Crabbe. In form, his poetry clings to the old classical tradition, but there is much in its content and historical significance that is important. It is this alone that need detain our attention here. Crabbe's reputation was established by *The Village*, a poem in which he describes the life and scenery of an obscure fishing hamlet on the coast of Suffolk. He had a remarkable gift for describing nature, especially in its gloomier and fiercer aspects; but beyond this was his power of depicting the wretched and sordid life of the poor. Crabbe spared no coarse or evil detail in drawing his realistic pictures; and they are stern and gloomy even to pessimism. Soon after writing *The Village*, Crabbe ceased altogether from poetry for over twenty years, and then took up the same themes again in such poems as *The Borough* and *Tales of the Hall*. He had then fallen upon a new age, but the quality of his work was unchanged, and belonged essentially to the eighteenth century. It will readily be seen that his work connects him, though in a peculiar fashion, with the naturalistic movement and more especially with the poetic treatment of common men and common things. His emotion was grim and stern, and certainly had nothing in it of mere sentimentalism. His realism is at the opposite extreme from much of the prevailing romanticism of his day. These lines from *The Village* convey the impression of his characteristic attitude:

George Crabbe

> No; cast by fortune on a frowning coast,
> Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast;
> Where other cares than those the Muse relates,
> And other shepherds dwell with other mates;
> By such examples taught, I paint the cot,
> As Truth will paint it and as bards will not.

Crabbe is the most realistic of English poets; William

Blake is the most extremely fantastic and idealistic. He was, in very truth, " of imagination all compact." There was in him a corresponding weakness — not to say failure — of the logical faculty. He thought in pictures and symbols, and these images of his thought had the utmost vividness and distinctness. We can hardly appreciate his poetry without knowing that he was also a painter. Painting was doubtless his natural province, for there imagery and symbolism might be sufficient unto themselves. When he turned to poetry, he endeavored to make language do the work of painting, and became thereby often vague and incoherent. It is hard to say that Blake was mad, but it is quite as hard to say that he was entirely sane. He was a typical visionary, and many of his visions had for him all the reality of actual presences. No doubt he was sincere when he claimed to have seen as a child of four God's head at the window, to have talked with Jesus Christ, with Moses and the Prophets, with Homer, Dante, and Milton. Out of such conditions, naturally grew his so-called *Prophetic Books*, which are vague beyond the limit of comprehension. His literary fame rests rather upon those lighter poems in which now and again a childlike simplicity flashes out into sudden beauty. It is almost as though Blake became a true poet only in his rare and happy moments and by a sort of fortunate accident. It is hard to interpret the character of this mystic and dreamer — so complex and so strange ; but the best of his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* we may appreciate, and give thanks. Few English poets have been capable of a rarer union of strength and sweetness than Blake manifests at his best. The pictorial quality of these and other poems is suggested by the fact that Blake printed them from copper plates in which text and illustrative designs were interwoven, the sketches being engraved and colored by his own hand. One of

William Blake

his best-known poems is *The Tiger*, in which occurs this characteristic stanza:

> When the stars threw down their spears,
> And watered heaven with their tears,
> Did He smile His work to see?
> Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Blake is a poet of nature, and one of the most exquisite. He is a romantic poet, and one of the most extreme. He is a religious poet, and one of the most rapt and mystical. He is an emotional poet, ranging from childish delight to profound religious awe. He is an intensely individual poet — one of the rarest and strangest personalities in the whole range of English poetry.

Robert Burns

Robert Burns was no less distinct an individual, but he was much less eccentric and much more in touch with ordinary human life. It is difficult for the common man to feel himself in sympathy with Blake; but probably no poet has ever appealed more strongly than Burns to the general human heart. His poetry was not essentially better than Blake's at its best, but it was broader, fuller, richer, and more human. It is this human quality in his work that comes first to our thought, and probably nothing comes nearer to accounting for his universal popularity as a poet. He had Crabbe's knowledge of common men and the hard conditions of their life, as he had Crabbe's directness and sincerity of method in portrayal; but he had more than Crabbe's sympathy with the common lot, as he had vastly more than Crabbe's poetic genius. If we set Burns alongside of Cowper for a moment, we shall see that the two men were alike in at least one respect — their isolation. Each was left to his own rural and obscure world, to work out the suggestions of his genius in his own way. Both had some acquaintance with previous literature, and both were somewhat affected by the old classical influences; but neither

was deeply touched or strongly swerved from his own original way. Both were poets of nature — direct, observant, sincere; but the methods of the two were as different as their spirit. In most other respects, Burns was in strong contrast with Cowper. The one was calm, meditative, serene, though deeply passionate; the other was impulsive, vigorous, impetuous, moved by passion unrestrained. The one was frail with disease and trembled on the verge of madness; the other was sound to the core and thoroughly sane. The one rounded out a life of seventy years, nursing all the strength of his delicate being and concentrating practically all of his literary work into his sixth decade; the other, likewise, spent less than ten years in poetical work and in his eager pursuit of the joys of living, but flung away his life in the spending.

Burns and his Age

As we have already partly suggested, Burns was the central figure of his age, though so much apart from its life. He felt instinctively — perhaps more or less unconsciously — all the impulses that were stirring the minds of men in his day, and he was in touch with all the great tendencies that were making the onward current of English life and literature. His nature was open on all sides, and he felt the mighty blowing of all intellectual winds.

A Poet of Nature

He was a poet of nature, and that, too, in the fullest and largest sense. The natural forms of his native Scottish countryside — hills and vales, fields and streams, trees and flowers and growing crops — he knew by daily contact, and loved them with a poet's joy. The birds and beasts that he touches with his poetic fancy are such as had come under his actual eye. Toward all these creatures, his feeling is that of an elder brother. To the mountain daisy — "wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flower" — which he has turned down with his plough, he speaks in accents of sympathetic tenderness. To the

field-mouse, whose nest has been ruined by that same ploughshare, he says, in words broadly significant of his attitude toward the whole natural creation:

> I'm truly sorry man's dominion
> Has broken Nature's social union,
> An' justifies that ill opinion,
> Which makes thee startle
> At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
> An' fellow-mortal!

With the common human lives that belong to these natural surroundings, he has a sympathy even deeper and more intense. Indeed, in his poetry, nature is of interest chiefly as it reflects human passion and experience by sympathy or by contrast. Speaking of Jean Armour, whom he afterward married, he says:

> I see her in the dewy flowers,
> I see her sweet and fair;
> I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
> I hear her charm the air.

The forlorn maiden, mourning for her lost love, sings:

> Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
> How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair!
> How can ye chant, ye little birds,
> And I sae weary fu' o' care!

A Poet of Common Humanity

The human interest of Burns takes an even wider sweep. He has learned from these humble ploughmen and peasants who were of his own blood that there is divine quality in the lowliest human lives. As a matter of intimate knowledge and of profound conviction, he understands that men are to be judged by their own inherent worth and not by the accidents of wealth, rank, learning, or position. In *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, he has drawn an immortal picture of a Scottish peasant family, like that which gathered around his own father's hearth. The poem is written in the Spenserian stanza, but how different from the atmosphere of

Spenser's faeryland is that of this Scottish fireside. Nothing could more emphatically mark the gulf that lies between the age of the Renaissance and this age of democratic feeling. In *Tam O'Shanter*, we have a glimpse of another side of this same peasant life. Tam, planted by the ale-house fire with "his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony," is a drunken Ayrshire peasant. As he rides home in the stormy night, his head filled with country superstitions — as he sees in "Alloway's auld haunted kirk" the vision of the witches' dance, and is chased by "the hellish legion" over the Brig o' Doon — he becomes in some sort a hero of romance through the magic of Burns's fancy. Not alone such transcripts from common life does Burns present to us. His poetry is filled with human passion, and not least with the exceedingly human passion of his own ardent nature. Most of all with the passion of love, which has poured so much of haunting music into his verse. This love was not always sanctified, but it was certainly fervid, and sometimes as pure as it was passionate. His verses to Jean Armour have been already referred to. There are verses also to many others. *Mary Morison*, *My Nanie, O*, *To Mary in Heaven*, *Farewell to Nancy*, *Highland Mary* — these are some of the most beautiful of his numerous love-songs. None of his lines go deeper into the heart than these from his *Farewell to Nancy*:

> Had we never loved sae kindly,
> Had we never loved sae blindly,
> Never met — or never parted,
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted!

That he can express other feeling than his own, the world knows by such songs as *Auld Lang Syne*, *John Anderson my Jo*, *Bannockburn*, *A Man's a Man for a' that*, and many songs that portray the passion of other lovers. All his poetry shows the breadth and intensity of his sympathy with his "fellow-mortals," as well as with the

world of nature. That his pity can take an even wider range is illustrated in his *Address to the Deil:*

> Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
> An' let poor damned bodies be;

and again, to the Devil himself:

> But, fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
> O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
> Ye aiblins might — I dinna ken —
> Still hae a stake —
> I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
> Ev'n for your sake!

Burns's association with the emotional tendency of his age has been already suggested by what has been said of his treatment of human passion. He was himself one of the most passionate of all English poets; he exercised the utmost freedom in the expression of his emotion, from broadest humor to the most heartbreaking sorrow; and he is the representative singer of an age in which emotion had again come to its rights in English poetry. Enough has also been said or implied as to the comparatively small element of romanticism in Burns's poetry. He was not a typical romantic poet, and his work should go far toward convincing us that Romanticism is not the central literary movement of the time. Nevertheless, he was by no means devoid of the romantic spirit. He knew how to discover and to interpret the romance of common life and of the ordinary human heart. His most typical poem in this particular is *Tam O'Shanter*, whose romantic significance has already been suggested.

Burns's Emotionalism

Burns's Romanticism

A consideration of Burns's attitude toward religion involves judgment of his life and character as well as of his poetry. We can not touch upon such a subject without a mixture of feelings, and should not except in the mood of tender sympathy and broad charity. His wildness,

his passions, his dissipations, his excesses of many kinds, need not be denied and can not be excused. He himself would be the last to palliate them. Nevertheless, they can be forgiven, and there is no need that they should be unduly emphasized. We can afford to accept his poetry as it is, thanking God for such a genius, and committing to His infinite mercy all that was faulty in the nature of one of the greatest of His poets. If we have any touch of Burns's own sympathetic nature, we shall see that beneath the stormy surface of his life there was a true human heart and a genuinely religious spirit. Religious cant, hypocrisy, and pretence he hated with the fervor of a generous nature and ridiculed with all the power of his humor and his scorn. For true religion he displays nothing but reverence and sympathy. It is in such a spirit that he depicts the scene in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, as

Burns's Religious Nature

> Kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
> The saint, the father, and the husband prays.

He knew well, moreover, that

> From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs.

Speaking more directly for himself, he thus sums up the matter:

> When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
> Religion may be blinded;
> Or, if she gie a random sting,
> It may be little minded;
> But when on life we're tempest-driv'n —
> A conscience but a canker,
> A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n,
> Is sure a noble anchor!

The general tenor of his life and of his poetry allows us to believe that Burns did have that "anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."

Burns's marked and forceful individuality underlying all his actions, his strongly individualistic convictions under-

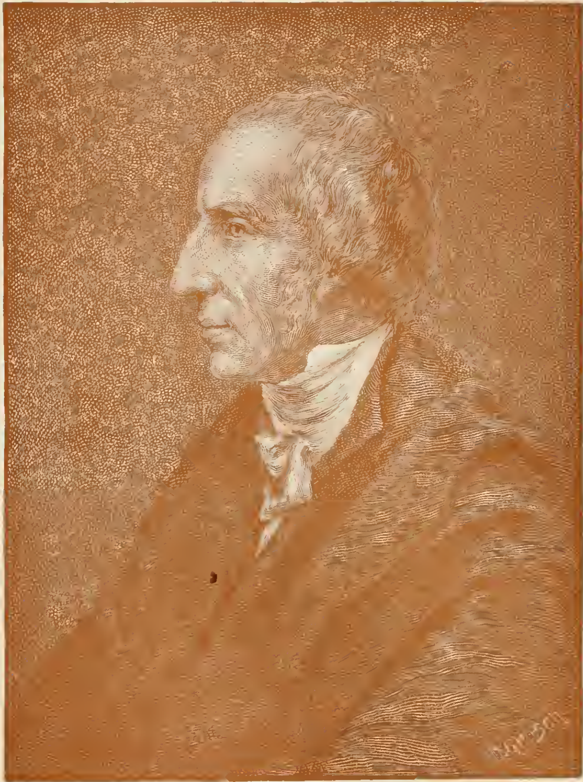
lying all his thought, are not difficult to discover or to appreciate. He preached Individualism, directly in such poetry as *A Man's a Man for a' that* and certain passages of *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, indirectly in the essential tone and spirit of all his poetry. He gave in his own person a splendid example of Individualism. This ploughman and son of a poor Scotch peasant broke through the restrictions of his lowly rank and made his name known to the ends of the earth. He shook off the classical fetters that other men had not been able entirely to break, and spoke his free and fearless word to an age that must needs listen. He left his plough in the furrow and consorted with the greatest men of his time on equal terms, proud and independent as the best, and then went back to his plough again. He made men forget his humble origin as he challenged social rank and privilege, religious formalism and insincerity, political tyranny and oppression.

Burns's Individualism

More even than all this was the strongly individual character of his poetic genius and work. He was a lyric poet, the greatest pure singer that England had yet seen. His song was full of exquisite music, but it was full also of that deeper thing in lyric poetry, warm and genuine human passion. Here were "tears and laughter for all time." Here was that "spark o' Nature's fire" which to him was better than all learning, full compensation for all toil, because it could "touch the heart." His homely Scottish dialect has become forever a classic speech because it has been touched by his genius. No English poet has ever come closer than he to the daily lives of men; for wherever the English language is spoken, his songs have been sung for a hundred years, and their music does not yet die away. Wordsworth spoke most truly:

His Individual Genius

> Deep in the general heart of men,
> His power survives.



Wm Wordsworth

CHAPTER XIV

THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH (1800–1832)

The eighteenth century was for the most part an age of authority and of classicism. Toward the close of the century had come the triumph of new and directly antagonistic principles, preparing the way for a great and original literary period during the earlier years of the nineteenth century. The Age of Wordsworth was to be distinctively and preëminently the age of Individualism. It was an age of great individual geniuses, many of them creating splendid bodies of literary work and establishing their places among the foremost writers of the literature. It was an age of great individualistic achievement; for although its writers were all moved in the main by the same general spirit, the work of each of the great leaders was surprisingly distinct and peculiar. It was an age of great individualistic ideas; for Individualism was in the air, was rapidly permeating the whole mass of society, and was passing on from a mere democratic principle to a concrete realization in actual democracy. The literary expression of this individualistic spirit was in large measure a further development of tendencies which we have already traced. Romantic literature was advanced and broadened by men like Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The poetic treatment of nature was brought by Wordsworth to its greatest depth and significance. The recognition of the worth, the dignity, and still further the rights, of the common man affected the work of many writers, and developed in some cases into a decidedly revolutionary sentiment. Emotion prevailed in literature as it had never

The Age of Individualism

done since the days of Milton, save in the single case of Burns; but emotionalism was no longer a distinct tendency, but took its place as a commonly accepted matter of fact. Much the same might be said of religion. The moral and religious tone of the age and of its literary work was higher than that of the eighteenth century; but there was no decided religious movement, and no distinct religious tendency in literature. Beyond the development of these older tendencies, there was much that was new and original in the individualistic literature of the time, but it is hardly to be defined in general terms. It was due to the decided and peculiar personality of many individual writers, and is best to be felt and appreciated in connection with the study of their works.

The high priest of this new literary dispensation was William Wordsworth. He more than any other man was its leader and its great central figure. He was not so in any such sense as Dryden, Pope, and Johnson had been in their respective periods. The age of the literary dictator had passed away with the decadence of the principle of classical authority, and the spirit of the present period was too individualistic to bow down to any man, however great, as a literary lawgiver. Indeed, the influence of Wordsworth was of exceedingly slow growth and hardly received full recognition much before his own death. This is illustrated in a minor way by the fact that, in 1813, when Wordsworth had already written much of his best poetry, Robert Southey, a younger man and a much inferior poet, was appointed poet-laureate. Southey held that office until his death in 1843; Wordsworth was then appointed and held it until his own death in 1850. If the age is fittingly designated by the name of Wordsworth, it is because later generations than his own have recognized him as the most representative literary genius of his day. His long life,

Limits of the Age

covering the years from 1770 to 1850, was much more than coextensive with the proper limits of the period. Before the death of Cowper in 1800, his genius had already received wide recognition through the publication of his *Lyrical Ballads*. He continued to exercise his poetical powers till well toward the end of his life, although his literary activity practically ceased as early as 1835. Even before the latter date, the age was practically over, and the literature of a new period was well under way. There was naturally much overlapping of literary work; but probably the year 1832 best marks the point at which the old period may be regarded as passing into the new. That was the year of the death of Scott, one of the most popular and influential literary men of the age. It was the year of the death of Goethe, the greatest literary figure of the continent. It was the year of the great Reform Bill, which marks the beginning of the extension of the elective franchise and of the growth of practical democracy in England. In the next year Browning published *Pauline*, Carlyle published *Sartor Resartus*, and Tennyson published his first collected *Poems*. These are among the most notable men and works of the next period; and from this point the newer literature grew rapidly, while only a few scattered works were published by eminent leaders of the older period. The present chapter, therefore, will aim to discuss literary work that lies for the most part between the years 1800 and 1832, although it will to some extent overpass those limits at either end.

Character of Literature in the Age

The eighteenth century was distinctively an age of prose. The Age of Wordsworth — like the Age of Shakespeare and unlike the Age of Tennyson — was decidedly an age of poetry. Its great men of genius were mostly eminent in the poetical field, distinction was more easily achieved in poetry than in prose, the general taste was decidedly set in

the poetic direction. This fact has helped to mark it as the second great age in our literary history; for poetry is the highest form of literary expression, and poetry seems to have been most in harmony with the noblest powers of the English genius. There was also a noteworthy development of the novel which was already beginning to establish itself as the favorite literary form of the nineteenth century. Miscellaneous prose was by no means without its distinguished representatives, and the age has given to English literature some of its noblest examples of prose style. The drama was the only great literary form that was not adequately represented. Many of the great poets, as well as other writers, tried their hands at dramatic work; but there is probably not a single great drama in the stricter sense of the term. The best that we can say is that there was some really noble poetry written in nominally dramatic form. During the nineteenth century, the drama seems to have been practically superseded by the novel as a medium for the portrayal of its complex forms of life and character. It remains to be said that the literature of the age was exceedingly rich and varied. There were many excellent writers, and there was a vast body of excellent work. Under these conditions, it becomes almost an absolute necessity to confine our attention to the greatest writers and to those who best represent the essential spirit of the age. In our consideration of these, we shall see — what more detailed study would only serve to confirm — that the great literary impulse of the age is the impulse of Individualism, manifesting itself — most naturally — in a wonderful variety of forms.

William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland, and went to school as a boy at Hawkshead, in the very heart of the beautiful English Lake District. It was in these early days that he learned to love, and in some measure to understand, those

aspects of nature which he was afterward to portray with such marvelous poetic power. At seventeen, he went to Cambridge University, where he became a member of St. John's College. The life here was not altogether congenial to him; but, nevertheless, his contemplative and receptive nature drew much from study and from the associations of the historic place. His love for nature was still further developed by his country wanderings; and among other evidences of his broadening intelligence was a rather curious poetic interest in the higher mathematics. After leaving the University, he spent two years in travel on the continent, feeling with delight the grandeur of the Alps, and coming into somewhat intimate contact with the men and events of the French Revolution. These two interests are symbolic of the two great passions of Wordsworth's life, the passion for nature and the passion for humanity. By the ideals of the Revolution — "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" — his young soul was stirred to its depths; and he planned to cast in his lot with the great movement. Just before the frightful "Reign of Terror," he was recalled to England and was probably thus saved from falling a victim to his own enthusiasm. The excesses and final failure of the Revolution brought about a reaction in his mind and made him for the rest of his life a conservative. He remained always a poet of liberty moving within the bounds of law, but he was opposed to violent revolutionary outbreak. This attitude was really more in harmony with the serene and steady nature of the man, although the remembrance of his youthful passion of enthusiasm led him to exclaim:

His Life

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven!

In 1797-1798 he was a neighbor, in Somersetshire, of Coleridge, who joined with him in the writing and publi-

cation of the *Lyrical Ballads*. After a year in Germany, he settled down in the early days of the nineteenth century to fifty years of quiet and productive life in the English Lake District where his boyhood had been nourished. Here he found his proper environment, and here his genius steadily grew in ripeness and spiritual power.

In these surroundings he could be a true poet of nature; but his earlier experiences and the natural constitution of his own mind prepared him also to be a poet of humanity and a poet of man's intellectual life. He felt himself, like Milton, to be a dedicated spirit, for whom the tasks of poetry were no less than a divine calling. His preparation for these tasks has been roughly indicated by the brief outline of his career. He himself has fully elaborated the course of this preparation in one of the most famous of his works — a long poem in fourteen books, called *The Prelude*, in which he sets forth the principal facts of his early life and shows the development of his poetic faculty. The subtitle of the work — "Growth of a Poet's Mind, an Autobiographical Poem" — indicates its peculiar purpose, and shows Wordsworth's superb self-consciousness and self-esteem. He deemed the history of his own personal development worthy to be unfolded in a poem of heroic proportions. It was a splendid egotism; but Wordsworth was not wrong in considering his own spiritual experiences to be among the great facts of English poetry. He delivers to us a secret of his poetic greatness when he says, "I loved whate'er I saw." He tells us in brief his poetic attitude, after many inward strivings, when he declares that he

His Poetic Development

> In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
> A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

Wordsworth stands in the thought of the world — and justly — as the greatest of all poets of nature. He was

born to that office. From his very earliest years he was alive to the beauty and to the spiritual suggestiveness of the world of nature around him. He had the seeing eye, the receptive soul, the divine gift of spiritual insight. In his youngest days, he could say of himself:

The Poet of Nature

> The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colors and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.

This sufficiently indicates the poetic sensuousness — the exquisite delight in all the joys of the senses — that lay at the foundation of Wordsworth's rather intellectual genius. But this was only the foundation. There soon came into his life and into his poetry the higher "charm, by thought supplied," the deeper significance supplied by his unparalleled faculty of spiritual vision. It is not merely accurate description of nature that he gives, not merely reproduction of the beauty of her myriad forms. Nor is it the sentiment of nature alone or her reflection of the passions and experiences of the human soul. It is the soul of Nature herself.

He is, therefore, something more than a greater Thomson or Collins or Cowper or Burns. He is nature's inspired seer and interpreter. Nature to him is a divine symbol, the uttered word of the eternal thought; and it is the meaning of this symbol that he attempts, within the range of human powers, to discover and to convey. Suggesting the image of a child, applying to its ear a shell and hearing therein

Spiritual Interpretation of Nature

> Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
> Mysterious union with its native sea,

he adds,

> Even such a shell the universe itself
> Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
> I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
> Authentic tidings of invisible things;
> Of ebb and flow, and ever during power;
> And central peace, subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation.

It is such "authentic tidings of invisible things" that Wordworth's poetry aims to bring to mankind. Beyond all other poetry that has ever been written, it succeeds in suggesting through its treatment of natural appearances that deeper meaning of nature which no human language or symbol can adequately express.

To this profound interpretation, Wordsworth is able to give the impressive power of artistic utterance. He has not only "the vision and the faculty divine," but he has in due measure "the accomplishment of verse." By the power of his imagination, the natural world is idealized and clothed for us in

Idealization of Nature

> The light that never was, on sea or land,
> The consecration, and the Poet's dream.

It is made alive, too, by his emotion; for he was endowed, not only with the power of minute observation, of graphic portrayal, of spiritual interpretation, of imaginative idealization, but with the power also of pouring out his heart in passionate description. It is the soul of nature that we are made to feel, but it is also the soul of Wordsworth. He has an intense love for nature and a profound sympathy with her various forms; and this love and sympathy is doubtless in large measure the secret of his ability to discover the manifold beauties that she has to reveal and to interpret the deeper meanings which she hides from unanointed eyes.

Perhaps no poetic doctrine is more peculiar to him than

that nature is informed by a living spirit which animates all her multitudinous shapes. In one of his earlier poems, he says,

> And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes.

The faith here so simply expressed is elsewhere elaborated more fully and with larger sweep of thought. Especially do we find his poetic creed set forth in his *Lines composed above Tintern Abbey, on the Banks of the Wye.* The sensuousness of his earlier feeling for nature has already been illustrated by a passage from this same poem, and the lines which almost immediately follow are the finest illustration of his further development in intellectual and spiritual perception :

The Life of Nature

> For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

These lines suggest that Wordsworth has not only derived from his deeper contemplation of nature "a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused," but that he has also learned to hear "the still, sad music of humanity." This leads us to observe that in his maturity his interest in man was almost if not quite equal to his interest in nature. The human interest was in part aroused in him by his experiences in the

A Poet of Man

broader world of men, by his foreign travel, and especially by his brief association with the French Revolution. The latter brought him into contact with forceful individuals and with the broad sweep of great human problems. Not alone in this way, however, was his interest in man developed. He found dwelling in the midst of his native hills human beings who to him were an organic part of the great whole, so vitally associated with nature that they were hardly to be moved out of their place any more than the hills themselves. These also were men, with human passions and experiences not really less significant than those of the great leaders of the French Revolution.

His Individualism

Wordsworth was one of the most thoroughgoing of individualists. If there was any one thing that was the very corner-stone of his character, his thought, and his poetic creed, it was faith in the value and in the poetic significance of what men ordinarily call the commonplace. He speaks of Robert Burns, ploughman and poet of common men, as one

> Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
> And showed my youth
> How Verse may build a princely throne
> On humble truth.

Treatment of Common Men

Such a man was not likely to miss the importance of common men any more than the importance of common things. Indeed, this tendency to find poetic values everywhere was sometimes a snare to Wordsworth. Lacking the sense of humor that would have enabled him to perceive when he was passing the bounds of the ridiculous, he wrote such poems as *The Idiot Boy* and *Peter Bell*. On the other hand, in poems like *The Leech-Gatherer* and *Michael*, he has attained the noblest poetic results that were ever reached by such simple means. The latter is the severely plain story of an old shepherd whose heart is broken by the shame of an only and well-beloved son.

When the boy went away from home, the father had just begun to build a sheepfold; and though the old man wrought at the fold for seven years after the boy's disgrace, he "left the work unfinished when he died." The profound impression of Michael's sorrow is conveyed by the suggestion that "many and many a day" he went to his labor,

> And never lifted up a single stone.

How bare and prosaic are the mere words; and yet, charged with its weight of meaning, it is one of the most grandly simple lines in English poetry. In such treatment, Wordsworth is dealing with the natural rather than with the artificial man, showing man as vitally related to nature and drawing help and comfort from her. He can hardly be said to have much dramatic power in the portrayal of individual character, and perhaps is disposed rather to deal with human ideas and emotions — with humanity rather than with individual man.

Harmony of Nature and Man

This suggests still another avenue of approach by which his love for nature has brought him to a large human interest. He feels that these two — nature and man — were made by God for each other and should be in harmony. He makes us feel

> How exquisitely the individual mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the whole species) to the external world
> Is fitted: — and how exquisitely, too —
> Theme this but little heard of among men —
> The external world is fitted to the mind;
> And the creation (by no lower name
> Can it be called) which they with blended might
> Accomplish.

This is Wordsworth's "high argument"; and it is in this spirit that he becomes the poet both of nature and of man, in their spiritual communion with each other.

Wordsworth said, "Every great poet is a teacher; I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing." Whatever we may think of the validity of this opinion, it is at least perfectly unequivocal. Wordsworth was — and is — a teacher. He was not only a man endowed with poetic imagination, poetic passion, and poetic feeling for beauty; he was also a great thinker. He is properly to be called a philosophical poet. The name of philosopher is not to be applied to him in any strict sense of the word; for he was not a merely speculative thinker, nor did he have an ordered philosophical system. Yet he is philosophical in that he deals, after the poet's fashion, with problems of the universe and of human being. The subjects of his thinking have already been largely indicated. His doctrine of a universal spirit in nature has been called pantheistic; but although Wordsworth speaks in the vaguest terms of "a motion and a spirit" in nature, he speaks also of the soul as coming

A Philosophical Teacher

> From God, who is our home.

This line is from his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, one of the greatest poetic masterpieces of the century. This poem is typical of his philosophical as well as of his poetic spirit. The soul comes into the world attended by the vision of the glory from which it sprang.

Intimations of Immortality

> At length the man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

Yet Nature is a most kindly nurse, and "even with something of a Mother's mind," "doth all she can"

> To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
> Forget the glories he hath known,
> And that imperial palace whence he came.

Still there are within us instincts and affections,

> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
> Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal Silence.

Such philosophical teaching as this runs through all of Wordsworth's poetry, so wide in range, so varied in quality. It is the teaching of a great poet, with superb mastery over the resources of his art — able to command the charm of lyric melody, to shape the sonnet into finished perfection, to build the meditative verse where "high and passionate thoughts" are "to their own music chanted," to construct great temples of poetry like his *Prelude* and his *Excursion*. It is the teaching of a great master of life, charged with ethical meaning. His poetry touches the highest; it does not despise the lowest. In it,

Ethical Spirit

> The primal duties shine aloft, like stars;
> The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
> Are scattered at the feet of Man, like flowers.

A man of extraordinary genius, allied with Wordsworth by close personal friendship and by association in literary work, was Samuel Taylor Coleridge. There are some points of similarity between the two men, but in other respects they are strikingly unlike in character and in genius. The intellectual powers of Coleridge were little short of marvelous, both in range and in quality. He was a man of broad and varied learning, so much so that it is doubtful if any mind in his age was so richly stored as his. He was a profound philosophical thinker — acute, subtle, and original. His critical powers were of the very first order; and in this respect he had a gift which Wordsworth almost wholly lacked. In purely poetic genius, he was probably

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

His Genius

as richly endowed as any man in the nineteenth century. His command of the resources of language, both in poetry and in prose, has seldom been equalled. It is generally agreed that he was one of the greatest conversers that ever lived. Many of the greatest men of his age — Wordsworth among the rest — owed much to his stimulus and inspiration; and from him went out streams of influence that did much to make the literature of his generation so rich and so full. These are some of his titles to fame, and these are suggestive rather than exhaustive.

Over against these remarkable powers are to be set limitations many and unfortunate. His nature and the conditions of his life were such that his great gifts were in large measure locked up from use and never came to adequate expression. Doubtless the extent to which he exercised personal influence upon other men took away in no small degree from his own use of his own powers. Then, he was a dreamer rather than a doer. He planned many things, and in his fortunate moments could achieve with the best; but most of his plans came to nothing, and his life was strewn with unfinished projects. His methods of work were desultory, and only in his happy moods was he capable of his best self-expression. He was constitutionally sluggish even to laziness, and accomplished his set task only by painful effort. He spent his great intellectual resources and potential energies in talk rather than in productive literary labor. As if all this were not enough, he was a confirmed and excessive opium-eater. All things considered, it is perhaps a wonder that he accomplished so much rather than that he accomplished so little.

His Limitations

From what has been said, it will easily be seen that Coleridge was a unique, original, and impressive personality. He was strikingly individual even in that age of marked individualities. His sympathies, his theories, and his literary expression were also marked

Coleridge's Individualism

by the prevailing spirit of Individualism. Like Wordsworth, he was enthusiastic for the French Revolution, and spoke noble words in behalf of human freedom. In one of his poems, he calls on waves, forests, clouds, sun, and sky:

> Ye, everything that is and will be free!
> Be witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
> With what deep worship I have still adored
> The spirit of divinest Liberty.

Under the influence of this spirit, he planned with Southey to found a so-called "Pantisocracy" — a Utopian community in which all should rule equally — on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania. They actually set about the carrying forward of this project, but were forced to abandon it for lack of sufficient money to cross the sea. It was a poet's dream, but it illustrates the dreams that men found possible in that day. In no way, however, did Coleridge display his individualism more than in the unique character of his literary work. Like Wordsworth, he struck out his own modes of expression and followed the singular impulses of his own peculiar genius. Those modes and impulses were as different from those of Wordsworth as from those of other men, although the two friends were in intimate literary association. Coleridge was as preëminently a romantic as Wordsworth was a naturalistic poet, and his romanticism was different from anything that English literature had yet seen. It was, as we shall see, the romanticism of a dreamer but also the romanticism of a philosopher. As a poet of nature, he was second only to Wordsworth and with a manner quite his own. As a philosophical thinker, he was profoundly interested in the spiritual philosophy of the great German writers, and nothing gives more of continuous purpose to his life than his endeavors to interpret that philosophy to English readers. All of these literary activities were in harmony with the ruling spirit

Individualistic Character of his Work

of his age; and through them all he becomes one of the leading representatives of the individualistic movement.

Instead of going to America, Coleridge settled down to a happy and quiet life at Nether Stowey, in the Quantock Hills in Somersetshire. In 1797 Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy established themselves in the neighborhood in order to enjoy Coleridge's society. Under the influence of Wordsworth's strong and vigorous personality, Coleridge was inspired to active and fruitful literary work. In a single "wonderful year," he wrote nearly all of the poems upon which the greatness of his poetic fame really rests. In 1798 the two friends published the famous *Lyrical Ballads*, containing Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and many of Wordsworth's best-known early poems. *The Ancient Mariner* is Coleridge's masterpiece, the one perfect and flawless work of a life so full of futile projects. It is in form and general tone an imitation of the old ballads; but the essential spirit that makes the very heart of it is vastly deeper than that of any mere ballad that ever was written, and the poetic genius that presided over its creation was incomparably greater than that of any mere singer of the people. One is astounded at the imagination that could take elements so strange, so weird, so fantastic, so supernatural, and could make them like "Presences plain in the place"—so vivid, so concrete, so distinct, so credible. The language matches its great matter. It is doubtful whether there is in all literature another work so remarkably illustrating the power of word and phrase to convey and to suggest "the forms of things unknown" which the poetic "imagination bodies forth." Here, if anywhere, "the poet's pen" has indeed given "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." As for the music of his verse,

Coleridge's Poetry

The Ancient Mariner

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute :
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

Nominally, the poem is romantic in the ordinary acceptation of the term; but in reality, its romantic character is "deeper than did ever plummet sound" and at bottom touches essential reality. The fantastic scenes and happenings of the poem are such as could have no objective existence in the actual world; but Coleridge — profound psychologist that he was — knew well that they could have a subjective existence. They could take shape in the imagination of such an inspired dreamer as himself. They could veritably exist in the disordered brain of that "grey-beard loon," the Ancient Mariner. It is he who holds the Wedding-Guest "with his glittering eye" and makes him "listen like a three years' child" to the tale which makes him "a sadder and a wiser man." Every reader of Coleridge's great poem must be sadder to feel that such things have been, and wiser to understand that they still can be. Other poets of his age taught men that each individual soul has its place and its part in the world; he taught them that a whole world exists by itself in each individual soul.

Christabel

In *Christabel* — unhappily only an exquisite fragment — he has given us still further insight into the mysterious human spirit. It seems to have been intended to symbolize the conflict between good and evil in human nature. Indescribably weird and fascinating is the picture of the demon woman who throws her spell over

The lovely lady, Christabel.

As she unbinds her robe, this evil being, mingled of beauty and horror, is

A sight to dream of, not to tell!

This same contrast between good and evil is suggested by the picture of the "bright green snake" coiled around the wings and neck of the dove. One of the most famous passages of the poem is that in which Coleridge describes the broken friendship of Sir Leoline and Lord Roland:

> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
> A dreary sea now flows between,
> But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
> Shall wholly do away, I ween,
> The marks of that which once hath been.

These two poems illustrate the romantic side of Coleridge's genius. His *Dejection, an Ode*, may serve to represent those moods of depression and sadness which arose from his afflictions and which did so much to check the flow of his genius.

Dejection, an Ode

> But oh! each visitation
> Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
> My shaping spirit of Imagination.

The quality of his genius and the influences which repressed it could hardly be better suggested. The poem will also serve as well as any to illustrate Coleridge's gift as a poet of nature. Though he is writing on a personal and emotional theme, we become aware that he has an alert and accurate eye for natural form and color. He realizes, however, as he elsewhere says,

Poetic Treatment of Nature

> That outward forms, the loftiest, still receive
> Their finer influence from the world within.

And he adds here,

> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

Nature is spiritualized, but it is rather his own soul that is poured out into nature:

Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,
A light, a glory, a fair, luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth.

It follows that nature for him is often touched with the weird, romantic quality of his own strange imagination. There is on the one side an imaginative apprehension of what is really in nature, and, on the other, an imaginative projection upon nature of what exists only in his own mind. In this particular poem, his idealizing faculty is perhaps best illustrated by these lines:

And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars.

Finally, we may note that Coleridge's poetic love for nature associates itself with his more than poetic love for freedom. Not in the forms of human government is freedom to be found, not even in the individual human spirit. In nature alone there is perfect liberty, because there is perfect law.

Coleridge's Prose

During the remainder of his life, Coleridge wrote much poetry; but little of it was equal to his best, and his most characteristic activity was in other fields. His creative poetic power seemed in large measure to fail, while his philosophical and critical powers — the more purely intellectual side of his nature — increased in corresponding measure. There was, however, still the same general attitude of mind, the same general purpose and method. In poetry, he had endeavored to bring the spiritual and the remote down to the level of the ordinary imagination — whereas Wordsworth, on the contrary, had sought to exalt the commonplace into poetic beauty. In prose, Coleridge aimed to interpret to the ordinary mind the meaning of a spiritual and transcendental philosophy or the significance of a great poet like Shakespeare or Wordsworth. On the side of philosophy, his most impor-

tant work is found in *Aids to Reflection.* In the direction of literary criticism, his best powers are displayed in *Biographia Literaria*, where he explains and interprets the poetical theories of Wordsworth with a critical judgment and insight which was almost entirely lacking in Wordsworth himself. His *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare* contains some of the most suggestive interpretation of the great dramatist that has ever been written. These and other works place him among the very greatest of English critics. As a prose stylist, Coleridge was surpassed by not a few men in his own generation. The command of the resources of language and the sense of verbal music that are so manifest in his poetry did not fail him here; but in his prose work he is much more intent on matter than on form and the distinctively intellectual purpose of his prose writings had its natural effect upon his style. Probably the most remarkable examples of his prose expression are to be found in the singular and half-poetical prose commentary that runs alongside of the stanzas of his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner.* Here he is quaint, imaginative, and decidedly original.

Sir Walter Scott

Sir Walter Scott was of nearly equal age with Wordsworth and Coleridge, but he differs very decidedly from both of them, no less in his character and genius than in the circumstances of his life and the quality of his literary work. His preparation for the literary tasks of his mature years would seem to have been an almost ideal one. Born and brought up in a land filled with historic and romantic associations, his youth was nourished on ballad, legend, and historic tale that fed his imagination and kindled his enthusiasm. His delicate boyhood was largely spent on his grandfather's farm of Sandy Knowe, in a region of history and poetic legend. Edinburgh, where he was born and educated, he calls "mine own romantic town." Many years of his youth were partly

spent in traversing the country, collecting ballads and tales. Besides all this, his reading made him widely acquainted with the legendary lore of Scotland, England, and Germany, and with a wide range of British and continental history, mediæval and modern. He began his literary work with translations and imitations from the German, and in 1802 published a collection of native ballads, songs, and tales under the title of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.* His first great original work was a poem called *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, published in 1805; and the years from this date until 1814 practically mark the limits of his purely poetical career. In 1814 he published *Waverley*, his first novel; and from this time until his death in 1832, appeared the long series of the "Waverley Novels." Hardly a year passed without one or two novels being put forth, and his income during a considerable period ranged from fifteen to twenty thousand pounds a year. Scott bought a large estate, built the magnificent mansion of Abbotsford on the banks of the Tweed, received in 1820 the title of baronet, and cherished as the fond dream of his life a hope of founding the noble family of Scott of Abbotsford. The dream was cruelly shattered in 1826 by the failure of the publishing firm of Ballantyne, in which he had secretly become a partner. Refusing bankruptcy, Scott assumed a debt of some £117,000, and set himself to the tremendous task of paying it in full by his literary labors. That task he practically achieved, and the remainder of the debt was cleared off by the income from his works after his death. The result for Scott was paralysis and softening of the brain. He was offered a man-of-war in which to make a trip to Italy; but from his voyage, he returned to die at Abbotsford in his sixty-first year. His life was literally made a sacrifice to his commercial honor, and he thereby left the world an example more precious than

Literary Career

Later Life

all his works. So long as the name of Scott is spoken, this thing shall be "told for a memorial" of him.

Scott's poetry is chiefly in the form of lyric songs, ballads, and more especially, long verse-tales. His first notable poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, is a mediæval and in large part supernatural story of border feud, associated with the family of Buccleuch, with the wizard Michael Scott, with actual ancestors of Sir Walter, and with such places as Branksome Tower and Melrose Abbey. The "Lay" is supposed to be sung before the Duchess of Buccleuch and her ladies, toward the close of the seventeenth century, by an old minstrel. What is said of him in the introduction to the poem might well be applied to Scott himself:

Scott's Poetry

> The last of all the Bards was he,
> Who sung of Border chivalry.

In *Marmion* there is decided advance. The qualities which had made the *Lay* so extremely popular were here exhibited in fuller measure and on a larger scale. It is called "a tale of Flodden Field," and the great battle of Flodden is described at the close of the poem with a vigor and animation that convey the very spirit of the fight. The events that lead up to the battle are full of stirring interest and are interwoven with a love story whose happy outcome is in fine contrast with Marmion's violent death. Even more successful was *The Lady of the Lake*, which is probably Scott's poetic masterpiece. We are here carried to the edge of the Highlands, to the beautiful Loch Katrine and the wild pass of the Trossachs. The "Lady" is Ellen Douglas, who lives with her father, the outlawed noble, upon an island in the lake. Fitz-James, the unknown huntsman who has lost his way amid the mountains, is entertained by the Douglases and guided on his way by Roderick Dhu, the famous Highland chief. He finally

proves to be the king of Scotland, and the poem closes with reconciliation between him and the Douglas.

These and other poems of Scott were among the most immediately popular poetic works ever written. To them, more than to the early poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, is due the rapid triumph of the newer poetic ideals among the great masses of the people. This poetry is essentially, almost exclusively, romantic; and in it the romantic movement which had been growing during a large part of the eighteenth century may be said to reach its culmination. The subjects of Scott's romantic verse are found in the Middle Ages and in English and Scottish history. It does not follow, however, that he was a mere imitator. He goes to the past for his material, but he uses that material in a way peculiar to himself, shaping it by his imagination and filling it with his own romantic spirit. Next to the romantic quality of his poetry is to be noted its narrative character. Scott was a master story-teller, in verse as well as in prose. He constructed romantic tales thoroughly fitted for poetic expression, and told them with a vigor, a rapidity of movement, an interest of incidents, a brilliancy of description, a swing and resonance of verse, that showed him a master in his art. It can hardly be claimed for Scott that he was the equal of Wordsworth, of Coleridge, or of others of his poetic contemporaries, in the higher qualities of poetry. He was, however, a genuine poet, in the character of his imagination and in his command of the music of language. The extent of his poetry is fairly to be taken into the account, and this is all the more noteworthy when we consider that practically all of his poetic work was confined to a single decade. He had as much poetic genius as was necessary to make a great, popular, and voluminous narrative poet.

Quality of Scott's Poetry

Scott's novels are as truly romantic as his poems. They

are romantic in their subject-matter, which is largely historical, though partly legendary. They are romantic in their method of treatment; for he allows his imagination to play freely with his material and to shape it as he wills. They are romantic even in the sense that they lay chief stress upon the narrative element rather than upon the picture of life and character. Most of the novels are historical, and Scott is the real creator of a type which later writers have so fully developed. The history covered is Scottish, English, and continental. There is an exceedingly wide range in time as well as in place. *Count Robert of Paris*, for instance, is located at Constantinople in 1090; *St. Ronan's Well* is practically contemporary with the writing of the story and is laid amid scenes with which Scott is perfectly familiar. The favorite historical field, however, is the Middle Ages. *Ivanhoe* is a picture of English life in the reign of Richard I. *The Talisman* is a story of the Crusades. *Quentin Durward* is connected with French history in the days of Louis XI and Charles the Bold. Not a few of his best stories, however, deal with a later time. A notable example is *Kenilworth*, which gives a brilliant picture of the Age of Elizabeth. Scott had a marvelous power to reproduce the past and to show his readers that it was peopled with real men and women. He took pains to know the period of which he wrote, and sometimes wearies the reader with obtrusive notes to prove his historical accuracy. He does not, however, give the absolute fact of history. This is only to say that he was a novelist rather than a historian. What he does give, is the spirit of history, which puts life into the bare facts.

Scott's Novels

Historical Novels

A considerable number of his novels deal with Scottish history or with Scottish social life in a period not very remote from his own day. Here he was on his own

ground, and in this field he produced some of his most successful works. They are less romantic in conception and come closer to real life. Scottish character he thoroughly understood, and no less close was his acquaintance with Scottish history and scenery. All this enabled him to narrate and to describe with vividness, with full conviction, and with unfailing truth. His portrayal, too, had the advantage of the enthusiasm which came from his strong Scotch patriotism.

Scottish Novels

Scott, we have already said in connection with his poetry, was a great story-teller. He had much skill in the construction of plot and still more in the conduct of narrative. His stories show rapidity of movement, interesting details, dramatic situations, effective climaxes, great variety, and a fair degree of unity. His narrative is wonderfully helped and strengthened by his power of vivid and picturesque description. It is in this connection that the treatment of nature chiefly enters into his work. He had no conception of a spiritual life and meaning in nature, but he loved her outward forms and knew how to portray them as the background of his human pictures. His descriptive gift is also serviceable in the portrayal of character. He had a really remarkable skill in character delineation. The personages of his novels are varied and original, they have both vitality and fidelity to nature. Above all, they are thoroughly objective, no mere reflections of the author himself. On the other hand, they are comparatively superficial; for Scott did not possess insight equal to his power of portrayal. In general, it may be said that they are individual rather than typical, and that they are not a little affected by his romantic tendencies. His greatest success was probably achieved in the treatment of historical characters. He has given us true, interesting, and valuable, though not profound, pictures of human life.

Plot and Character

At the basis of Scott's genius lay a broad, active, and comprehensive mind. He was eminently sane and clear rather than subtle or profound. His sincerity and earnestness were among the best qualities of the man and among the most noteworthy traits of the writer. He had a wide range of artistic sympathy, and a remarkable power of objective portrayal. His ability to excite and to represent the emotions was not profound, but it was intense and energetic. His geniality and humor helped to give a broadly human quality to his work. In certain powers of imagination, Scott has had few superiors. His imagination displayed remarkable vividness and lucidity, astonishing breadth and variety, power to construct large and complicated pictures, a marvelous wealth of materials. The fact that he was a poet has given great beauty to his work as well as great power. He was an instinctive lover of the beautiful, both in nature and in art, but had a special fondness for beauty associated with mystery and romance. Few men have been endowed with a more wonderful fluency and fertility, or with such a tremendous capacity for work. Scott was a very great literary genius; but what crowns his fame, is that he was also a great character. The man was even broader and nobler than the artist.

Scott's Genius

The relation of Scott to his age and to its great moving ideas is somewhat peculiar. He was in no sense a democrat, but rather an aristocrat. He had little sympathy with those revolutionary principles which so strongly moved Wordsworth and Coleridge and other great men of the time. It can hardly be said that he had any great enthusiasm for individual freedom. His temperament was naturally conservative. His sympathies inclined to the side of order and of law. It seems at first sight as though he was entirely untouched by the influences that so profoundly affected other men. Yet Scott was too large and too re-

ceptive a nature to be wholly apart from his age, too sane and too sympathetic to set himself wholly in an attitude of antagonism. Consciously or unconsciously, he was a part of the general life of the time and moved with its main currents. The age was individualistic; and — in spite of some limitations — so was Scott individualistic. In the first place, he was himself an original, forceful, and aggressive personality, making his way by sheer power of genius and character to one of the foremost positions in his time — to one of the foremost positions in all time. Again, conservative though he was, he was by no means a classicist or a reactionary in literature. He exercised the right to work out his own native genius in his own original way, and became a leader in the new romantic movement and in the creation of a new type of fiction. Romanticism itself, as we have seen again and again, was in this age one of the manifestations of Individualism; and Scott helped on the individualistic movement by helping on that romantic movement which meant at bottom freedom of individual genius. Still further, Scott's was a tender, generous, chivalrous soul, which apart from all theory felt sympathy with the poor and oppressed, and recognized the essential worth of common men. He consorted on equal terms with peasant and lord, denied no man his rights, and acknowledged his fellowship with all human kind. His poems and novels prefer the knight, the hero, the fair and noble dame; but they also have a place for even the serf, the beggar, and the outcast; and nowhere in literature have all kinds and conditions of men received more sympathetic treatment. Such a man, whether he willed it or not, was in essential harmony with the great modern principle of Individualism.

Scott's Individualism

In a very different way, the influence of this same principle was illustrated in the work of another great novelist of the time — Jane Austen. If Scott was the prince of

romanticists in his generation, Jane Austen might not inaptly be called the princess of realists. Born and brought up in a small country parish in the South of England, she had very little knowledge of life outside of a narrow circle; but her peculiar genius found even within that limited range opportunity for some of the best work in the English novel. She dealt almost exclusively with characters drawn from the respectable middle class of English society, and portrayed these in the most ordinary relations of life.

Jane Austen

Her first impulse seems to have been received from an inclination to satirize in a mild way the exaggerated romantic type of terror fiction represented by Mrs. Radcliffe toward the close of the eighteenth century. This appears especially in her first novel, *Northanger Abbey*. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the very title suggests the contrast between her own common-sense view of life and the affected sentimentalism prevalent in the work of her predecessors. Her next novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, is usually regarded as her masterpiece and is thoroughly typical of her manner. Its characters are people of the most ordinary sort, and only the ordinary aspects of their lives are portrayed. There is not a single exciting incident from beginning to end of the book. The characters, however, are portrayed with a delicate and minute realism that makes them actually alive to the imagination; and the picture of life is so true and so just as to create a positive illusion. Nothing of the kind has ever been done better than the delineation of the various members of the Bennet family and the more or less important personages who surround them. The theme of the novel is the conflict between the "prejudice" of Elizabeth Bennet and the "pride" of her lover, whose scorn of her rather commonplace family she very properly resents. Her other novels, *Mansfield Park*,

Her Work

Emma, and *Persuasion*, are of essentially the same type.

Her plots are simple and grow naturally out of the characters and their ordinary relations; but incidents as well as characters are handled with perfect sureness of touch and with the perfect mastery of assured knowledge. Nothing is more admirable than this perfect command of her material and of her artistic method. One of the fine points of her art is her skill in the treatment of conversation. The characters are made to reveal themselves through their own words, and the author seems always able to find the precise expression that accurately fits the character and the occasion. She is possessed withal of a neat humor and of a satirical touch that is half malicious. Her style is an almost perfect instrument for her purpose — simple, clear, quiet, precise, keen, suggestive, mildly ironical.

Her Art

Jane Austen was no theorist. She had no great principle to demonstrate. She had simply a clearly defined bit of human life to portray. If she connects herself with the great movement of the age, she does so unconsciously and indirectly through the quality of the work which was suggested to her by her own genius. Yet such a connection is clear and unmistakable. If we interpret this as mainly a romantic age, she is entirely apart from its central current. If we regard it as chiefly the age of Individualism, we shall see that the art which could find fit material for great literature in the life to be observed from the windows of a country parsonage was no mean servant and ally of the individualistic spirit. And here is the significant fact — that the mighty impulse of Individualism which could inspire a Wordsworth or a Coleridge to scale the highest heaven of imagination, or a Scott to traverse the far fields of romance, could find quite as natural an expression in inspiring this humble

Her Individualism

woman to portray with her delicate pencil the homely features of common life.

Lord Byron: his Individualism

In the case of George Gordon, Lord Byron, there is no need to seek closely or far for his relation to the age or his manifestation of the individualistic spirit. He carried to the wildness of extreme the impulses which were driving the age on its forward way. He manifested in his character, in his life, in his poetry, and in his governing ideas and passions, the very type of the free human spirit in revolution against the whole order and framework of society. We have suggested that Wordsworth was a sublime egotist in making his own spiritual experience the subject of so much of his poetry. Byron was quite as great an egotist, if somewhat less sublime. He wrote about himself, not from any profound conviction that his experience was typical and that he had through himself a great message to convey to mankind, but because his passionate heart felt an imperious necessity to utter itself in words and because he wished to fling his own personal bitterness and scorn and pride and defiance in the face of the world. It is this in part that has limited the extent of his fame. So far as he was simply an individual man calling upon other men to listen to his own passing griefs or challenging the tyrannous conventions of a society which also must pass and change, so far he was merely "of an age" and not "for all time" — so far he retains interest chiefly for the people of other nations which have yet to accomplish the struggle for individual freedom which in England has long been won. This helps to account for the fact that his fame is probably much higher to-day on the continent than in his own land. Only so far as his personality was broadly human and typical, as his poetic genius was rich and powerful, as his ideas were individualistic in a sense larger than that of mere personal

revolt against an uncomfortable system — only so far will he really remain in the first rank of English poets. And this, in spite of many limitations, they actually were. Byron is the representative poet of a revolutionary age; but he is also in a large sense the poet of the passionate, restless, gladiatorial soul of man.

Byron's Life and Character

To understand Byron's attitude, we must understand something of his life and character. He was born of a noble family whose haughty pride and passionateness of temperament came down to him by natural inheritance. His father was wild, dissipated, and unprincipled. His mother was a woman of quick and ungoverned passions whose relation to her son was like that of a lioness to her cub — alternately tender and savage. The defiant spirit of the boy was early awakened, never to sleep again until it slept forever. At ten, he became a lord, and the fact naturally worked to increase his arrogance, his self-esteem, and his ambition. At the end of a school career at Harrow and of a university career at Cambridge, he was a brilliant, fearless, athletic, and strikingly handsome youth, with an unmatched personal charm and with extraordinary personal force. A club-foot was the one physical defect that embittered his proud heart. It is in some sense symbolical of the spiritual deficiency that marred his splendid and gifted nature. He published his youthful poems at nineteen under the title of *Hours of Idleness*. The sarcastic ridicule with which they were received touched Byron's pride to the quick; and two years later, he took a signal revenge on his critics in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. It is in allusion to this deserved chastisement that Shelley says in *Adonais:*

> The Pythian of the age one arrow sped,
> And smiled! The spoilers tempt no second blow,
> They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

The incident is in many respects typical of Byron's char-

acter and literary career. In 1809 he set out for two years of travel in Spain, Italy, Albania, Turkey, Greece, and the Ægean Islands, and returned with the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, a poem which reflected his romantic experiences. It immediately made his reputation. He said, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous." For some three years he was the literary lion of London, winning the public from Scott's poetry by such Oriental romances as *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, and *Parisina*. In 1815 Byron separated from his wife after a year of union. The circumstances have never been fully known; but the public agreed in laying the blame upon him, and he was practically forced to leave England. He did so in 1816, never to return alive. Taking up his residence in Italy, he continued there his literary work. To this period belongs the great poetry which made him famous throughout Europe. The close of his life is finely characteristic of the man on his nobler side. Throwing himself with generous enthusiasm into the war for the liberation of Greece from Turkish oppression, he was seized with a fever, and died at Missolonghi in 1824, in his thirty-seventh year.

Literary Work

Perhaps the most striking feature of Byron's poetry is its intense subjectivity. Frankly and freely, he makes himself the subject of his verse, and pours out into it his personal passion and experience. Even where he is dealing — as he very often does — with some imaginary hero, that hero is seldom anything more than a reflection of the poet himself. This is true of his earlier Oriental tales and of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. It is perhaps even more true of the poems written after his final departure from England. *Childe Harold*, for instance, is continued through two cantos more, far superior to their predecessors; and

Byron's Subjectivity

Childe Harold

in these later cantos, the thin mask is dropped, and Byron and Childe Harold are practically one and the same. Byron relates poetically the story of his journeyings to the field of Waterloo, up the Rhine, through Switzerland, and over Italy. He gives utterance to his thought and feeling concerning himself, mankind, and the world of nature. The passionate individualism of his poetic purpose is thus finely expressed:

> 'Tis to create, and in creating live
> A being more intense, that we endow
> With form our fancy, gaining as we give
> The life we image, even as I do now.

It was not merely to enlarge and intensify their own personal being that such poets as Chaucer and Shakespeare created; but there could be no better description of the moving poetic impulse of Byron. He dealt with himself in order to give expression to all that was seething in his great heart and brain. He dealt with mankind in order to define his relation to other men and to show his own splendid isolation. He dealt with nature in order to find his energy and his despair reflected in her fiercer and darker moods. Addressing the elements of the subsiding tempest, he cries:

> The far roll
> Of your departing voices, is the knoll
> Of what in me is sleepless.

His fierce desire for utterance is voiced in this tremendous passage:

> Could I embody and unbosom now
> That which is most within me, — could I wreak
> My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
> Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
> All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
> Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe — into *one* word,
> And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;

> But as it is, I live and die unheard,
> With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

Bold, strong, and impressive as his utterance was, no powers of human language — nothing but the elemental forces of nature — were adequate to match that which still lay unexpressed in his soul.

Dramatic Work

Byron tried to be a dramatist; but he had no power to portray real human life outside of himself. Again his heroes are mere reflections of certain aspects of his own personality. In dramas like *Manfred* and *Cain*, he embodies his own spirit of defiance and his own yearning for complete self-realization. Nothing could be more completely individualistic — could more defiantly challenge the rights of the individual soul as over against human society or any other power in earth or heaven or hell. The guilty Manfred, from his wild fastness in the Alps, defies humanity, and in the hour of death, cries to the evil spirits who come to seize him:

> Back, ye baffled fiends!
> The hand of death is on me — but not yours!

Even death can not tame him; for when the Abbot calls upon him to utter "yet one prayer," his only answer is:

> Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die.

The guilty Cain, remorseful for the first murder, yet finds it possible to challenge the wisdom of God in allowing evil in the world and to justify his own spirit of hatred. Surely the assertion of individualism could go no further. It is set above social order, above human sympathy, above submission to the divine will. Here is the assertion of Liberty and Equality, but hardly the recognition of Fraternity.

It is natural that so subjective a writer as Byron should

have been a lyric poet. In the lyric is the true field for the expression of personal passion. Byron was a genuine lyrist, although the gift of pure song was not his most characteristic gift. He was capable at times of a sweetness of music that all but matches the finest. Some of his *Hebrew Melodies* and *Stanzas for Music* are really exquisite, although not quite as characteristic as the grander roll of his verse in *Childe Harold.* What Byron was most capable of giving to the lyric, however, was not so much sweetness as fire and energy. In this, few poets have been his equals. We shall also expect to find his lyrics charged with the personal quality that so strongly marks all his other poetry. Here he reflected his transient moods and momentary emotions, though not seldom there is gathered up into a single poem much of the larger significance of his life. One of the best-known poems associated with his life experiences is *Fare thee well*, in which he expresses his grief at parting from his wife:

Lyric Poetry

> Fare thee well! and if for ever,
> Still for ever, fare thee well:
> Even though unforgiving, never
> 'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.

More intense, more passionate, more filled with the bitterness and the weariness of his disappointed life, is the poem written on his thirty-sixth birthday. Profoundly, even terribly, pathetic are such words:

> My days are in the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone!

Byron's death knell seems to sound in the last stanza:

> Seek out — less often sought than found —
> A soldier's grave, for thee the best;

Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest.

In less than three months he was dead.

It has sometimes been questioned whether Byron's characteristic attitude toward life was entirely sincere, or whether it was a mere poetic affectation. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two extremes. Something there was doubtless of tragic pose; but in the main it was real expression of real experience. The melancholy is too thoroughly a part of the very texture of his poetry and that poetry itself is too great and vital for us to believe that he was merely playing a part. Whatever else he may have been, the man was not a hypocrite. Indeed, he was altogether too frank in his self-disclosure — unlocked his heart to the extent of desecrating its inner sanctities. If he sometimes adds blackness to the gloom, in other places he lets us see the lighter, more frivolous, more cynical side of his nature.

Byron's Sincerity

Of all his poems, the one that represents him best is *Don Juan*. It is an extremely voluminous work, in sixteen cantos; but it was not completed and was probably incapable of completion. In that respect, it was like Byron's life, so full and yet so fragmentary. Much of Byron's experience is poured out into the poem, as in *Childe Harold*. Don Juan is another embodiment of the poet, on his most cynical and least moral side. Again we have a poem of individualism — man riding over all convention, all decency, all better human feeling, to satisfy his own desire. It is as if Byron would show men that their best and holiest feelings are mere dust and ashes. Into this mocking satire are gathered up all the powers of his genius — his passion, his intensity, his lyric music, his marvelous faculty of poetic description, his rhetorical eloquence, his vivid imagination, his pathos, his wit, his sarcasm, his irony, his cynicism, his scorn, his despair,

Don Juan

and all else that went to make up that strange but tremendous personality.

With the name of Byron as an eager and enthusiastic son of revolution is associated the name of Percy Bysshe Shelley. The underlying causes of this revolutionary spirit in the two men were, however, very different. Byron was a revolutionist by temperament — because his fierce and imperious nature could brook no control. Shelley was a revolutionist because he was an idealist and a lover of humanity. His revolt sprang from generous impulse rather than from well-reasoned conviction, and his theories were as impracticable as they were extreme. They were the theories of a poet and a child; and what is crude and excessive in them must be forgiven as mere accidents of his peculiar genius. Shelley was, indeed, in his own words, a spirit "tameless, and swift, and proud"; but he had the irresponsible wildness of his own spirit of the west wind rather than the tigerlike fierceness of Byron's nature. None the less was Shelley a remarkable and unique personality, a great individual in an age of Individualism. A supreme idealist, a poet of poets, a prince of romance, a lover of nature, a child of dreams, an enthusiast of humanity, to him was applicable in no common measure the description of Tennyson:

Percy Bysshe Shelley

> The poet in a golden clime was born,
> With golden stars above;
> Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love.

They understood him well who wrote his epitaph in the New Protestant Cemetery at Rome, "*Cor Cordium*" — Heart of Hearts.

The life of Shelley held much that calls for the world's charity; but it also affords a rare example of fidelity to an ideal. Born in 1792, he breathed from his earliest years the atmosphere of a revolutionary time. When he went

to Eton, his proud and sensitive spirit showed itself in rebellion against the boyish tyrannies and the rough sports of a great public school. At nineteen he was expelled from Oxford for publishing a pamphlet on *The Necessity of Atheism.* His rash marriage with Harriet Westbrook grew out of an impulse of generous pity, and was naturally followed by disappointment and separation. Association with William Godwin, the social reformer and novelist, brought him into acquaintance with the latter's daughter; and he soon found in Mary Godwin a congenial life companion. By this time, Shelley had succeeded in shocking public opinion and in setting himself at odds with his own eminently respectable family. He therefore left England with his wife, never to return. The remaining four years of his life were spent mostly in Italy. Here his genius rapidly matured, and here most of his greatest poems were produced. This life — so fervid, so erratic, so unselfish, so exalted — was brought to a sudden and tragic close. In the summer of 1822, while sailing from Leghorn to Spezia in his boat, the *Ariel*, he was overtaken by a storm and drowned. His body was burned on the beach, and his ashes were buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome.

His Life

If idealism is the explanation of Shelley's revolutionary spirit and the secret of his life, it is even more emphatically the inspiration of his poetic genius. No poet lived so much in a world of dreams. None was characterized by a poetic fancy so ethereal, so evanescent, so elusive, so impalpable. His imaginings are woven of air and fire. They change and vanish and reshape themselves like a cloud; they are touched by sudden glories as of the sunset; they are as delicate as the "girdle of pearl" about the moon. Nothing can describe them but themselves. There is in Shelley no such clear and definite presentation of common fact as we find in Words-

Shelley's Genius

worth, no such concrete realization of poetic dreams as we find in Coleridge, no such effective rhetorical eloquence as we find in Byron. His is the pure essence of poetry and appeals to us by no other charm than that of poetic beauty, except it be the charm of his lovable personality. The haunting melody of his verse, the poetic enchantment of his beautiful imagery, seem like some magic caught from other worlds, and yet they seem as natural as nature itself. For there is no apparent artifice — only the unconsciously beautiful expression of a beautiful soul. Yet, in spite of all his wonderful achievement, Shelley seems to be trying to express the inexpressible. The grossness of flesh, the imperfection of language, the inadequacy of any earthly music, hinder and retard the utterance of the spirit.

> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity.

Shelley was preëminently a lyric poet. He wrote many poems in narrative and dramatic form, but he was a singer rather than a story-teller or a portrayer of life and character. It is not too much to declare that he was the greatest pure lyrist in English literature. This means in the first place that he had an unsurpassed gift of poetic music. It means further that he had a passionate heart, and knew how to pour out the richness of a great nature in passionate speech. It means still further that his poetry is intensely subjective and brings us into contact with a rare personality. In form, his poetry is finished and exquisite, and yet it has all the careless ease of a singing bird. The poet's delight in his music sometimes amounts almost to ecstasy. Almost everywhere in Shelley's poetry this lyric gift is illustrated; but he has left a few supreme lyrics which may serve as examples of the rest. *The Cloud* is a wonderful illustration of Shelley's imaginative, as well as of his

His Lyric Poetry

The Cloud

musical, power. The cloud itself sings and exults in its own glorious, ever changing life. It brings fruitfulness to the earth; it commands the powers of snow and tempest; it creates the beauties of sunrise and sunset; it companions with moon and stars; it has the rainbow for its triumphal arch. Immortal and indestructible, it rejoices:

> I change, but I cannot die.

To a Skylark

To a Skylark is one of Shelley's finest examples of natural but inimitable music. Like the bird itself, the poet pours his "full heart"

> In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Its exultant song suggests contrast with his own imperfect life, and he cries:

> Teach me half the gladness
> That thy brain must know;
> Such harmonious madness
> From my lips would flow
> The world should listen then as I am listening now.

The West Wind

Surely the world has listened to his own diviner song, not out of the heart of gladness, but out of the heart of sorrow. In the *Ode to the West Wind* there is this same yearning for something seemingly beyond his grasp. The poem is an amazing piece of musical and imaginative description. Shelley enters into the very spirit of the invisible wind, and longs to share the impulse of its strength. Touched by the anguish of life, he utters the prayer that seems almost like a prophecy:

> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
> Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth;
> And, by the incantation of this verse,
> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
> Be through my lips to unawakened earth
> The trumpet of a prophecy!

There is apparent in these words, not only a personal pain, but also the longing to awaken mankind to a realization of the poet's dreams for the betterment of the world. *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples* is one of Shelley's most perfect poems. Nature is described in all her loveliness, and the poet allows no sorrow of his to cast a stain upon her beauty. In her presence, "despair itself is mild," and he sings:

Dejection

> I could lie down like a tired child,
> * * * * and hear the sea
> Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Such music is beyond praise; it calls only for illustration. It verily seems as though it had been taught to him by the

> Mother of this unfathomable world

whom he addresses in his *Alastor:*

> I wait thy breath, Great Parent; that my strain
> May modulate with murmurs of the air,
> And motions of the forests and the sea,
> And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
> Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude, is a narrative poem in blank verse, describing the wanderings of the poet in search of ideal beauty in the person of a lovely dream maiden. It is typical of Shelley's own effort to capture in his poetry a more than earthly beauty. Alastor travels amid sublime and beautiful solitudes of nature, borne up in all dangers and distresses by the inspiration of his great quest, and after fruitless and despairing search, lies down at last to die amid the loneliness of nature. All the gloom and sadness of Shelley's soul were poured out into the poem; but it splendidly illustrates his love of nature, his worship of ideal beauty, the power of his creative imagination, and his superb command

Alastor

of the resources of expression. His powers are illustrated briefly in these lines from the description of Alastor's death:

> His last sight
> Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
> Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
> With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
> To mingle.

Adonais

In *Adonais*, Shelley laments the early death of his friend and fellow-poet, John Keats. The poem ranks with Milton's *Lycidas* as one of the few great elegies of the language; and considering its poetic quality, the nobility of its sentiment, its genuine personal grief, the interest of its subject, and the poetic friendship which it enshrines, there is no poem of its kind which claims a higher place in the world's regard. Written in the Spenserian stanza, it displays Shelley's mastery over that difficult form and displays still further that magic of music and inexhaustible richness of imagination which were his poetic birthright. He calls upon all things to mourn the great poet, so early dead — Urania the "mighty Mother," "the quick Dreams" born of his extinguished genius,

> Desires and Adorations;
> Wingèd Persuasions, and veiled Destinies;
> Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering incarnations
> Of Hopes and Fears, and twilight Fantasies;
> And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs;
> And Pleasure, blind with tears.

> All he had loved, and moulded into thought
> From shape and hue and odour and sweet sound,
> Lamented Adonais.

So likewise the Morning, "the melancholy Thunder," "pale Ocean," "the wild Winds," "lost Echo," "the young Spring," Albion. At last, as though exhausted by the splendid effort of his own genius, the poet cries:

> The breath whose might I have invoked in song
> Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
> Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
> Whose sails were never to the tempest given.
> The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
> I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar!
> Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of heaven,
> The soul of Adonais, like a star,
> Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

It seems almost like a prophecy; for in the summer of the following year, Shelley's boat was overturned in a storm on the Mediterranean, and the poet was drowned at the age of thirty.

Prometheus Unbound

All that was finest and noblest in Shelley's genius is gathered up into his great lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound.* Shelley had attempted dramatic work of a more ordinary kind, and, singularly enough, had in *The Cenci* come as near as any of his great poetical contemporaries to real dramatic success. The actual world, however, was not his sphere; and his powers found larger play in the ideal realm of *Prometheus.* Here his lyric gift is at its very finest — nowhere more subtle, more ethereal, more full of unearthly music. His idealizing power is here carried to the extreme. We are in a world of spirits, where anything is possible that the imagination may choose. And Shelley's imagination has chosen to symbolize here his revolutionary ideals and his dreams for the happiness of man. The Titan Prometheus, representative of humanity, is chained for ages to the frozen rocks of the Caucasus by the tyrant Zeus. At last, in the fulness of time, the deliverance comes. " Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom," arises from the place where he has awaited the hour of fate, hurls Zeus from his throne, and sets Prometheus free. Then all nature unites with man in the joy of the glorious deliverance. It is an impracticable dream; but at the very heart of it there is divine truth as well as some of the

most marvelous lyric music ever written. When Prometheus forgives Zeus and calls back his curse, then only does the hour of final deliverance come. When the oppressed can rise to the height of forgiving his oppressor, then he has conquered indeed. Forgiveness is the secret and crown of Victory. Such is the truth that Shelley teaches, and it is thus he expresses his sublime ideal:

> To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy power which seems omnipotent;
> To love and bear; to hope till hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
> This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
> Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!

The name of John Keats is usually associated with the names of Byron and Shelley. Like his great compeers, Keats was a marvelous child of genius, and like them he died an early death in a foreign land. He was, indeed, the latest born and the earliest dead of the three — the youngest poet that ever left so great a name among the immortals. The facts of his life are not of much importance; for his literary work is at an opposite extreme from that of Byron and has comparatively little dependence upon external events. A first book of *Poems* was published in 1817, and the next year saw the appearance of his *Endymion*. All of this was comparatively immature work, and Keats recognized that fact as well as anybody. The next three years showed a wonderful development and gave evidence of the poet that might have been, could he but have had a longer lease of life. A volume published in 1820 contained the masterwork of his life, a group of poems among the most perfect in the English language. Then he hastened to Italy in a vain pursuit of health. He died at Rome in 1821, only

John Keats

twenty-five years of age. He was buried in the Old Protestant Cemetery, near where Shelley was so soon to lie. His epitaph — suggested by himself — reads, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." No name in English literature was written to endure longer.

As Scott among the older trio of poets was least in harmony with the great tendencies of the age, so among the younger group Keats stands somewhat aloof. More than any other poet of his time, he is independent of the great life currents, though even he can not help being borne along on the wave. Perhaps his comparative isolation was in part due to his extreme youth, to the fact that life had not yet deeply touched and moved his poetic nature. Shelley, to be sure, had been stirred by revolutionary ideas long before he was twenty; but Shelley was an astonishingly precocious youth, and there were, besides, certain circumstances of his life that help to account for his early interest in great movements. The position of Keats, however, was even more due to his peculiar character and genius. He had no taste for politics, for social questions, for philosophical problems, for purely abstract ideas. He was born to be simply a poet. His only great passion was for beauty. That, he desired to find and to express, and he was quite willing to leave the tasks of the world and the problems of the mind to others. It is on the side of his purely poetical genius, therefore, that we must seek any possible association between Keats and the life of his age.

Keats and his Age

We have already seen the kind of literature which the individualistic movement was likely to produce; and if we examine the poetry of Keats, we shall find it in harmony with that movement on its purely poetical side, though, of course, with many distinctive marks of his own personal genius. He was one of the great romantic poets of his time, seeking

His Individualistic Quality

his finest inspiration, not so much in the mediævalism of Scott, in the Orientalism of Byron, in the poetic idealism of Shelley, or in the psychological wonder-world of Coleridge, as in the pure and perfect beauty of ancient Greece. He was touched by something of the same interests as the other poets, but in the main his way was his own. He was likewise one of the great nature poets of his time. It was not his business to find spiritual meanings in nature with Wordsworth, to idealize her in the magic light of his own fancy with Shelley, or to pour out his own soul into her with Byron. He was content to look at her by her own light and to reveal to unseeing eyes her marvelous beauty. It used to be supposed that Keats was a mere weakling, and that he was practically killed by ungenerous criticism of his work — that his soul, in Byron's phrase, was "snuffed out by an article." There is, however, much reason to suppose that quite the contrary is the case — that he had some decidedly pugnacious elements in his nature, that he accepted even cruel criticism like a man and made his immortal profit of it, that he had within him strong intellectual and moral qualities which might eventually have placed him in the very front rank of English poets. What seems fairly certain is that he had that superb assurance of genius which makes it go its own way regardless of criticism or current fashion or great example. In the form and method of his work, he was decidedly original. In the spirit of it, he was in unconscious harmony with the other great poets of his age.

The Apostle of Beauty

It seems probable that in the last analysis beauty is the supreme object of all poetry — simply as poetry. Whatever may be true in other cases, it is certainly true that beauty is the essential quality in the poetry of John Keats. It could hardly be otherwise. Keats was a passionate lover of the beautiful, in nature, in human life, in the ideal world of imagination. He

began by loving sensuous beauty, and on the side of the senses he was marvelously alive and receptive. He cried,

> O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts !

It is told of him that "he once covered his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with Cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the delicious coldness of claret in all its glory." He spoke of "bursting the grape of joy against one's palate fine." He said, "I feel the daisies growing over my grave." Yet Keats was not, as some have supposed, merely the poet of the senses. He loved sensuous beauty, but he was going on also to love the beauty that is intellectual and spiritual ; and it is this that gives us the fairest promise that he might have been among the very highest, as he is among the most exquisite, of pure poets. His *Endymion* begins with the words :

> A thing of beauty is a joy forever :
> Its loveliness increases ; it will never
> Pass into nothingness.

Such, he tells us, are all the lovely forms of nature ; but he adds :

> And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
> We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
> All lovely tales that we have heard or read :
> An endless fountain of immortal drink,
> Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

This already, in one of his earlier and most sensuous poems, is something more than merely sensuous. In *Hyperion*, he rises to a larger sweep of thought, and declares :

> For 'tis the eternal law
> That first in beauty should be first in might.

In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, he has this word of profound poetic insight :

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

To such a poet, beauty was surely something more than merely a matter of the senses. He had the right to declare, "I have loved the *principle* of beauty in all things." It is this love of beauty as a great principle of the world that gives to his poetry its largest significance.

In one way or another, all of Keats's poetry is an illustration of this principle. The poems in his volume of 1820 embody it in fullest and richest measure. The first of these, *Lamia*, is the story of the beautiful enchantress whom the philosopher Apollonius discovers in her original nature of a serpent and causes to vanish. The protest of Keats against the pure reason that would banish all poetic illusion is thus finely expressed:

Narrative Poems

Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine —
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

It is the characteristic attitude of poets like Keats toward the spirit of modern science. *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, is a romantic and pathetic love story from Boccaccio. *The Eve of St. Agnes* is his most perfect piece of narrative and description. The bitter winter night, the aged Beadsman saying his prayers in the cold chapel, the palsy-stricken old serving-woman, the boisterous revelry in the mediæval castle, the fierceness of "the whole blood-thirsty race" into whose precincts the adventurous lover Porphyro has come, form a marvelously effective background for the beautiful and voluptuous picture of youthful love. The

poem is rich and warm and vivid; and yet it is a perfectly modeled masterpiece of the most consummate art.

Lyric Poems

Following these narrative poems in the 1820 volume are Keats's wonderful odes. Three of these must serve for brief comment. *The Ode to a Nightingale* is among the most personal of the poet's works. The sadness and weariness of his own heart are contrasted with the song of the unseen bird:

> Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
> No hungry generations tread thee down;
> The voice I hear this passing night was heard
> In ancient days by emperor and clown:
> Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
> The same that oft-times hath
> Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

To Autumn is Keats's finest poem of nature. It is full of all the rich warmth and "mellow fruitfulness" of the harvest season, as perfectly unique in its kind as any of his narrative poems. In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, he has given life to the "leaf-fringed legend" that "haunts about the shape" of this relic from a beautiful past. It has much of the richness of his other work, but it has also caught something of the rare and chaste perfection which the classic subject suggests.

Hyperion

Perhaps the noblest effort of the poet's genius is *Hyperion*. The poem deals with the Greek myth of the fall of Saturn and the Titans, and was especially to have treated of the triumph of the new sun-god Apollo over his predecessor, Hyperion. It was, however, left a splendid fragment. Perhaps Keats felt that he was as yet unequal to a great epic task; but the grandeur and simplicity of what he did achieve certainly shows that his powers were rapidly strengthening and broadening.

Shelley said, in his Preface to *Adonais*, "I consider the fragment of Hyperion, as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years." The remark might be applied to all Keats's poetry. Feeling the powers that were still undeveloped within him, he once said, "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." Matthew Arnold adds, "He is; he is with Shakespeare."

So far we have been dealing mainly with the poets, and have touched upon the prose literature of the time only with reference to the prose writings of Coleridge and the novels of Scott and Miss Austen. The age was chiefly a poetical one; but it had, nevertheless, some notable masters of prose style. One of the most gifted, as well as one of the most lovable, of these was Charles Lamb.

Charles Lamb

The age in which Lamb lived was one of unique and not seldom imposing literary personalities. It can hardly be said that Lamb was an imposing figure; but he certainly was sufficiently unique. Eccentricity is the mark of his thought; quaintness is the mark of his style. He is one of the most delightful humorists in the literature; but the effect of his humor is qualified by a tenderness which deepens into pathos and by a sweetness which gives him a most human charm. He was a blue-coat boy with Coleridge at Christ's Hospital in London, and the later friendship of the two doubtless meant much for the development of Lamb's literary interests and powers. Shortly after leaving school, Lamb was appointed to a clerkship in the East India House, and remained in that position until he was fifty, when he was retired on a pension. His life was comparatively uneventful, except for the pathetic fits of insanity of his beloved sister Mary. Lamb's devotion to her was lifelong, and he never married.

Lamb's literary career began before the close of the eighteenth century, but his first noteworthy work was the

Tales from Shakespeare, written in conjunction with his sister. It was a child's book, and Lamb's simple and unaffected nature was admirably adapted to a task which in other hands might have proved an unfortunate experiment. This venture was soon followed by his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*. He ranged the whole field of Elizabethan drama outside of Shakespeare, and presented some extracts from later dramatists. His selections are admirable, and his critical comments are sympathetic, subtle, and acute. Lamb was an enthusiast for the old dramatists, and succeeded in communicating his enthusiasm to others. His book did much to quicken interest in many half-forgotten writers and to revive their fame. Such work as this, of course, allied itself with the romantic movement and helped to extend its influence. Lamb was also much interested in the early seventeenth-century prose-writers, such as Burton, Fuller, Sir Thomas Browne, and Jeremy Taylor; and their style had much influence upon his own. This influence, however, was thoroughly assimilated, and Lamb's style is quite individual and unique. Nowhere are the qualities of this style better displayed than in the so-called *Essays of Elia*, his most original and distinguished work. In these altogether delightful productions, his mind and heart are reflected as in a clear mirror. The subjects, exceedingly varied, show the scope of Lamb's interests outside of the literary field. They range from "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist" to "The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers," from "Witches and other Night Fears" to "A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People," from "Poor Relations" to "The Tombs in the Abbey," from "Modern Gallantry" to "Old China." In "Dream-Children: a Reverie," his imagination conjures up two children that might have been his; but as they vanish, they seem to say: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we chil-

Lamb's Writings

Essays of Elia

dren at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name." Perhaps the finest of his essays is the famous "Dissertation upon Roast Pig." It is filled with all Lamb's quaintness and with all his humor. Throughout the whole series of essays, his manner is most personal and intimate; and it is largely because he comes so close to the heart of his reader that Lamb is the most charming and attractive of all English essayists. He is a unique personality uniquely expressed.

Thomas De Quincey

No less unique, though in a vastly different way, was Thomas De Quincey. "In general," he declares, "a man has reason to think himself well off in the great lottery of this life if he draws the prize of a healthy stomach without a mind, or the prize of a fine intellect with a crazy stomach; but that any man should draw both is truly astonishing, and, I suppose, happens only once in a century." De Quincey himself drew the fine intellect and the crazy stomach; and this combination is in large measure the clue to an understanding of his life and work. His intellect, indeed, was almost abnormally active and acute, and was, moreover, of a quality so subtle, so refined, so unpractical, so purely contemplative, as to seem almost quite exceptional in the history of the English mind. His life was almost entirely a life of mental activity; and his hold upon the realities of the actual world was as slight as may well be conceived. He was in a certain sense of the word a voluptuary, but he was a voluptuary of the intellect and not of the senses. His pleasures were those of the imagination and of the analytic mind. He delighted in marvelous dreams of the fancy, and he delighted quite as much in the speculative processes of the pure reason. Such peculiarities as these at least hint at a character

most singular and most strange; and we may safely say that his age did not produce a more remarkable or a more strikingly individual personality.

De Quincey's peculiarities were in large part inborn, but in some measure the result of his life experience. Even on such a specimen of pure intellect as he, the realities of the world must needs show some reaction. As a child, he was remarkably precocious, and some of the spiritual experiences that he records of his earliest childhood are credible only of such a nature as his. In his seventeenth year, he ran away from Manchester Grammar-School, made a pedestrian tour in Wales during which he suffered considerable exposure, and then went to London. His hardships and poverty brought him to the verge of starvation, and he was probably saved from death by a poor outcast whom he knew only as Anne. During this period, he contracted the opium habit which pursued him all his life. His London experiences constantly recurred in his later opium dreams. At last he was discovered by his family and soon after sent to Oxford. He received little from the University, and yet he was one of the most learned men of the age. Even as a boy, he could converse fluently in Greek, and later he had a remarkably wide knowledge of English literature. Indeed, his works are a standing evidence of the wonderful fulness as well as of the wonderful activity and power of his mind. After leaving the University, he took up his residence in the Lake District, and came to know intimately Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others of the great men of his time. He lived in the Lake District for some twenty years, and afterward near Edinburgh, where he died in 1859. The period of his mature life was comparatively uneventful, except for intellectual experiences and for the vicissitudes of his opium habit.

De Quincey's Life

De Quincey's first and greatest work was *The Confessions*

of an English Opium-Eater. In it he tells the story of his early life, as leading up to the formation of the opium habit. This occupies the larger part of the work, the rest of it being taken up by "The Pleasures of Opium" and "The Pains of Opium." De Quincey is very discursive, and, in fact, gives comparatively little description of his actual dreams. What he does give is extremely impressive. The dreams themselves were tremendous, and to convey an impression of them calls forth all the powers of his magnificent style. To suggest their vastness, he says:

De Quincey's Opium-Eater

> Thousands of years I lived and was buried in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles, and was laid, confounded with all unutterable abortions, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.
>
> The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than all the rest. . . . So often did this hideous reptile haunt my dreams that many times the very same dream was broken up in the very same way: I heard gentle voices speaking to me (I hear everything when I am sleeping), and instantly I awoke; it was broad noon, and my children were standing, hand in hand, at my bedside, come to show me their coloured shoes, or new frocks, or to let me see them dressed for going out. No experience was so awful to me, and at the same time so pathetic, as this abrupt translation from the darkness of the infinite to the gaudy summer air of highest noon, and from the unutterable abortions of miscreated gigantic vermin to the sight of infancy and innocent *human* natures.

Nothing could be more effective for his purpose than such a contrast. A single further quotation must suffice:

> The sound was reverberated — everlasting farewells! and again, and yet again reverberated — everlasting farewells! And I awoke in struggles, and cried aloud, "I will sleep no more."

The other works of De Quincey fill many volumes and cover an astonishingly wide range of subject-matter. Some of them are associated with his opium dreams. *Suspiria de Profundis* is, in fact, a sequel to the *Confessions*, and consists largely of sketches in "that vein of dream-phantasy" which charac-

Other Autobiographical Works

terizes the earlier work. The most famous of these is entitled "Levana and our Ladies of Sorrow." In it he images forth the profound grief of the heart through three mighty personifications — Our Lady of Tears, Our Lady of Sighs, and Our Lady of Darkness. *The English Mail-Coach* affords an admirable illustration of the way in which his dream world associates itself with reality. The first part, entitled "The Glory of Motion," is a highly imaginative description of real experience. "The Vision of Sudden Death" is an intensely vivid account of an accident in which the mail-coach had run down a small gig. This incident was taken up into De Quincey's dreams, and became the basis for the wonderful "Dream-Fugue: founded on the preceding Theme of Sudden Death." Beyond such works as these, he wrote much else of an autobiographical character, covering his early life, his studies, and the period of his residence in the Lake District. Here he easily passed over into literary reminiscence and criticism, dealing with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and others. He was a defender of the so-called Lake School of poetry represented by these men and one of its most sympathetic and suggestive critics. In this way among others, he was allied with the new literary movements.

General Works

It would be very far from the truth to suppose that De Quincey's writings were confined to himself or to his own personal circle. Indeed, no man's mind took a wider range. In the field of literary criticism, he deals with broad questions of literary theory — with language, with rhetoric, with style. He discusses Greek poets, prose-writers, orators, and dramatists. He treats great German poets and philosophers. He ranges the wide field of English literature, from Shakespeare to Wordsworth, from Milton to Pope — always catholic in his sympathies, always subtle in his insight. History and

historical biography also attract his attention. His finest biographical essay, *Joan of Arc*, is a wonderful piece of imaginative writing. His most ambitious historical work is *The Cæsars*, but this is surpassed in fascinating interest by many of his briefer historical essays. The astonishing range of his interests and the equally amazing minuteness of his knowledge are suggested by such titles as *The Casuistry of Roman Meals*, *Homer and the Homeridæ*, *Toilette of the Hebrew Lady*, *The Essenes*, and *The Flight of a Tartar Tribe*. In the best of such works, the vividness of his imagination fully matches his gifts as a thinker and a scholar. This imaginative quality is still further displayed in his tales, romances, and fantasies. His romantic stories do not rank very high, except from the point of view of style; but at least one of them, *The Spanish Military Nun*, is a most charming combination of fancy, humor, and pathos. Nothing of De Quincey's is more characteristic than the extravaganza *On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*. Its original humor is a little gruesome to some people; but it is certainly a masterpiece of fantastic irony. The description of "three memorable cases of murder" in a "postscript" matches in its vivid horror the ghastly humor of the supposed "lecture." It is to be noted finally that De Quincey labored much in a more purely intellectual field, producing essays philosophical and theological and a considerable volume on politics and political economy. These, however, are rather beyond the range of pure literature.

De Quincey's Genius

It is evident that this man of subtle intellect and marvelously exact learning was also in some sense a poet — a man of imagination, living in a world of his own creation. He was a poet by virtue of his grand and beautiful conceptions; he was almost a poet by virtue of his matchless style. This style is unique in the literature. It is not the poetic prose of the

seventeenth century, although that perhaps is its nearest kin. It is at the opposite extreme from the clear, polished, and direct style of the eighteenth-century writers. It does not transgress the proper limits of prose, but approaches poetry without ever attempting to ape the methods of poetry. It stands, so to say, on poetic heights and breathes poetic air; but it has climbed to those loftier levels instead of soared. In the first place, De Quincey — in writings where this peculiar style is fully exercised — has a theme full of imagination and charged with emotion. His problem, therefore, was to convey in prose language what is essentially poetic material. The style through which this was accomplished is a marvelous display of all the resources of the rhetorician. It is not only great rhetoric, but it is great oratory as well; for De Quincey knew how to pour forth his heart with all the fervor of a moving eloquence. It is almost poetically imaginative and ornate, and is impassioned at times almost to ecstasy. The discriminating critic will tell us of De Quincey's literary faults — his tedious digressions, his teasing eccentricities, his often strained humor, his incongruous mingling of solemn and grotesque, his whimsical extravagances, his lack of intellectual order and balance. But when all is justly said, we must still recognize a rare intellect, a magnificent imagination, and an almost unmatched splendor of style.

Lesser Prose and Poetry

The literary wealth of the age is admirably illustrated by the authors already discussed, but it is by no means exhausted. In all departments of literature there were other writers, eminent in their own day and by no means forgotten by posterity. A few of the best known of these may be briefly mentioned by way of example. In the field of literary criticism, one of the most brilliant critical essayists and most helpful allies of the romantic movement was Wil-

William Hazlitt

liam Hazlitt, best known by his lectures on Shakespeare, on the dramatic literature of the Elizabethan Period, on English poets, and on English comic writers. The name of Robert Southey was in his own day associated on equal terms with the names of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the list of the Lake School of poets. His poetic star has now declined, but no man represents better than he the romantic and individualistic spirit of his age. Perhaps his best and most typical poem is his romantic *Curse of Kehama*. Although he was poet-laureate for thirty years, Southey was probably better as a prose-writer than as a poet. His *Life of Nelson* is a classic. Southey's position may be best defined as that of a typical man of letters. Thomas Campbell began with a poem of the classical type on *The Pleasures of Hope*, but soon caught the newer spirit of poetry. His best work is to be found in such poems as his three splendid war-songs — *Hohenlinden*, *Ye Mariners of England*, and the *Battle of the Baltic*. Campbell was a Scotchman, but the sentiment of his patriotic poetry is rather British than Scotch. Thomas Moore, however, was not only a typical Irishman, but was also the singer of Ireland's woes and departed glories. His *Irish Melodies* do not reach the highest poetic levels, but it is praise enough to say that at their best they are almost perfect in their kind. Moore represents the spirit of the age, not only by his patriotic enthusiasm, but also by his rather florid Oriental romances, of which the best is *Lalla Rookh*. The life of Walter Savage Landor was an extremely long one, extending from 1775 to 1864; and his literary career affords some interesting illustrations of literary movements. He began as a romantic poet even before the close of the eighteenth century, and by later works illustrated the progress of the romantic

Robert Southey

Thomas Campbell

Thomas Moore

Walter Savage Landor

movement. His fine classical culture brought, however, a more finished and restrained quality into much of his poetry and also into the chaste and classic prose which marked his later life. His work, therefore, taken as a whole, unites romantic suggestiveness with classic elegance. While this union and change are in some respects personal to Landor, his tendency was nevertheless in harmony with the tendency of the age. When Romanticism had spent its greatest fervor, when Individualism had passed the period of its greatest intensity, there came something of a movement toward that restraint and recognition of literary law which Classicism had formerly represented. It was an old spirit recurring under the stress of very new impulses; and Landor, living far on into the later age, had opportunity to feel the effect of influences which gave a classic finish to the work of Arnold and Tennyson.

Change of the Age

Graves of Keats and Severn, Old Protestant Cemetery Rome. Shelley's Grave is near, in New Cemetery

BOOK VI

DEMOCRACY AND SCIENCE (1832–1892)

The Individualism which characterized the Age of Burns and the Age of Wordsworth was not Democracy. It was rather the spirit of which democracy is born. Democracy is organized government — "of the people, by the people, and for the people." It is individualistic theory and passion crystallized into actual fact. An age of individualism must precede an age of democracy, and sometimes the period of preparation is a very long one. The history of the development of free institutions in England has not, of course, been a history of sudden revolution, but rather a history

Individualism and Democracy

> Where Freedom slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent.

It is therefore difficult to specify the exact points where movements for freedom have begun or have culminated. Nevertheless, we have been able to see in literature the development of the individualistic spirit progressing for something like a hundred years, gradually gathering force and gradually coming to ever clearer and stronger literary expression. At about the close of the first third of the nineteenth century, moreover, it may be fairly said that democracy in England has begun. It began earlier in America; but there it had freer way, and did not have to make that long and severe struggle against established order and prescriptive right which we have seen to be the special characteristic of the ages of Burns and Wordsworth. It was not until the battle for individualism had

A Tennyson.

been fought and won on many fields that victory for democracy was possible. If there is any one event that marks the actual beginning of democratic conditions in England, it is the great Reform Bill of 1832. From that as a point of departure, the movement went gradually forward throughout the rest of the century, until England became in literal fact a "crowned republic."

Individualism in Democracy

Not only must the spirit of individualism precede the growth of democracy; it must also accompany and inform that growth. It is the very breath of life in the nostrils of the democratic organism. Yet this union of spirit and fact brings new conditions. Individualism is no longer a disembodied spirit, free to wander at its own sweet will, to turn and overturn at its own pleasure. It has accepted responsibilities and has put itself under bonds. It is now the master and guide of social conditions, and no longer the mere iconoclast. It can not indulge in revolution, for it must preserve and develop the new order which it has created. In a word, its work is no longer destructive but constructive. All this makes a vast difference. Men still believe in the worth of the common man. They still maintain the rights of the individual. They still proclaim the blessings of liberty. But now the ideal is liberty within the bounds of law. The individual is part of a great organization, and has his duties as well as his rights. The common man must make himself uncommon, if he is really to prove his worth where opportunity is open to all.

Democracy and Literature

Some such suggestions as these will serve to indicate roughly the new conditions that are created for literature by the passing of the democratic ideal into the democratic reality. Literary genius must now seek to represent the appearances and conditions of life under a democratic social order. It must reflect the thoughts, the feelings, and the aspirations of average men

and women. It must recognize a duty to uphold such ideals as will make the individual a better citizen and member of society. It must feel the influence of popular taste and judgment, and yield in greater or less measure to the sway of the popular will. Even poetry must become to some extent "popular," and must recognize the right of the people to find poetic expression for the spiritual and the ideal that is within common breasts. Literature is likely to return from the study of nature to the study of man. Romance will still exist, for the common people are always romantic; but it will tend to be such romance as common people can understand. On the other hand, there will be encouragement to realism, for men will desire to see the portrayal and to be told the meaning of ordinary life. To some sensitive souls, this democratization of literature will seem a lamentable and a vulgar thing; but democracy will be likely to have faith in itself and in the way along which it is impelled by its own genius. Nor will those who know the history of English literature find that faith unjustified by the past. They will recall that there have been fears before lest literary genius should be degraded by stooping to common themes — lest King Cophetua should lower his dignity by stepping down to wed the beggar maid. Then they will remember — and the remembrance will be sufficient — that Robert Burns taught William Wordsworth

> How Verse may build a princely throne
> On humble truth.

It is not too much even to believe that the literature of democracy may eventually become the greatest of all literature, because more than any other it is the literature of humanity.

The conditions of democracy, whose natural influence upon literature we have thus tried briefly to indicate,

prevailed throughout the period whose literary history we are now to consider. If those conditions did not produce in the fullest measure the effects suggested, the reasons are to be sought in two directions. In the first place, the conditions themselves were not complete. England was becoming a democracy; but the growth was slow, and its perfect results were in some degree hindered by the coexistence of aristocratic and monarchical institutions. Democracy in America was more thoroughgoing, and its effects on literature have been consequently more typical. In the second place, the influence of democracy has been to a large extent modified by the simultaneous action of another great and powerful force — that of modern science. Nevertheless, in spite of all necessary limitations, the literary influence of democratic ideas and of democratic conditions of life may be discerned with sufficient clearness and fulness to justify the recognition of democracy as one of the great guiding impulses of the literature of the age. The wonderful growth of the novel in its manifold forms offers large illustration of the presentation of life and character as they exist in a democratic state of society. Miscellaneous prose has dealt largely with the themes and problems suggested by a democratic age, and not the less so when the writers have been hostile or critical in their attitude toward democratic theories and aspirations. Even in the case of poetry, the ideals of the average man and the sentiments of a democratic society have had their influence and have found their expression.

Democratic Influences on Literature

Another controlling influence in the age, as we have already intimated, has been that of Science. The growth of natural science has been one of the great facts of the nineteenth century. It has exerted a profound influence upon human thought in all its departments — religious, philosophical, political, social, historical, educational, literary, as well as purely scientific.

Growth of Natural Science

It has had a far-reaching and almost incalculable effect likewise upon the conditions of practical life. Within two generations, the world has been almost revolutionized in the matters of commerce, trade, travel, intercommunication, and every-day living. The facts in the case are too clear and too familiar to be in need of specific illustration. Under such conditions, it could hardly be otherwise than that science should have had a profound influence upon literature.

Direct Influence of Science

This influence has been partly direct and partly indirect, partly negative and partly positive. Science has influenced literature directly by suggesting new literary themes, by opening up new realms to the imagination, by increasing the range of imagery and illustration, by giving new conceptions of the universe and of man, by emphasizing the reign of all-embracing and unalterable law, by teaching new methods of analysis and research, by laying stress upon the idea of organic growth, by stimulating anew man's deep-seated passion for truth and reality. Its most immediate influence has been upon such writings as those of Darwin and Huxley and Tyndall and Spencer — writings scientific in subject and purpose, yet possessed of no small degree of literary quality. Scarcely less immediate has been its influence upon realistic fiction. The close and accurate study of real life, the analysis of character and motive, the insistence upon the inexorable laws of human being, the conception of evolutionary growth, are but some of the ways in which the novelists have manifested the scientific spirit. Much of this will be found in Thackeray, still more in George Eliot. How far these and like influences are manifested in other great writers, we shall have later occasion to ask.

The indirect influence of science upon literature has been quite as powerful and important. Science, as we

have implied, has affected all classes, from the highest to the lowest. The improvement in the conditions of living, the increase of prosperity, the advance in material civilization, the mastery over the resources of nature, the growth of industrialism and commercialism, the freedom of intercourse among civilized nations, the revelation as to natural law, the impetus to philosophical thinking, the transformation of method in nearly all departments of research, the disturbance of religious faith and opinion, the change of attitude toward all the great problems of existence — all these have affected literature no less profoundly because their influence was indirect. Literature, as we have already pointed out, never expresses the life of an age completely. Least of all could it do so in an age like this, so many of whose ideas and ideals were anything but literary Nevertheless, literature has been one product of the life in which these forces were moving, and it therefore manifests at least indirectly the influence of the scientific impulse. In no single direction has this indirect influence of science been more strongly felt than in the direction of its effect on religious thought. Carlyle, for instance, feels the scientific impulse more than he knows, but is chiefly moved by it in an indirect way to the insistence upon the reality of spirit behind the material garment. On the great poets, also, the scientific influence has been chiefly indirect and mainly through the same religious channel. They have for the most part accepted the conclusions of science with loyal devotion to truth; but they have not found in science much direct poetic inspiration. Science has affected them rather by affecting their attitude toward great spiritual questions — questions of religion and of life. No poem of the age is more typical than Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. It reveals the struggle of a great soul with the doubts and fears which science has induced, the

Indirect Influence of Science

vindication of "the larger hope" against an aggressive materialism. The struggle of Arnold is more futile; his mood is sadder. A sorrowful resignation breathes through *Dover Beach*, a sad assurance of powers that make for righteousness through such poems as *Palladium* and *Rugby Chapel.* Morris seems to himself but "the idle singer of an empty day." Swinburne finds consolation only in the fact

> That no life lives forever;
> That dead men rise up never;
> That even the weariest river
>   Winds somewhere safe to sea.

To him the end of all things is

> Only the sleep eternal
>   In an eternal night.

Only one voice of assured faith and optimism has rung clear like a trumpet across all this tumult. Robert Browning — looking science fearlessly in the face, accepting without a murmur or a protest all that she has proved, hiding his head in the sands of no blindly orthodox creed — is yet confidently certain that

> God's in his heaven —
> All's right with the world!

Positive and Negative Influences

The influence of science on literature has been both positive and negative. On the positive side, many men have accepted its conclusions, have availed themselves of its stimulus and its resources, have frankly made the best of its influence on religious faith, on spiritual conceptions, and on all the other great problems of life and thought. Others have been thrown into an attitude of opposition and revolt, and have either challenged the new movement in hopeless conflict or have sought relief from its oppressive weight in sad resignation or in the old escape from the trouble of the world into the

serene realm of the romantic imagination. To some such and to many men of science, it has seemed that science is necessarily hostile to poetry. Probably in one sense it is; for by extending the field of definite knowledge, it tends to limit the realm of mystery which is the true domain of the poet. Yet thus far, science has suggested more mysteries than it has solved. When science has done its perfect work, poetry may be swallowed up in knowledge, as faith will be lost in sight. When knowledge is so complete that there is no more room for the exercise of imagination, then it will be time to say that science has been fatal to poetry. For the present, we may think of scientist and poet as complementary to each other, and may content ourselves with the saying of Wordsworth that "poetry is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science."

Such brief allusion is, of course, utterly inadequate to do anything more than barely suggest the influence of democracy and science upon literature during the Victorian Period. Our further discussion must show the application of these general statements to particular cases. In the meantime, two things at least are clear. One is that science has not in our time proved destructive of literature. The other is that the earlier materialistic tendencies of science have not silenced in our poets that instinctive belief in spiritual verities which even science itself is coming more and more to justify. As we turn to a consideration of the literary work of the age, nothing is more striking than its wonderful variety and complexity. The two great forces of Democracy and Science, working sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict, operating directly and indirectly in all departments of literature, have created a literary situation more than usually confusing. It is impracticable to divide the age chronologically, for the work of many of its greatest men runs

Variety of Literature in the Age.

clear through the whole period. The best solution of the difficulty seems to be a division of the literature into miscellaneous prose, the novel, and poetry, and a consideration of each of these branches of literary work in a separate chapter.

MACAULAY'S HOUSE IN LONDON

CHAPTER XV

THE AGE OF TENNYSON — PROSE (1832-1892)

Thomas Babington Macaulay was one of those rare men who, in the phrase of De Quincey, drew in the lottery of life the double prize of a fine intellect and a healthy stomach. He was, on the one side, a fine animal, and on the other, a man of brilliant political and literary genius. The note of his character was the note of buoyant and cheerful optimism. The world in which he lived seemed to him a good world, and he had a confident faith in human progress and in the ultimate triumph of right principles. There was in him nothing of the temper of the revolutionist; yet he saw with clear vision some of the more striking evils of his day and set about righting them. He had still less of the temper of the visionary and the idealist. He dreamed no divine dreams which were impossible of realization in a practical world. He voiced no passionate cry of human longing or aspiration. A temper like Shelley's, for instance, could probably have awakened in him neither sympathy nor understanding. His nature was eminently practical. What he saw was the plain fact of life in the clear light of every day. What he sought was such betterment in the conditions of life as were within the scope of reason and possibility. Such a man seemed born to grapple with the actual realities of the world rather than to lead men in the path of infinite spiritual development. The world needs all sorts of leaders, and could no more do without its Macaulays than without its Shelleys. Indeed, the former are the more absolute necessity. Man must live, in order to aspire.

Lord Macaulay

He must first live by bread, in order that he may come to know that he "shall not live by bread alone." Macaulay spoke to the great masses of men. He spoke to move them to practical action or to definite comprehension. He accomplished his task; and we may well be thankful for what he did and look to other men for the great spiritual message. It would seem as though just such men as he were necessary in a democratic state of society, and perhaps the natural product of democratic conditions. Macaulay, at any rate, served well his day and generation. He had grown up in an age when individualism was growing in the minds and hearts of men, he came into public life at the time when conditions were ripe for practical democratic action, and he took his effective part with other great leaders of the age in bringing about the beginnings of democratic development. In order to see this practical relation of the man to his age, it will be desirable to glance briefly at some of the most salient points of his life before turning to the consideration of his literary work.

Macaulay's Life

Macaulay's father was a prominent member of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery, and edited an abolitionist newspaper. We may fancy from this fact the sort of political school in which Macaulay grew up. His university training was received at Trinity College, Cambridge. He became a fine classical and historical scholar, obtained a considerable reputation as an orator and debater, and twice won the Chancellor's medal for English verse. His earlier literary work gave evidence of a deliberate purpose to broaden his mind, to increase his knowledge, and to train himself as a writer. At twenty-five, he made his first important bid for literary fame by his *Essay on Milton*, a most brilliant piece of work. His literary efforts soon brought him into notice; and five years later, at the age of thirty, he was in the House of Commons. In the debates leading

up to the passage of the great Reform Bill in 1832, he was one of the most prominent speakers and leaders, and the success of that most important measure for the extension of the elective franchise was due in no small degree to his efforts. In the Reformed Parliament, he continued to be a most active and useful member. In 1834 he was made president of a new law commission for India, and a member of the Supreme Council of Calcutta. In connection with these important duties, he spent two years and a half in India, returning to England in 1838. During all this time, he had continued his literary labors, and now desired to devote himself exclusively to literature. He was, however, again elected to Parliament in 1839. During the next few years, he held such important offices as Secretary for War, Paymaster-General, and member of the Cabinet. He was a strong partisan, and was consequently often on the wrong side of important questions. In other cases, however, he was the vigorous champion of liberty and of progress. On the whole, his political career was of decided benefit to his country and mankind. The chief opposition and criticism which he aroused was because of his liberal and advanced views. His literary work had at no time ceased, and in 1849 he published the first two volumes of his *History of England*. Later volumes were published in 1855. No work since the Waverley Novels had created such general enthusiasm or been bought with such eagerness. The close of his life was rich in public honors. He was successively made Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow, Fellow of the Royal Society, Foreign Member of the French Academy, High Steward of Cambridge, and Baron Macaulay of Rothley. He died in 1859, in his sixtieth year. It was a short life for a man of such robust constitution and regular habits. The fact is that Macaulay had spent

too lavishly his splendid vitality and energy, both in the service of the commonweal and in the more enduring service of literature.

Macaulay's Essays

Macaulay's literary genius was preëminently that of a great essayist. In his chosen field and in his chosen manner, he has probably had no equal. What this field and this manner were, we must briefly illustrate. Macaulay's first notable work, the *Essay on Milton*, is typical of his excursions in the field of English literature. Among others of less note there are essays on *Bacon*, *Dryden*, *Bunyan*, *Sir William Temple*, *Addison*, *Johnson*, *Goldsmith*, and *Byron*. Macaulay also invaded the field of foreign literature, both ancient and modern, writing on such themes as *The Athenian Orators*, *Dante*, *Petrarch*, and *Machiavelli*. He was not a great literary critic; and his limitations were particularly apparent where an adequate appreciation of his subject called for spiritual insight or for delicate feeling. He was strong, however, in the very useful critical virtue of common sense. It is rather in the field of historical biography than in the field of literary criticism that Macaulay is most distinguished. In English history, he began with *Hampden*, and treated such great characters as *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, and the younger *William Pitt*. His residence in India had given him a special acquaintance with Indian affairs, and led to such famous works as the *Essay on Warren Hastings* and the *Essay on Lord Clive*. His interest in general European history is well represented by his essays on *Mirabeau* and *Frederick the Great*. It will readily appear that his favorite subject of treatment was biography, and especially biography associated with history. In dealing with such themes, he displayed a style clear, concrete, and brilliant to the last degree. He lacked subtlety, suggestiveness, spirituality, pathos; but he could make his readers understand, and he could stimu-

late their attention and secure their unwearied interest by his swift, breezy, and energetic manner. Few passages display his vigor, his self-confidence, his lucid and trenchant expression, better than the conclusion of his essay on *Barère*:

> Something more we had to say about him. But let him go. We did not seek him out and will not keep him longer. If those who call themselves his friends had not forced him on our notice we should never have vouchsafed to him more than a passing word of scorn and abhorrence. . . . We have no pleasure in seeing human nature thus degraded. We turn with disgust from the filthy and spiteful Yahoos of the fiction; and the filthiest and most spiteful Yahoo of the fiction was a noble creature when compared with the Barère of history. But what is no pleasure M. Hippolyte Carnot has made a duty. It is no light thing that a man in high and honourable public trust . . . should come forward to demand approbation for a life black with every sort of wickedness, and unredeemed by a single virtue. This M. Hippolyte Carnot has done. By attempting to enshrine this Jacobin carrion, he has forced us to gibbet it; and we venture to say that, from the eminence of infamy on which we have placed it, he will not easily take it down.

History of England

Macaulay's *History of England* is characterized by most of the qualities that mark his *Essays*. He believed that history should combine careful research, accurate statement of facts, and a vivid and concrete presentation — that it should unite the descriptive and narrative interest of a novel with the true historical record. Putting this theory into brilliant practice, he wrote history as it had never been written before. He says, "The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature." It was this that he aimed at and in large measure attained. As mere history, it is open to the charge of partisanship, of superficiality, of lack of proportion, and of sacrificing historical truth to dramatic effect. As a piece of brilliant imaginative writing, it commands almost unqualified praise. The characters of history live, the events of history are realized by the imagination, the past becomes vital with human meaning.

The essential characteristics of Macaulay's literary genius have been already implied. He was a man of marvelous industry, sparing no labor in acquiring knowledge, in expressing his thought, or in serving the public welfare. He was a man of most remarkable memory. The story that he could repeat the whole of *Paradise Lost* is only one of many wonders related of him. He was a man of clear vision, of vivid imagination, and of remarkable powers of expression. He was even, in his own way, a poet — not merely in the imaginative power of his graphic descriptions, but in the actual writing of verse. Such poems as *Horatius*, from his *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and the *Battle of Ivry* and the *Battle of Naseby*, from his *Miscellaneous Poems*, do not rise to the higher poetical levels; but they are nevertheless genuine poetry. Popular taste has certainly endorsed them, and popular taste will be justified by a fair and catholic criticism.

Macaulay's Genius

His Poetry

In almost all possible respects, Thomas Carlyle was in marked contrast with Macaulay. Indeed, it would be difficult to find anywhere his parallel or his analogue. When we recall that he was born in 1795, it will not seem strange that he possessed much of that intensely individualistic spirit which characterized the earlier generation. But even this was with a difference and in his own peculiar way. He was certainly himself a unique individuality — even to the extent of oddity, whimsicality, perversity, and violent prejudice. He was, moreover, a believer in strongly individual personality. This does not mean that he was a believer in the common man. What Carlyle believed in was the uncommon man. Tyrants, autocrats, aristocrats, men of rank and privilege, were his abhorrence. He set his faith on the strong individual soul, and believed that such a soul had not merely the right to be equal with other men, but the right to be

Thomas Carlyle

T. Carlyle

superior to other men. The business of government in the world, properly understood, was to find the able and righteous man and to put him in the place of power. The business of the great mass of men was to obey and to follow such heaven-sent leaders — not to rule themselves.

This was individualism in an extreme form; but it certainly was not the spirit of democracy. It was the recognition of great character, wherever found; but it was by no means the democratic assumption that all men are equal or that the voice of the people is the voice of God. Coming upon a democratic age, Carlyle found himself in harmony with it so far as it insisted upon the recognition of individual worth, on freedom from tyranny and oppression, on equal opportunity for all men according to their powers; beyond this, his attitude was one of criticism and of protest. The world that seemed to Macaulay about the best of all possible worlds seemed to Carlyle about the worst. He wanted men to think of obedience and of duty rather than of freedom and equality. The effect of democracy on him was therefore peculiar. Instead of carrying him along with it, it made him a great critic and censor of contemporary life. His influence was in one sense depressing and discouraging; but in another, it was wholesome and uplifting. He helped to keep men from forgetting some things which they seemed likely to ignore. He taught them that freedom and equality are not all of life, but that love, work, and obedience have also their place. In a way, therefore, his genius felt the influence of the age, though in some respects he was driven to reaction rather than to advance or to sympathy.

Attitude toward Democracy

Carlyle's relation to science was somewhat similar. He was in sympathy with the scientific doctrine of law as against the democratic doctrine of liberty. No man was more eager than he to preach the necessity of recogniz-

ing and obeying law. He was in sympathy with science, likewise, in its inflexible devotion to truth and reality. No man was a more intense lover of truth; no man a more scornful hater of all falsity and sham and pretense and unreality. The one feature of the scientific movement that most aroused Carlyle's antagonism was its tendency toward materialism. There is no doubt that Carlyle — like many other men of the age — was profoundly disturbed in his religious beliefs. How far this was the direct result of science may be questioned; but it was the result of the general unrest and unfaith which science tended to induce. In spite, however, of all religious disturbance in his soul, Carlyle clung to the profound conviction that this is essentially a world of spirit — that materialism would make it a "dog-kennel" of a world, instead of an antechamber to heaven. Feeling that the tendency of science was materialistic, his conscious attitude toward it was one of hostility. He was affected by it more than he knew, he was in sympathy with it at its best more than he realized; but he felt called upon to oppose many of its pretensions and to preach the doctrine of the spirituality of existence. Here again he became a critic and a censor of the age. He became also a great prophet — crying, as it seemed to him, in a spiritual wilderness. Carlyle was a great literary genius, a strong, original, philosophical thinker; but more than all else, he was a great preacher — a preacher of duty and labor and obedience, a preacher of spiritual faith and practical righteousness. He was of his age, and felt the great impulses that were moving its life and thought, even though his character and convictions led him to cry out against it with all the strength of his prophetic soul and of his splendid genius.

Attitude toward Science

There is comparatively little in Carlyle's life that calls for particular mention. He was born at Ecclefechan in

the Scotch Lowlands, of a sturdy and God-fearing peasant stock. Educated at the grammar-school of Annan and afterward at the University of Edinburgh, he was at first destined for the ministry, but deliberately forsook that calling for the walks of literature. Against terrible odds of poverty, loneliness, dyspepsia, hostile criticism, and religious doubt, he fought his hard battle. For six years, after his marriage with Jane Welsh, he lived and toiled at the lonely farmhouse of Craigenputtoch, slowly building up his literary fame. His studies in German literature and philosophy were coloring his thought and affording material for his pen. He was putting his deep life experience into *Sartor Resartus*. In 1834 he removed to London, where he spent the remainder of his long life. Here his fame steadily grew as he poured forth his powerful and voluminous body of literary work. For a generation he was a venerated teacher and an accepted prophet of his time. In 1866 he was made Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh; but this mark of his triumph was embittered by the death of his wife. He died in 1881, full of years and honors, and was buried among his own kindred in his native village of Ecclefechan.

Carlyle's Life

Carlyle began his literary work as early as 1823, and continued it until his death. His first publication was a translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. His next was a *Life of Schiller*, and this was soon followed by numerous translations from the German. These works are especially important as indicating the influence exerted upon his earlier development by German ideas and German literary tendencies. More than any other one man, Goethe was his ideal and his master. Carlyle was a man of very different temper from the great German. The latter was a large, broad, serene nature, while the inspired Scotchman was narrow, bigoted, intense, but tremendously forceful. Nevertheless, there seems to

Early Literary Work

have been something of natural affinity between the two, as there was also between Carlyle and the general temper of the German mind. This illustrates in its way the growing cosmopolitanism of literature which finds so many illustrations during the nineteenth century. Carlyle's own later work has many reminders of this modern condition of affairs. Especially does his first great masterpiece, *Sartor Resartus*, show the influence of German ideas. Carlyle's work is exceedingly voluminous, and can not here be considered in detail. There are, however, certain representative works which serve to display his characteristic genius and his typical modes of thought, and these may receive brief individual notice as specimens of the whole.

Sartor Resartus

Sartor Resartus is one of the most astonishing and unique books of the century. The title means "the tailor retailored," and suggests symbolically Carlyle's main idea. The book humorously pretends to be the confused and fragmentary collection of the outpourings of a half-crazy German philosopher named Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, of Weissnichtwo. It is a so-called "philosophy of clothes," and mingles Carlyle's theory of the universe and of man with a good deal of autobiographical matter setting forth his spiritual experiences. The work is grotesque, both in conception and in style. It is terrible, in its revelation of Carlyle's spiritual struggles. It is profound, in its deep and far-reaching philosophy. It is tremendously powerful, in its emotional intensity and in its imaginative vigor. The singular book is too confused, too complicated, too rich in suggestion, too profound in thought, to allow of brief exposition. It must suffice, therefore, to indicate its main purpose. By "clothes" Carlyle meant the outward vesture and wrappings of the essential reality. The forms of nature, the human body, even man's thoughts, deeds, and expressions — all are "clothes." In the deepest interpretation, these are only the outward symbols of the spiritual facts which

they enshrine. The universe, at the heart of it, is not material but spiritual. The book is the symbol of Carlyle's spiritual philosophy; and it sets forth the bitter agony of his own struggle out of the depths into the light.

Carlyle's next great work was *The French Revolution.* It is more like a great epic poem than like a sober history. Carlyle believed with Macaulay that history should be made alive to the imagination; but how vastly different from Macaulay's are his methods and results. Of the gift of clear and orderly narrative, he displays little; but his power of vivid and picturesque description and his genius for the dramatic realization of historic characters have never been surpassed since Shakespeare. His faculty of pouring out his own passionate emotion into his descriptions, of making himself as it were an actor in his dramatic scenes, is quite his own. The blood-curdling horrors of the "Reign of Terror," the tremendous and almost superhuman actors in the great tragedy of the Revolution, find in him their master and their inspired delineator. He seemed, indeed, the man born for such a task. He could ride that whirlwind undismayed. He could select from all its weltering confusions the men and the events that were most dramatic, most significant, most symbolic, and could make them stand forth in all their living colors and in all their historic meaning. It is unlike any other book that has ever been written, it is unlike any book that ever will be written, on the same theme. Others may give us the facts of the history in more orderly array. Carlyle has given us a picture that moves and breathes with his own intense life.

The French Revolution

Heroes and Hero-Worship is one of Carlyle's most characteristic productions. It sets forth his distinctive theory that "universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here."

Heroes and Hero-Worship

Such men are the world's "real kings," the men who have the right to rule, and whom other men have the duty to obey and to follow. The work is in form a series of six lectures on "the heroic in history." The titles of the several lectures will convey the best idea of their scope: "The Hero as Divinity. — Odin. — Paganism: Scandinavian Mythology"; "The Hero as Prophet.—Mahomet: Islam"; "The Hero as Poet. — Dante: Shakespeare"; "The Hero as Priest.—Luther; Reformation: Knox; Puritanism"; "The Hero as Man of Letters.—Johnson, Rousseau, Burns"; "The Hero as King. — Cromwell, Napoleon: Modern Revolutionism." Nothing save the actual reading of them can convey an idea of their singular character and of their marvelous style. They embody much of Carlyle's characteristic attitude toward modern democracy. They show that he found his historic ideal, not in the people, but in the world's men of supreme genius and character. Hero-worship seemed to him a lesson that democracy needed to learn.

Biographical Writings

Carlyle's attitude toward great men is still further illustrated by his series of biographies. We have already mentioned his *Life of Schiller.* There are various essays that have more or less of a biographical character. Carlyle loved to seize on a striking or heroic figure and give it illustration on a larger or smaller scale. One of his favorite heroes was Oliver Cromwell; and his *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* is one of his most sympathetic as well as scholarly pieces of work. As might be expected, Carlyle does not allow Cromwell to speak altogether for himself. The letters and speeches are given "with elucidations," and Carlyle "elucidates" in his own characteristic fashion. Sometimes he flings his own dramatic word into the very midst of one of Cromwell's speeches in a way that reminds us of his habit of making himself an actor in the scenes of his *French Revolution.*

The *Life of John Sterling* is a more quiet and restrained but not less deeply sympathetic biography of his personal friend. More heroic in proportions is his *History of Frederick the Great*, a magnificent historical panorama in twenty-one books. The great builder of the Prussian kingdom and layer of foundations for the German Empire is portrayed in living colors against the background of the history of his age. Frederick — Carlyle recognizes — was no demigod, rather a very "questionable hero"; but he was after all "a reality," a genuine "king."

Past and Present

Carlyle's distaste for the democracy and the materialism of his day led him to glorify the past as an age of obedience and of faith. In *Past and Present*, he has drawn a strikingly effective contrast. Book II of this work, entitled "The Ancient Monk," gives a picture of life in the Middle Ages which has never been surpassed for imaginative vividness and which has also the merit of historical fidelity. Book III, entitled "The Modern Worker," expresses his vigorous disapproval of modern conditions and methods. Two of his chapters are entitled "Gospel of Mammonism" and "Democracy." These titles indicate some of the targets at which his shafts were aimed. Carlyle's own "Gospel," whose main features have already been suggested in one way or another, is largely contained in this book; but it is still further emphasized and expanded in works like *Chartism*, *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, *The Nigger Question*, and *Shooting Niagara: and After*. The first of these deals, in an exceedingly undemocratic spirit, with the labor question. The second discusses various modern topics. The third is a sarcastic fling at the sentimentalism of the abolitionists. The last suggests that the democratic, industrial, materialistic age is approaching the brink of a tremendous cataract, and Carlyle's prophetic spirit forebodes only disaster and ruin.

Later Works

It will have already become apparent that behind Carlyle's literary genius there was the potent strength of a great character, an original personality, and a profound life experience. That genius itself is not easy to analyze or to describe, and brief suggestion must suffice. It is probable that the greatest force in his literary work is its vehement, deep, and lofty passion. Carlyle's heart was like a volcano, making lurid the heavens with its flames and carrying devastation in the path of its consuming streams. Carlyle was also possessed of a great creative imagination. His power of vision was almost supernatural. He worked in the realm of fact; but he possessed an immense capability of "realizing" fact in vivid shapes, and of clothing fact in ideal garments. His imaginative faculty is chiefly displayed in the dramatic portrayal of historical characters. He had the instinctive feeling for beauty which is an element of the poetic nature, but he had little regard for the claims of beauty as compared with the claims of truth. Truth was the ruling passion of his nature, and all his books impress one with their craving for reality. The style in which he expressed himself is strongly marked by the idiosyncrasies of his own nature. It is passionate; it is vivid; it is grotesque; it is pathetic; it is rich with imagery; it is weighty with meaning and with power. Carlyle cares little for the rules of rhetoric and has not a slavish regard even for those of grammar. He is loose, fragmentary, interjectional, bold to excess. He cares only to express his meaning and to make his desired impression. If he startles, astounds, sometimes disgusts, all this is a part of his purpose. He will keep his reader awake at all hazards, and he will make him feel as with the tingling of electric shocks. It is certainly one of the least "classical," one of the most individual, styles ever written. He may be accused, as De Quincey on far

Carlyle's Genius

His Style

different grounds accused Keats, of "trampling upon his mother-tongue as with the hoofs of a buffalo." Nevertheless, his style is powerful, imaginative, rhythmic, massive — touched at times with poetic beauty or poetic splendor — sounding all the notes of emotion, from sublimity to violent energy, from the broadest humor to the tenderest pathos. It is the fitting and adequate expression of a great soul.

John Ruskin

John Ruskin was a disciple of Carlyle, and had many of the peculiarities of his master with reference to his modes of thought and with reference to his attitude toward the age. Yet Ruskin was a man of far different genius, and in some respects of far different character. The moral effect of the work of the two men is not so very far apart; the purely literary effect is decidedly different. Ruskin was almost, if not quite, as dogmatic as Carlyle, and hardly less self-willed. Moreover, he had the like combination of an erratic manner and mode of expression with a spiritual tone and purpose that was at bottom ever one and the same. Both men were "wandering barks," sailing to all appearance under the direction of a capricious master, but guided in all their wanderings by the clear sight of the polar star. It is perhaps not unworthy of note that, while Carlyle was a thorough and typical Scotchman, Ruskin was born of Scotch parentage. The combination in them of an arbitrary will with a strongly religious temperament seems peculiarly Scotch.

Ruskin and his Age

Ruskin had comparatively little sympathy with democracy in the stricter sense of the term; but he had a deep and ever growing sympathy with the poor and the oppressed, a sympathy with the essential spirit of democratic ideals especially on the sociological side. In order to be helpful to his fellow men, he wrote, he labored, he spent practically the whole of his large

fortune. Ruskin had quite as little sympathy as Carlyle with the materialistic tendencies of science; but with its larger spirit, he was in substantial harmony. He had the passionate love of truth which was even more than the intellectual ardor of the scientist. He had a love for nature which combined the spirit of the scientific investigator, the poet, and the artist. He had an eye for natural fact which no student of science could surpass. His temperament was perhaps more than anything else that of the artist. He was in his generation an apostle of beauty — beauty of form and color, but likewise the beauty of righteousness, in thought, in feeling, and in living. He possessed the practical gifts of the artist; but he chose to set them aside in order that he might call attention to the beauty in the works of other men. He possessed also the gifts of literary genius; but these, too, he chose to sacrifice to his task as a preacher of the gospel of beauty. If he attained literary fame, it was because his genius could not be suppressed, because his preaching necessarily took on those great qualities of substance and form that made it literature. For all this Ruskin was rather scoffed at by many as being chimerical and quixotic. Nothing could better illustrate this attitude or his own nobility of spirit than a passage from his *Fors Clavigera*, an autobiographic work written toward the latter part of his career:

> Because I have passed my life in almsgiving, not in fortune-hunting; because I have laboured always for the honour of others, not for my own, and have chosen rather to make men look at Turner and Luini, than to form or exhibit the skill of my own hands; because I have lowered my rents, and assured the comfortable lives of my poor tenants, instead of taking from them all I could force for the roofs they needed; because I love a wood walk better than a London street; and would rather watch a sea gull fly than shoot it, and rather hear a thrush sing than eat it; finally, because I never disobeyed my mother, because I have honoured all women with solemn worship, and have been kind even to the unthankful and evil; therefore, the hacks of English art and literature wag their heads at me.

A large part of Ruskin's work, and especially of his earlier work, was in the form of art criticism. His first notable work was a book entitled *Modern Painters*, which he afterward modified and expanded through a series of years. It was not, as its title might suggest, a history of modern painting, but rather a glorification of Turner as the first and greatest of genuine landscape painters. The book, especially in its enlarged form, goes much further; for Ruskin enters into elaborate discussion of art theories, of the characteristics of various schools, of the true and the false in art, and especially of the relation of art to nature. This interest in landscape and the recognition of its place in art associates itself with the naturalistic movement in poetry, already discussed. It associates itself, however, quite as much with modern scientific study of nature; for Ruskin was concerned even more with natural truth than with natural beauty. Other art works of importance are his *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and his *Stones of Venice*. The former of these aptly illustrates the very important fact that Ruskin believed the inspiration of all true art to lie in the moral nature of the artist and of his age, and also the further and greater fact that all Ruskin's work — of whatever name or nature — is at bottom dealing with moral questions. The "Seven Lamps" are these: Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, Obedience. They suggest much as to Ruskin's spirit and method. The *Stones of Venice* is a work of larger scope, but it is informed by the same general purpose. The effect of the three works taken together is to show Ruskin's conception that the natural world is the expression of the divine mind and filled therefore with spiritual suggestion, and that all human art must find its highest power in fidelity to nature and in humble obedience to moral law. Such doctrine as this, Ruskin preached to his generation; and he preached it with a prophetic

Work as an Art Critic

fervor, not merely because he wished to see modern life made more beautiful, but because he believed that beauty is at bottom a matter of righteousness.

This same zeal of the prophet inspired also his later writings. About 1860, when Ruskin was just past forty years of age, he practically brought to an end his career as an art critic by the completion of his *Modern Painters*. He had labored nearly twenty years in the service of art, and was still to be her enthusiast; but from this time forward, he was to give himself more especially to a higher and a nobler service. For nearly forty years more his life was to continue, closing only with the last year but one of the century; and during this period, his literary work was to be that of a great ethical teacher and social reformer. He dealt with all sorts of subjects, there was in his writings an ever recurring allusion to art and to beauty; but still more, there was the prevalent tone of a deep moral earnestness, the voice of a man whose supreme desire was to better the condition of his fellows and to teach them that righteousness is the great law of life. It is no more within our present scope to consider his various efforts outside of the literary field for the betterment of humanity than to consider the specific value of his work as a technical critic of art. These matters are, of course, important to an understanding of the man and of his total achievement; but our present purpose is more exclusively literary, and, moreover, his work in literature was in essentially the same spirit as his work in other fields.

Social Questions

Most of the works of this later period bear fanciful titles which only remotely suggest or symbolize their real subject-matter. *Unto this Last* and *Munera Pulveris* are two books written against the narrowness and utilitarianism of the current political economy. Ruskin would have men consider that there are higher values than those which mere commercialism takes

Later Writings

into account. *The Crown of Wild Olives* consists of three lectures on "Work, Traffic, and War." *Ethics of the Dust* is a series of ten lectures "to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallisation." *Fors Clavigera* is a series of letters "to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain," and contains much autobiographical matter. *Præterita* is also autobiographical. Probably his best-known work is *Sesame and Lilies*. It is brief, and contains some of the best illustrations of his style. One of the divisions, "Kings' Treasuries," contrasts worldly and spiritual wealth, and treats especially of the spiritual value of books. Another division, "Queens' Gardens," deals with the place, power, and education of women.

His Genius and Style

Ruskin was a man who possessed a fine imagination and an almost poetic appreciation of beauty. These were perhaps the basis of his purely literary genius, although, of course, his noble character and his high ethical spirit largely determined the quality of his literary work. It is with his style, however, that the literary student must be chiefly impressed. This is highly ornate and musical, reminding us somewhat of De Quincey's imaginative and impassioned prose. It has reminders, too, of the early seventeenth-century prose-writers; but more than to any other scource, it owes its distinguishing qualities to the English Bible. He had been deeply familiar with the Book from his earliest years, and its sublime strains had become a part of his intellectual inheritance. Magnificent as it is, this style can not justly be charged with affectation or artificiality. He rises to his heights of inspired eloquence or impassioned description only under the stress of his own genuine emotion and kindling imagination; and the style is the natural and almost inevitable expression of the man.

As we come to the consideration of Matthew Arnold, we are struck by the fact that, of the four great prose-writers

who best represent the present period, only one was in full harmony with its spirit. Macaulay was a typical man of his time, accepting its ideals and voicing its characteristic ideas. Carlyle and Ruskin, as we have just seen, were in many respects in an attitude of antagonism to the spirit of the age, and felt called upon to be its censors and critics, although they too were, of course, unconsciously affected by its power. Matthew Arnold was also a censor, a critic, and in some sense a prophet, of his time. Carlyle preached the doctrine of duty and work and obedience. Ruskin preached the gospel of beauty, in form and in spirit. Arnold was preëminently the apostle of culture. "Sweetness and light" was the phrase that he borrowed from Swift and made practically his own. By it he referred to gentility of manners and to intellectual refinement. His conception of culture is acquaintance with "the best that has been known and thought in the world." As compared with the "Hebraism" of Carlyle and to some extent of Ruskin, Arnold's ideal was found rather in "Hellenism." It was the ideal of ideas as compared with the ideal of conduct and duty. Arnold believed in the potency of ideas, and sought to aid their triumph over the narrow-minded, complacent, insular, and puritanical spirit of "Philistinism." With democracy, he had comparatively little to do, one way or the other. His own personal temper was that of an intellectual aristocrat. With science, he had to do in two ways. Directly, it helps to account for the keen, analytical, observant temper of his mind. Indirectly, it unsettled his religious faith. With the sadness, the melancholy, and the resignation which this induced, we shall have to do in a later consideration of his poetry. In prose, his attitude was intellectual and logical. It was that of the stoic, who will put away all outworn illusions, will face the situation as it is, will "see life steadily and see it whole," and will take ref-

Matthew Arnold

uge in ideas. It was that of the cultured man of the world — urbane, polished, intellectual, and withal "a friend and helper of those who would live in the spirit."

Arnold's most important work in prose was that of a literary critic. Here he was classical, comparative, sane, impartial, and acute. He brought literature to the test of the highest ideals, and applied those ideals with rare judgment and insight, if with something more than a tinge of dogmatism. From 1857 to 1867, he was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and his lectures in that position exerted a wide influence upon current criticism and ideas of literature. The most important fruits of this work were two famous productions, *On Translating Homer* and *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. In 1865 he published *Essays in Criticism*, and twenty-three years later, in the year of his death, added to this a second series under the same title. Other volumes largely of a literary character were his *Mixed Essays* (1879), *Irish Essays* (1882), and *Discourses in America* (1885). In these various books, his criticism took a wide range and displayed a taste catholic as well as just. He dealt with Greek, French, German, as well as British, authors, and brought to bear a comparative criticism that was both suggestive and stimulating. His ideals were classical rather than romantic, his method was perhaps rather judicial than sympathetic; but everywhere there is the evidence of a cultivated intelligence and of keen critical insight. Arnold's true province as a prose-writer was that of literary criticism; but he did not always confine himself to that field. His *Schools and Universities on the Continent* shows his interest in education; and as an expert in educational matters, he had a right to speak with authority. His writings are permeated with thought on social and ethical questions, and it is in this sphere that he best displays his relation to the age. He even made an excursion into the field of theological controversy in

Arnold's Prose Work

such works as *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and *God and the Bible* (1875). Here, perhaps, his venture was less fortunate; but these works help to define for us Arnold's character and intellectual attitude, to make clearer the influence upon him of the great movements of the age, and to emphasize his peculiar relation to his own time.

Arnold's genius on the prose side was, as we have intimated, that of a great literary critic and apostle of culture. He was also one of the great poets of his age, and will call for prominent treatment in our later consideration of the poetry of the time. It remains here to observe that he was also a great master of prose style. In this particular, he affords a remarkable contrast with both Ruskin and Carlyle. He had next to nothing of their vehemence, their richness, their music, or their imaginative splendor. His qualities are those of the intellect rather than those of passion or imagination. His characteristic virtues are those of lucidity, serenity, simplicity, purity, suavity, terseness, precision. To all this he added the Attic salt of a spicy humor and of a delicate irony. He is great with the greatness of a calm and pure intelligence.

Arnold's Style

THE BIRTHPLACE OF CARLYLE
Ecclefechan

CHAPTER XVI

THE AGE OF TENNYSON—THE NOVEL (1832–1892)

In our consideration of the history of the modern novel, we have seen that it began in realism, under the classical influences of the eighteenth century. Later, under the influence of a growing romanticism, the novel also became romantic. Scott was the great romancer, and under his auspices the romantic novel came to the place of first importance in the field of prose fiction. Nevertheless, such work as that of Jane Austen had more than preserved the realistic tradition; and the Victorian Period found itself in possession of a broad and many-sided inheritance from the past development of the novel. On the whole, the history of the novel during this period is a history of change from romanticism back to realism, with certain marked tendencies toward romantic reaction. This seems altogether natural. The spirit of individualism that prevailed in the age of Scott tended mainly toward the freedom of romance, although, as we have seen, there was a side on which it tended toward the encouragement of realism. Individualism under the more concrete form of democracy was likely to emphasize the realistic view of life by emphasizing the place and importance of the ordinary man. This tendency toward realism was reenforced by the influence of science. Science had given men a new insight into psychological as well as into physical facts, it had taught methods of intellectual analysis that supplemented the imaginative insight of genius, it had brought new conceptions of man's

The Modern Novel

relations to society and of his place in the universe. All this gave to real life a new and different interest, and novelists were encouraged to a fresh zeal in the study of its actual phenomena. The romantic fiction of the age was largely written in a spirit of protest or of escape. Its writers struggled against the coldness and bareness of the scientific aspect of things, or else they tried to escape from it into the world of dreams. Some, however, took a better view. They found new marvels in the revelations of science which they displayed as more romantic than Gulliver or the "Gothic" romance of terror. This points to still another fact; namely, that the boundaries between romance and realism were to some extent obscured. Each used in a measure the materials and the methods of the other, and thereby enlarged the boundaries of its own province. The amount of work produced in the various departments of the novel was immense. The necessary limitations of a brief discussion will therefore compel us to a more than usually rigid selection and exclusion. Three novelists of the age stand out from the crowd — Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot. They were undoubtedly the greatest in genius. They were also typical, in a sense that makes them illustrative of the principal facts and movements of their age. To these three, then, we may devote our attention with the assurance that they will be found largely representative of the history of fiction in their time.

Charles Dickens: his Life

Charles Dickens was in many ways in harmony with the spirit of his generation, but with striking personal peculiarities. No author of the period save Robert Browning better illustrates the necessity of taking into account the personal equation in literary work. At the basis of his genius lies his broad and intimate familiarity with men and things. He was by nature a shrewd and accurate observer of

life; and his own practical experiences had brought him to a close knowledge of its realities and even of its hardships. Born in Portsmouth in 1812, he was early removed to London with his family, and learned there to know the privations and sordid cares of humble life in the great city. At ten years of age, he was working in a blacking factory, while his father was confined for debt in the Marshalsea Prison. His literary apprenticeship was served as a newspaper reporter and later as a magazine and newspaper editor. Experience as an amateur actor also contributed to the training which was to take the place of a university education in preparing him for his life work. Literary work began early and was almost immediately successful. Few writers have been so popular as Dickens or have lived to reap such abundant literary honors. His life was prematurely shortened in 1870, by the excitement and the physical strain of his public readings before vast and enthusiastic audiences in England and America.

His Subjects

Dickens had certain points of contact with the realistic school, although he is by no means to be called a realist. His personal experiences gave him opportunity for wide and varied knowledge of English life. Within this field, he best knew the middle and lower classes, and nothing was more familiar to him than the life of London streets and homes. One of the most interesting minor features of his novels lies in his particular acquaintance with certain favorite localities, in and out of London. Readers of Dickens will recall many illustrations of this from works like *Our Mutual Friend*, *Bleak House*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *David Copperfield*. The last of these is in effect an idealization of actual experiences from his own life. His subjects are drawn almost entirely from the life of the English common people. Even in a novel like *A Tale of Two Cities*, in which he deals

with events of the French Revolution, a very large proportion of the book is taken up with description of English life and especially the life of London.

If Dickens is a realist in knowledge of actual life and in choice of subjects, he is anything but a realist in his methods of treatment. He handles his real subject-matter with the greatest freedom. We can hardly call him a romantic novelist, for his field lies rather between the territories of realism and romance. For lack of a better term, he might be designated an idealist in fiction. This means to imply that his novels, while keeping within the limits of ordinary life for their materials, are an extreme idealization of the actual and the familiar. He takes liberties with the literal facts of life in the portrayal of character and perhaps still more in the construction of plot. What he seeks is not primarily a faithful picture of life as it is. He displays that life rather in the light which his singular fancy has shed around it. Often he is concerned with the attack or defence of some moral principle, and portrays life in a way to suit his immediate purpose. Illustrations of this are to be found in such books as *Dombey and Son*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Nicholas Nickleby*. In all his works, we may see his marked disposition toward partisanship for or against his various characters. He applauds and rewards the good, he condemns and arbitrarily punishes the bad. In a word, there is lack of that artistic impartiality which characterizes a great master like Shakespeare. What we shall have occasion to see is that Dickens supplies this lack by other remarkable powers and that he is great in spite of all faults and limitations.

His Methods

We must probably seek the deepest secret of Dickens's genius in his emotional nature. He had intense power of feeling, and his feeling was easily aroused. His emotions were not inspired primarily by litera-

His Emotional Power

ture, by the ideals of his art, or even by the strong impulse to personal expression. Their inspiration was rather in the human spectacle which he saw around him. He was profoundly interested in the joys and sorrows and manifold experiences of men and women, and he was profoundly moved by them. His deep and strong sympathies were always on the side of truth, morality, and religion. The two most characteristic emotions of his nature were pathos and humor. These seemingly opposite feelings have not seldom been found in harmony with each other in great men of genius; and in Dickens, they met in a rare and happy union.

On the one side, we feel the deep tenderness of his nature, and are witness of his power over the softer emotions of the human heart. His pathos permeates all his work. Every reader of Dickens will recall such examples as the death of Little Nell, of Little Jo, and of Paul Dombey; and these are only extreme illustrations of what is to be found in greater or less degree in all his novels. He has been charged with sentimentalism, with exaggeration, with "pumping for tears," and there is something of justice in the charge; but nevertheless, his pathos is an element of undoubted power in his work and helps in large measure to account for its popularity.

His Pathos

Over against his pathos is his humor — not delicate, subtle, and half melancholy, as we might expect, but rather of the broad and boisterous kind. Hearty laughter, playful irony, potent ridicule, a singular love of the grotesque — these are some of the characteristics of Dickens's humor. We may declare without qualification that he is one of the world's great humorists. Whatever other limitations upon his art may be allowed, there surely can not be much room for cavil here.

His Humor

This is one of the secrets of his literary greatness, while at the same time it accounts for much that is strange, dis

torted, and exaggerated in his work as a novelist. The relation of Dickens to the art of novel-writing is a somewhat peculiar one. He is a caricaturist of life and character rather than a painter of portraits. Yet let us recognize that the caricaturist has also a genuine and deep, as well as a keen, insight into life, and that he is in his way just as truly a revealer of its meanings. Dickens is not really to be understood by those who fail to comprehend his singular union of humor and pathos and the effect of this on his work. They judge him by the standards of other men and expect from him similar results. He must be judged by his own standard, and his results must be appreciated as the outcome of his own very peculiar genius.

Effect on his Art

Next to the emotional power of Dickens, we must note the power of his imagination. Great emotional power tends to quicken the imagination; and as we might expect, the imaginative activity of Dickens is easily aroused. And when it is aroused, how astonishing are its creations. We are struck by its variety and its fertility; its resources seem inexhaustible and its possible shapes almost infinite. We are impressed by its clearness and its minuteness; there seems to be a perfect conception of objects even to their slightest details. There is comparatively little penetration into essential realities; but there is a wonderful power of effective combination. Dickens is less a revealer of life's mystery than a portrayer of its visible fact. The remarkable peculiarities of his pictures are largely accounted for by the marvelous intensity and vividness of his imagination. He sees the ideal almost as vividly as the actual. Objects stand forth with a distinctness comparable to that of a landscape revealed in a sudden glare of lightning. Inanimate things even seem to be endowed with life and sensibility. This activity of his imagination is undoubtedly largely affected

His Imagination

by his pathos and his humor. These help to account for its distortions, its exaggerations, its whimsicality, and its grotesqueness; but apart from other influences, much is due to its own sportive and fantastic nature.

His Art as a Novelist

Dickens's technical art as a novelist is not quite equal to the real force of his genius. On the side of his style, he can not be called a great master. This may in part be accounted for on general grounds. Masters of style among the great novelists are the exception rather than the rule; and the explanation probably is that in most cases the writer's energy and attention are engaged with the processes of invention to the comparative neglect of the matter of expression. Dickens is inclined to a decided carelessness in style, and at times even to coarseness. While his style is undoubtedly effective for its purpose, it lacks those minute perfections or those magic splendors which characterize the very greatest work in prose expression. When we come to the more important matters of his art, Dickens's real mastery begins to appear. He is a great story-teller. His plots are large, varied, and complicated; but he displays great skill in the handling of the broad and intricate construction. What is still more apparent, he is a wonderful inventor of incident, and is able by this means alone to hold the unflagging interest of the reader. There is some tendency to looseness and digression in his stories; but this is hardly more than might be expected, and is lost sight of in the interest of the whole and in the fascination of the details. An incalculable aid to his narrative is the clearness and vividness of his description. It is often highly idealized, but it never fails of distinctness or of life. It is probably in the creation of character that his greatest genius is displayed. His characters are in a sense representative of the author's theories and purposes rather than of human life. It may also be said that they are typical of virtues and vices

rather than of men and women. It may be still further added that they are frequently exaggerated and fanciful. All this is true, but it does not serve to shake a single leaf from the laurel of his fame. In spite of all the limitations that have been justly urged, but urged perhaps too much, Dickens is still to be regarded as a great creator of character. The imagination is the court of last resort for judging the works of the imagination — not any supposed standard of observation or experience; and to the imagination, the characters of Dickens declare themselves alive — thoroughly English, thoroughly human, thoroughly lifelike, in spite of all limitation. They are alive with the superabundant vitality of their creator. It is not the least of his peculiarities that Dickens identifies himself with his work, becoming as it were the companion of his characters as well as their maker. The effect of this on his work is not altogether happy, any more than is the effect of his constant introduction of a practical purpose into his stories of life; but none of these things vitally affect the real power and impressiveness of his novels.

General Estimate

When all is said, it remains true that Dickens is one of the most popular and influential of English novelists. He has been seriously criticised, and he is fairly open to serious criticism, on more than merely technical grounds. His exaggeration, his sensationalism, his sentimentality, his coarseness, his didacticism, are all fair objects of attack. If he is great in spite of these faults, it is because he opposes to them much greater virtues. He teaches the essential truth of life, even if he does distort the outward fact. He is not only a great preacher and moralist, but he is a truly great artist as well. Notwithstanding his seeming affectations, he is at bottom sincere, simple, tender, genial, manly, and true. His greatness is due to a high development of certain remarkable powers. His limitations are due to the comparative failure

of certain other powers and to a lack of proportion and harmony between his various artistic qualities. His abiding reputation will be that of a great humorist, a great novelist, and a great master of the human heart.

There are some points of resemblance between Dickens and Thackeray, but in the main their paths diverge. The difference appears first of all in their lives. Thackeray was born in Calcutta in 1811, but was early sent to England for education at the famous Charterhouse School in London. From here he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, but did not remain long at the University. After spending some time in travel and in study of art on the continent, he returned to London and began his literary career. His fame grew slowly but surely until his death in 1863. The insanity of his wife brought an element of deep pathos into his life, but his last days were comparatively happy and serene. Thackeray may be called a novelist of life and manners. This implies that he was the painter of an age and of a particular state of society rather than of essential humanity. Such an implication would be in the main just, although we must guard ourselves from the error of supposing that he was entirely limited to a narrow field or that his work has no large human significance. In many ways his portrayals are true, and will always be true, to the characteristics of general humanity. It may be said that he was a student of life rather than of the individual soul.

William Makepeace Thackeray

The actual field of life which he chose for that study was a comparatively limited one. It was the life of English high society, a life of artificial and conventional manners. It was a less fruitful field than that of Dickens, who had more opportunity to observe the natural workings of the human heart. Nevertheless, if one could see beneath the surface, humanity was there, however falsified and concealed. Within his limits,

Character of his Work

Thackeray finds a considerable variety of character, although the natural tendency of an artificial society is to restrict individuality and to reduce all characters to a few well-known types. To a certain extent this tendency is observable in Thackeray's portrayal. Indeed, he occasionally has almost repetitions of character. An interesting case is that of William Dobbin, in *Vanity Fair*, who seems like a preliminary study for Thackeray's superb masterpiece of character portrayal, old Colonel Newcome, of *The Newcomes*. Thackeray shows in all his novels a real knowledge of the human heart, and is a past master in his acquaintance with the social conditions that he portrays. His method of treatment is decidedly realistic. He has no disposition to idealize life or to seize only on its romantic elements. On the contrary, his chief impulse is toward a graphic portrayal of actual facts and conditions. This portrayal is not to be called either superficial or profound. Thackeray certainly does go beneath the mere surface of life; but just as certainly he does not fathom the depths. In the construction of his novels, life and character are much more important than plot. He introduces a moral purpose, but in his own way. It is not as with Dickens the purpose to reform institutions or to advocate a particular cause; it is rather to attack human weakness and folly and to rebuke a system of life.

Character of the Man

On the surface, Thackeray was a man of the world, acquainted with all its ways. He thoroughly understood the vice and meanness and hollowness of polite society; and his knowledge results in disillusion, both for himself and for his reader. We are led behind the scenes, and shown the tinsel and the sham which make up the fine-appearing spectacle. The result is that Thackeray is apparently a cynic and a pessimist. Such a conclusion, however, would not be justified by a deeper knowledge of the facts. He was, indeed, a spirit quick to

scorn and despise, a good hater of all sham and pretence, of all vileness and meanness. Ever ready he was with his mocking laughter and his potent ridicule. On any due occasion, he was capable of the most scathing irony and of the most bitter sarcasm. Yet, rightly understood, this was only the surface of the man. Beneath that surface was a most genuine and manly and noble spirit. Thackeray was a believer in the essential goodness of humanity, although he understood so much of its littleness and its badness. He was a man of kindly and genial nature, in spite of his keen and bitter words. Beneath his satirical manner, he hid a tender and compassionate heart. Moreover, Thackeray was a man of faith and hope. If he saw things as they were, with the scientific clearness and frankness of his age, if he put away all illusion, he nevertheless found it possible to discover the spiritual element in life and to have faith in what men might be and in what already they largely were. All his scorn and bitterness grew, not out of a petty or churlish spirit, but out of the real nobility of his nature. It grew out of his intense indignation against the vile and the false, and his no less intense love for the true and the pure. His work is marked by a customary restraint of emotion, in sharp contrast with the rather excessive display of feeling in the work of Dickens. Nevertheless, Thackeray was a man of strong and deep feeling. Beyond the evidence of his work there is the evidence of the patience and loving-kindness of his life.

Genius as an Artist

Thackeray's genius as a literary artist was very unlike that of Dickens, but the two men were at least alike in being keen observers of life. This, of course, was of especial importance to a realistic novelist like Thackeray. His knowledge of life was accurate, and his purpose was to be equally accurate in the portrayal. For such a purpose, observation is much, insight

is more. If Thackeray's insight was not profound, it was at least genuine and just, and fitted him for the portrayal of life in more than a merely superficial sense. Such knowledge of life as came to him in these ways, he had the gift to use as a fine artist in the realm of fiction. Perhaps his most remarkable power is his ability in characterization. He is subtle in his analysis of human feeling and motive. He is for the most part truly original in his conceptions. His characters are his own, and yet are created with fidelity to the great copy which he found in real life. The characters thus analyzed and conceived, he is able to realize in living beings that appeal to the imagination. Beyond the ability to portray individual characters is the ability to portray a large and faithful picture of life. Here, also, Thackeray's fine imagination is equal to its task. It is clear, penetrating, vivid, fertile, genuinely creative. Less vigorous than that of Dickens, it is more restrained and better balanced. Its results are symmetrical, orderly, precise. The pictures which his imagination creates are given depth and solidity by the fact that Thackeray was a really serious thinker. His reflections on human life have a value largely independent of the particular forms through which they are presented. On this side of his work, he appeals more to mature minds. Dickens is the novelist of the young, the vigorous, the hopeful, the sanguine. Thackeray is rather the novelist of the experienced, the thoughtful, and the reflective, and to appreciate him fully requires a certain degree of mental growth. Thackeray's emotional power is quiet, regulated, restrained, but none the less strong. Pathos in his work is comparatively rare, but he shows himself capable on occasion of touching the heart's tenderer emotions. There is hardly a finer illustration of quiet and restrained pathos in all English fiction than his brief account of the death of old Colonel Newcome. As a humorist, his power

is freely displayed. He ranges from broad and almost farcical humor to the keenest sarcasm and the most delicate irony. As a rule, however, his humor is not the hearty and boisterous humor of Dickens, but is more subtle, keen, refined, bitter, an exceedingly effective weapon of satire and ridicule. It can hardly be called altogether amiable. Thackeray laughs at the world rather than with it, and uses his powers of wit not so much to delight as to sting. Another characteristic emotion is his moral indignation. Often veiled, seldom expressed in direct and formal terms, it is none the less powerfully felt in his portrayal of life and in his characteristic comment upon the doings of men and women. Beneath this indignation, giving it fineness as well as strength, is an intense love of moral beauty. If Thackeray portrays for the most part those phases of life that deserve his satire, if he represents the wickedness and the weakness of the world, he has nevertheless a noble appreciation of all that is pure and sweet and genuine in character. His pictures of life exalt beauty by contrast and suggestion rather than by direct presentation; but he makes us feel that in spite of all the evil and the littleness of the world there is yet much in it of the savor of true goodness. Thackeray is not a great narrator. His plots are comparatively uninteresting, and he is largely lacking in the skill of the great literary architect. What he does possess is the power to present such a graphic and fascinating picture of men and women that the interest of the mere story is hardly missed. To this end contributes not a little his skill in graphic and suggestive description. Still further, he is one of the most finished masters of prose style among English novelists. His qualities are those of clearness, finish, ease, incisiveness, and vivacity.

The interest of Thackeray's novels, as we have implied, is primarily an interest in men and women vividly portrayed.

His characters are well defined, individual, and lifelike.

Work as a Novelist

He portrays male characters better than female, and mature persons better than children. The characters in any one of his novels are comparatively few in number, whereas Dickens crowds his stories with a great number of personages. These characters are so related to each other as to form a natural, consistent, and faithful picture of life, and to suggest the movements of the larger world outside their narrow circle. The narrative is subordinate in interest, but the thread of the story is sufficient to give unity to the whole. It is easy and graceful, but comparatively lacking in movement, in complication, in climax, and in dramatic effect. His descriptions, always admirable, are mostly of persons, situations, and conditions. There is little description of nature, and it is characteristic of him that he deliberately avoids, in *Vanity Fair*, an excellent opportunity to describe the battle of Waterloo. The proper business of conducting the story and portraying the characters is almost always accompanied in his novels with a running comment of satire on human follies and of moral reflections on life. These are exceedingly interesting for their own sake, independently of the story. To use his own figure, they are like the comments of the showman displaying his puppets. The effect of this on his art as a novelist is not altogether happy. Satire in art, if carried too far, tends to force the author upon us and tends also both to distract our attention from the characters and to distort them in the interests of the satirical purpose. Moralizing in art interrupts the story for the sake of the sermon and mars the proper unity, proportion, and continuity. If the moral purpose be less broad and human than Thackeray's, it tends to destroy the work of art altogether. Taken as they are, his novels are full of fascination to the mature mind. The reader may well forget all cavil in genuine gratitude and admiration.

What the novel could be, however, in such hands and without these objectionable features, Thackeray himself has shown us. In *Henry Esmond*, he has presented one of the most perfect historical pictures ever drawn — a transcript from the life of the early part of the eighteenth century. The narrator of the story is Henry Esmond himself, and all satirical and moralizing comment on the part of the author is necessarily eliminated. As a result, we have an example of the art of prose fiction pure and simple. All Thackeray's genius is there without its hindrances. It is his masterpiece, and in it his true greatness as a novelist is fully revealed.

George Eliot

George Eliot was the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, hardly less than the greatest woman of genius in English literature. Her career is an illustration of the production of great art out of comparatively narrow conditions and out of comparatively humble materials. Like Jane Austen, she was born in a rural community and matured her genius within a narrow life circle. Her native county was Warwickshire — the county of Shakespeare — but like Shakespeare, she transcends in spirit the bounds of Warwickshire and of England. For over thirty years, she lived in this quiet midland country, on the farm or in the quaint provincial town of Coventry. Her earliest acquaintance was with a life natural and unsophisticated — a life where humanity was visible in its simplest and most typical forms. By insight into such life, she learned to know what life was in its depths quite as well as Dickens learned to know it by his wide acquaintance with English types of character or as Thackeray learned to know it by his study of London society. She was destined, however, to a far wider knowledge of the world and to a far larger intellectual development than these early years seemed to promise. In 1851 she settled in London as assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*,

and was there brought into association with the most prominent liberal thinkers of the day. Her union with George Henry Lewes, which followed soon after, was of the utmost importance to her literary career; for under his influence she came to a realization of her genius as a novelist. After his death, in 1878, she was married to Mr. Cross, a London banker. She died in 1880, at the age of sixty-one. In spite of her broad experience of life and of her large intellectual culture, her temper remained thoroughly English. Through her provincial origin and sympathies, she had the roots of her genius deep in the soil of English life. Hers was the largest life from the narrowest circumstances, the broadest art through the most limited subject.

The Woman and the Artist

At the basis of George Eliot's character was her intense emotional nature. She had a heart full of tenderness and pity. Her loves and friendships make up much of the story of her life. Her experiences were such as to subject her emotional temper to an unusual development. The sorrows of her life, her deep heart experiences, her physical sufferings, her religious struggles, all tended to develop a profoundly sad yet serene nature. The wide range of her emotional powers and experiences had an important influence upon her work; for she learned how to portray in others the feeling that she had known herself. Hardly less important was her large intellectuality and her broad culture. Her mind seems in many ways masculine rather than feminine; and all her work is evidence of her force and breadth, as well as of her subtlety, of intellect. Her life was largely spent in extensive reading and study; and as a result, she had a wide knowledge of literature, history, and art. The conditions of the age brought this large heart and this large mind into conflict with one another. She was a woman of deep religious instinct, and her early religious experiences

were largely determined by her emotional nature. As she grew in mental power and in philosophical and scientific knowledge, her intellectuality radically affected her religious views. She passed through a time of doubt and struggle, but did not gain the spiritual victory of Carlyle. Her later attitude toward religion was agnostic. Religious by nature, she yet found it impossible to believe, and accepted the conditions of the age and of her own mind with a sad sincerity. Her reverence of spirit remained the same. Her conscientiousness in life and in work are an inspiring example. Above all, the altruism which she believed in and preached reveals the tenderness, the unselfishness, the real devotion of her nature. Her greatness of spirit as well as her limitations of faith may be clearly seen in her poem beginning,

> O may I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence: live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end with self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge man's search
> To vaster issues.

"So to live," she says, "is heaven"; and this was the only heaven, the only immortality, in which she found it possible to believe. It was a noble faith, if not the highest. There was, at least, no pretence in her nature, either in religious or in other matters. Her character was, indeed, strikingly simple and sincere. While she was not a great poet, the passage just quoted is illustrative of the fact that she did produce a small body of pure and lofty verse. Doubtless this poetic element in her genius serves to touch her work as a novelist to finer issues. That work gains a unique quality also from the singular combination of masculine and feminine traits in her character.

Speaking more specifically of her genius as a novelist, we must first note her wonderful breadth of sympathy. Probably no English novelist has had a more profound or a more catholic interest in human life, and the same spirit is shown in her love for nature and for domestic animals. Such sympathy is the first condition of understanding, and it is clear that George Eliot did understand. The depth of her insight was matched by its delicacy; for she had all the penetrating vigor of a man matched with the refined subtlety of a woman. These gifts for the comprehension of human life were supplemented by equal gifts for presenting it in concrete forms. She had a great creative imagination. By its power she could conceive original, definite, and individual characters, and could body them forth in vivid reality. Nothing is more remarkable than her marvelous power of endowing her creatures with life. Seemingly without effort, she breathes into them her own living spirit, and makes them live and move, not as mere puppets, but as actual men and women. She is essentially a delineator of the soul, presenting man's spiritual nature through his outward form and conduct. Yet, as we have implied, there is no lack of solid flesh and blood in her characters. Hers is not a presentation of the spirit instead of the flesh; it is a presentation of the spirit through the flesh. Akin to this is her power to reach the universal through the local. In many of her novels, the life portrayed is very narrow and restricted; yet her presentation is broadly human and typical of man's life under any conditions. She knows that if one will but go deep enough anywhere, he may reach essential human nature, that which makes the whole world kin. This contrast between the narrow life and the larger meaning is finely illustrated in *Adam Bede*, which is probably her masterpiece, and even more emphatically in *Silas Marner*. She began by being a great observer,

Her Genius as a Novelist

viewing life accurately and endeavoring to portray it faithfully. She added to her fineness of observation a depth of insight and a sense of spiritual values which enabled her to portray the inward as well as the outward life. Moreover, she had power to discern the poetry and the beauty which lie beneath the surface of life and which sometimes transfigure the lowliest characters. She was, indeed, a lover of the beautiful in art, in nature, and in the human soul, and could discover the beauty of common things as well as of common men and women. Her emotional power is also a most important element in her creations. Her pathos is the simple and unforced pathos of human life and destiny. There is, on the one hand, no undue restraint, and on the other, no striving for mere effect. She is a great humorist, not loud and boisterous like Dickens, not keenly satirical like Thackeray, but with a breadth, a healthiness, and a geniality quite in harmony with her sane and realistic view of life.

Her Subjects

George Eliot's realism is of the highest and best type. Like both Dickens and Thackeray, she goes to the actual world for her subjects. She deals for the most part with English rural and provincial life, and especially with the lower and middle classes. This was the life she knew best and the life on which most of her greatest novels are based. She began her work in fiction with *Scenes from Clerical Life*, containing three separate stories associated with the general theme. The success of this work encouraged her to the writing of her first great novel, *Adam Bede*. It is a vivid and most human picture of life in just such a rural community as that in which she grew up; but it becomes even more than that by virtue of the profound passions by which its characters are moved. *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner* are novels of much the same general type. The former probably reflects in an indirect way much of her own personal feeling and

experience. The latter is the most restricted in its subject-matter of all her great works, and at the same time the most objective and most free from intrusion of the author's personality. *Middlemarch* deals with life in a small provincial town, but its range and variety of character is somewhat greater. In *Romola* and in *Daniel Deronda*, she took a much wider sweep. The latter has been most criticised of all her novels, and is probably the least successful of her larger works. *Romola* has also found its critics, but it contains some of her most masterly work. It is a historical novel, dealing with Florentine life in the days of Savonarola; and its fine contrast between the fervid asceticism of the great Italian reformer and the beauty-loving self-indulgence of the Greek Tito Melema calls forth some of her greatest powers. Everywhere George Eliot knows her subject. In the novels of English life, she knows it because she has been a living part of it. In such a work as *Romola*, she knows it by wide learning and by careful study. If she is less successful in work of the latter sort, it is because she could not possibly feel with her more remote characters quite the same vital sympathy that she feels with her own Warwickshire blood. This is a necessary limitation on all artists, and is not to be helped except by such intimate and profound knowledge of the general human heart as she undoubtedly possessed.

Her Methods

Her manner of conception and her method of treatment make her works a study of life rather than a study of mere manners. She is concerned, not with the accidental, but with the essential. Her handling of life is truthful, but at the same time really imaginative and poetic. Her chief interest lies in the study of individual character; and that study is made significant by the depth of her insight and by the subtlety of her analysis. These individual characters she is able to combine into a large and impressive picture of life. While her plots are always

subordinate, they are never uninteresting; and if she has not quite the fascination of a great story-teller, like Scott or Dickens, she does possess a fair degree of skill in construction. The chief limitation on the general effect of many of her novels lies in her strong tendency to infuse into them a subjective element by means of her moral and philosophical reflections on the life that she is portraying. This same habit has been already noted in Thackeray, though in somewhat different form. In George Eliot, this tendency toward abstract thought instead of concrete portrayal is in peculiar contrast with her really great dramatic power. She portrays her characters without any infusion into them of her own personality, and then delivers her philosophical sermon as a thing almost apart. She was at the same time a great thinker and a great creator of character, and she was not quite able to keep her abstract thinking separate from her portrayal. In the main, her criticism of human life is both serious and conscientious, and falls short of the very greatest work only because she felt impelled to preach as well as to portray. Her novels are at least not marred by prejudice or by any satiric or merely didactic purpose; and even her occasional moral dissertations are in harmony with her portrayal. She has of late been unduly depreciated; but it is safe to say that her fame will eventually recover its own. Nothing can permanently obscure the fact that her novels are great works of art — true, beautiful, and profound pictures of human life. In the creation of lifelike character, she has hardly had any superior since Shakespeare.

Minor Novelists

With these three great novelists as chief examples of the voluminous fiction of the age, we must be here content. The briefest possible glance at the rest of the field will serve the simple purpose of illustrating the range and variety of work that was produced. Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873) was a ver-

satile novelist, sensitive to changes of literary fashion. He began as early as 1827 with novels of the "dandy" type. His taste was for romantic sentiment and for effects of criminal and supernatural terror. The influence of Scott turned him toward the historical novel, and here he produced some of his best works, like *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Harold*. Still later, Thackeray turned him in the direction of realism. His last phase was again romantic, but in the fashion of the new age. Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) has some affinities with Bulwer-Lytton, especially in his cleverness, versatility, brilliancy, and superficiality. His most effective novels are pictures of political and fashionable life in his own day. They are romantic, cynical, witty, imaginative — the work of a brilliant man of the world rather than of a really great novelist. Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) was a sort of lesser Thackeray. He dealt in realistic fashion with a wide range of English life — clerical, political, commercial, and rural. His work is that of an industrious and competent literary craftsman, never rising very high and never falling very low. Charles Reade (1814-1884) reminds us rather of Dickens. Led by the age to the choice of realistic subjects, his personal impulse was to deal with them in a romantic manner. His best work, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, is a historical novel. Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) suggests comparison with George Eliot, but the comparison is one of contrast. In a way quite her own, she presented real life in its romantic aspects. Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) wrote some effective novels of purpose, with democratic leanings, and some still better historical novels. Robert Louis Stevenson (1845-1894) brought back the atmosphere of true romance into English fiction. Sometimes it is the romance of pure adventure, as in *Treasure Island*, sometimes the deeper romance of the human spirit, as in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It represents

a reaction from the realistic and scientific temper of the age. These are by no means all of the really important novelists of the time. They are simply the best or the most typical. These among the dead, together with George Meredith and others still among the living, are convincing illustrations of the fulness, richness, and power of the novel during the Victorian Period.

THACKERAY'S HOUSE IN LONDON, WHERE "VANITY FAIR," "PENDENNIS," AND "HENRY ESMOND" WERE WRITTEN

CHAPTER XVII

THE AGE OF TENNYSON — POETRY (1832–1892)

Of the four poets who must be selected from the larger company to represent the poetry of the present age, Matthew Arnold was much the youngest and began his poetical career at considerably the latest date. That career, however, was almost entirely confined to the earlier part of his life, and was practically ended nearly a quarter of a century before the latest of the others had ceased to write. Arnold was born in 1822, and was a son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous head master of Rugby. After finishing his preliminary education at Rugby, he entered Balliol College, Oxford, and later became a fellow of Oriel College. The religious controversies which were stirring the University in his time united with the general tendencies of the age to unsettle Arnold's faith; and the note of spiritual conflict is heard through much of his poetry as well as through his later prose. During the greater part of his life, he held the responsible position of an inspector of schools; and from 1857 to 1867 he was professor of poetry at Oxford. His first volume of poems was published in 1848, and his poetical period continued to the time of his Oxford professorship. After that time, he was almost exclusively a writer of prose until his death in 1888. It will thus appear that his prose work was the product of his later life, while his poetry was the outcome of his younger manhood, before the chilling influences of the age had entirely silenced his poetic voice. The quality of his prose and its indication of the character of the man, we have

Matthew Arnold

Robert Browning.

already sufficiently considered. It remains here to speak of his poetry and to observe the light which it also throws upon his personality.

Between Arnold's poetry and his prose there is singular difference. He seems to have reserved for poetical expression those moods of sadness, of world-weariness, of anguished doubt, and of stoical resignation and renunciation which probably represented what lay most deeply hidden in his nature. We hear the voice of one who has been disturbed to the very centre of his spiritual life by the doubt so prevalent during the middle years of the nineteenth century. The faith in which he had been reared failed him utterly, and seemed to be passing away also out of the world. He says in *Dover Beach*:

His Spirit of Doubt

> The Sea of Faith
> Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
> Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd!
> But now I only hear
> Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
> Retreating, to the breath
> Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
> And naked shingles of the world.

There could hardly be a more pathetic expression of the deep melancholy of doubt. There could hardly be a more beautiful one. He seems, as he says in his *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, like one

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born.

Through most of his poetry this same spirit runs, this painful sense of

> The something that infects the world.

To all this pain and emptiness, Arnold opposes first resignation, then duty. In the poem entitled *Morality*, he declares:

> We cannot kindle when we will
> The fire which in the heart resides;
> The spirit bloweth and is still,
> In mystery our soul abides.
> But tasks in hours of insight willed
> Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.

In a poem like *Palladium*, as more or less in many others, it is made clear to us that Arnold has a still further consolation. Doubt has not made him a materialist; he still believes in the soul as something above the flesh.

His Consolations

> Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
> Upon our life a ruling effluence send;
> And when it fails, fight as we will, we die;
> And, while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

In *Rugby Chapel*, we see him standing by the grave of his father, a man of "radiant vigor" and of splendid faith. The contrast between father and son is as pathetic as it is significant. From thought of what the father was, the son draws inspiration and courage and even something of faith. Yet after all, he knows full well that he must be sufficient unto himself. The sense of isolation is upon him, as well as the sense of lost faith. He cries in *Marguerite:*

> Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live *alone*.

The few lines that have been quoted would alone be sufficient to show the classical perfection of Arnold's poetic style. He is a poet of limited range and product, but almost all that he has written is worthy to live. He lacked the passion and the music that make a great lyric poet, although his exquisite art sometimes achieved most beautiful effects. Of his narrative poems, only one is a genuine success. In *Sohrab and Rustum*,

Character of his Poetry

however, his classic style is combined with a romantic story to fine poetic results. His true field is that of meditation and reflection rather than that of passionate heart utterance or of objective portrayal. There is passion in Arnold's poetry, but it is rather a passion of the brain. Beyond the poems already mentioned, some of his finest work is to be found in *The Strayed Reveller*, in that beautiful piece of pure poetic fancy, *The Forsaken Merman*, and in his elegiac poems. *Thyrsis*, a monody on the death of his friend and fellow-poet, Arthur Hugh Clough, is one of the most beautiful elegies in the language; and scarcely less noteworthy is its companion poem, *The Scholar-Gypsy*.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was a woman of fine intelligence and of broad culture; but in almost all other respects she was in strong contrast with Matthew Arnold. In his poetry, it is the intellect that speaks; in hers, it is the heart. In all that he wrote, there is the classical refinement and finish that marks the presence of a fine critical faculty; Mrs. Browning had the fire and the inspiration, but lacked more than anything else the power of self-criticism. In still more important matters there is the same apparent divergence. So far as we can see, Mrs. Browning was almost untouched by the scientific spirit of the age or by its religious struggle and doubt. Unlike George Eliot, she was thoroughly feminine in nature; and her woman's intuition found the spiritual where it could not be found by much intellectual searching. In an analytic and inquiring age, she was a creature of passion and impulse, a lover of romance and of the beauty of Italy and Greece. She was touched, however, by the democratic spirit, or rather by something that is or should be the fine flower of democracy — the spirit of sweet human charity for all God's creatures. None of her poems affords better illustration of this than *The Cry of the Children*, a poetic protest against the sacrifice of child life to

the modern spirit of industrialism. That she loved liberty, is written large in *Casa Guidi Windows* and in many other poems.

Two main faults are charged against Mrs. Browning's poetry. In the first place, it is said that she lacked definiteness in her conceptions and a clear and well-ordered arrangement of her material — in other words, that she was somewhat vague and diffuse. In the second place, it is said that she was extremely careless in details of style and metre. These are important matters, and it is probable that in both cases the full justice of the criticism must be allowed. It can only be pleaded against them that they should not be given undue weight to the detriment of her poetic fame, and that they are more than offset by certain other qualities which she possessed in an eminent degree. In the first place, the whole tone and character of her thought was poetic. Her ideas were such as naturally sought expression in poetry rather than in prose. It might even be said, more broadly, that her whole character and temper were poetic. She carried about her, so to say, a poetic atmosphere. This being true, poetry was to her a thoroughly natural mode of utterance — less an art than an instinct; and this may in some measure account for an ease which often amounted to carelessness. Such a nature would least feel the need of a discipline like that which made Pope and Tennyson such perfect poetic artists; and that discipline was precisely what her spontaneous genius most needed. Perhaps her preëminent gift was poetic passion. It was poured out richly into such brief lyrics as *The Cry of the Human*, *The House of Clouds*, *Cowper's Grave*, *Catarina to Camoens*, and *A Musical Instrument*; it informed many a fine passage even in her long verse novel, *Aurora Leigh*; it rang with a high and resonant note in her poems on Italian freedom and in *Casa Guidi Windows*; it is nowhere more apparent than in her *Sonnets from the*

Her Poetry

Portuguese. Such poems as many of these illustrate, too, her fine gift of lyric music. She was a splendid singer, even if she was sometimes guilty of a false note. We must grant her also the larger endowment of poetic imagination. She could see, clearly and vividly, and she was able in large measure to "realize" her vision in outward forms. Among other poems that strikingly illustrate her imaginative power, may be named *The Rhyme of the Duchess May* and *A Vision of Poets.* These and all her poems illustrate the charm of poetic beauty that is everywhere in her work and that exalts it above all detraction.

Sonnets from the Portuguese

Mrs. Browning's masterpiece, the work that best illustrates all her poetic powers, is her *Sonnets from the Portuguese.* It is a sonnet cycle, enshrining to a poetic immortality her love for Robert Browning. The title is a mere veil or fanciful disguise; for the poems are all original, personal, and intimate. The whole number of sonnets is forty-four, and the series illustrates different phases in the progress of her passion. She records how love came to her as she stood expecting death, how she feared to look so high or to accept such bliss, how her love bade her rather prepare for renunciation, how she found her supreme joy at last in acceptance and in self-surrender. This is the next to the last of the sonnets:

> How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
> I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
> My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
> For the ends of being and ideal grace.
> I love thee to the level of every day's
> Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
> I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
> I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
> I love thee with the passion put to use
> In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
> I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
> With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,

> Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
> I shall but love thee better after death.

Of all the great men of literary genius in his time, Robert Browning was the strongest, the sanest, and the healthiest in body and in spirit. The man was alive in every fibre, and all his work is permeated with the vigor of his intense personality. His long and happy life was comparatively uneventful. Born in London, in 1812, he was educated under the direction of his father and found later in foreign travel his substitute for a university training. There is ample evidence in his work that he was a man of rich learning and of broad culture. Aside from his literary achievements, the most interesting event of Browning's life was his marriage with Elizabeth Barrett. Theirs is one of the most beautiful love stories in all literature, and it was crowned by a happy wedded life of fifteen years, in Florence. The death of Mrs. Browning in 1861 was the great sorrow of his life. After that time, he spent most of his life in England, but died in Venice in 1889.

Robert Browning

Browning seems to have been comparatively unaffected by the great impulses of his age, either in the way of acceptance or of antagonism. It was not that he did not feel these influences — at least in general and unconscious ways; it was rather that he received them as a strong and steady and self-assured personality, not to be easily moved by any forces from his own place or direction. Science did not disturb his soul, and he was perfectly willing to accept all of its established conclusions; but he was also perfectly aware of the questions that it was raising, and met them with an assured faith and optimism. His analytical habit was in entire harmony with the spirit of science, and so was his unhesitating willingness to look all truth in the face. But he received its message as a poet and as a man of faith,

Relation to his Age

and was unshaken either in his poetic ideals or in his religious assurance. While he was not a democrat in any ordinary sense of the term — while he did not speak for human freedom or make himself the mouthpiece of "the people" — he was nevertheless democratic in the broadest sense. Nothing human was alien to him, all men were his spiritual brothers, all personalities appealed to his catholic interest and sympathy. He cared little for actual political conditions, as he cared little for general laws or principles. What he cared for above all was the individual human soul, and in that field his interest was as broad as it was profound. There was probably the real basis of his unshaken faith. If science found in its study of the natural world no evidence of spirit, and felt itself driven toward materialism, Browning, on the other hand, found in his study of human personality full reason to believe in the soul, in God, and in immortality. What others could not find in the physical facts or laws of the universe, he found in the essential nature of man. His faith and optimism, therefore, were the result of no purblind orthodoxy but rather of a reasoned and well-grounded conviction. In this spirit, he spoke with assurance, with earnestness, with exultation, but in no temper of controversy or antagonism. In *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, he expresses himself thus:

> Fool! All that is, at all,
> Lasts ever, past recall;
> Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure.

It is one of the peculiar glories of Browning that he seems, almost from the first, to have caught as by a sort of intuition the spirit and teaching of his own generation, to have accepted its permanent gains, and then to have passed on beyond its doubts and fears to be the prophet of a new day when men should see with vision unclouded by the smoke and dust of conflict.

Browning was, of course, a poet with a message. While

he was primarily a great student and portrayer of life rather than a teacher, he understood well that life teaches and endeavored to interpret its meaning. We may properly speak of his teaching as in some sense a philosophy of life. To touch on all the points involved in that philosophy would be to discuss most of his poetry. We can only attempt to blaze a way through the forest — or, as the dramatic and human quality of Browning's poetry might rather suggest, to push a way through the crowd — indicating some of the main points of his thinking, leaving much to be inferred or imagined.

His Philosophy of Life

Beginning on the lower levels of his thought, Browning was emphatically a poet who dealt with the physical life of man, who felt "the value and significance of flesh." He was a man with all his senses keenly alive. His appreciation of the physical life, however, was something more than mere sensuousness of temperament. It was reasoned doctrine. It was not a physical life of luxurious enjoyment that Browning exalted, but one of strenuous endeavor. In *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, he urges:

The Flesh

> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

Strive, learn, dare — these three words indicate much of Browning's philosophy of life.

Browning was, of course, something vastly more than the poet of the merely physical life, even in its highest and best manifestations. He was also, as Alfred Domett called him, the "Subtlest Assertor of the Soul in Song." He taught that soul and body may be mutually helpful in their union, that the body may serve to "project the soul on its lone way." He taught, on the other hand, that the soul has its own aims and powers, and may, in the development of its higher functions, sometimes find the body a hindrance as well as a help. This and

The Soul

much more is finely expressed in a notable passage from *Paracelsus:*

> Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an inmost centre in us all,
> Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
> Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
> This perfect, clear perception — which is truth.
> A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
> Binds it, and makes all error: and to KNOW
> Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
> Than in effecting entry for a light
> Supposed to be without.

This is not exactly the doctrine of modern realism in art and literature, any more than it is exactly the teaching of modern science. It is at least a splendid poetic conception of man as the possessor of a living soul, out of which are the issues of life. One of Browning's favorite doctrines was that the unloosing of this "imprisoned splendour" is achieved mainly through the contact of the soul with higher personalities, and ultimately with the divine personality. God may influence the soul through nature as well as through human personalities. Sometimes the soul may feel the direct and immediate touch of the divine personality, without any intervention of nature or of other human souls. In any case, here is the soul, with its innate powers, to be elicited by whatever means — not a blank sheet, to be written upon by hands human or divine, but an "imprisoned splendour," to be let loose for a light to men.

Love: Human and Divine

To Browning, the great fact of our merely human life was the fact of man and woman — on the physical side, the fact of sex — on the soul side, the fact of spiritual difference and correspondence. Therefore he magnified and glorified human love. He makes the Gypsy Queen in *The Flight of the Duchess* sing

> How love is the only good in the world.

Even to the unrequited lover, love is good, as he has shown in that magnificent love-song, *The Last Ride Together*. Every reader of Browning knows what passionate intensity he has put into his portrayal of love. *Pippa Passes*, *In a Balcony*, *In a Gondola*, these but afford some of the finest among many illustrations. Not out of his imagination alone did Browning write such love poetry as this. His own being had throbbed with the love that he describes; and dramatic poet as he is, we can hear once and again the lyric voice of his own heart. How exalted was his personal affection, how infinitely more than merely sensuous was his poetic treatment of human love, we may learn from all his poetry. We may learn also that his conception of love has a more than human range. As on the lower levels he saw the great fact of man and woman and exalted human love, so to him the great fact of the spiritual life was God and man, and he exalted spiritual love. God's love to us, our love to Him — this is the foundation and the ultimate reward of all faith. This is especially the great teaching of *Saul* and *A Death in the Desert*, as well as of other poems.

Man and Nature

Browning was first of all the poet of man — of man physical and man spiritual. He was also a poet vitally interested in man's relation to the world around him — primarily, of course, in his relation to the visible world. Here Browning was met by the problems that modern science had raised, and like a true poet, he felt the weight and pressure of those problems. There was no revolt against science, but rather a frank and cordial acceptance of its demonstrated conclusions, with due recognition, however, of scientific limitations and with due protest against its unwarranted assumptions. He perceived the difficulties which science had placed in the way of faith, but here, again, he had no contro-

versy with true science. In *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, he makes the Bishop speak of

> Cosmogony,
> Geology, ethnology, what not
> (Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
> That signifies some faith's about to die).

Not for him, however, was science the passing-bell of faith. He was probably uttering somewhat of his own thought when he made Bishop Blougram say further:

> With me faith means perpetual unbelief
> Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot,
> Who stands firm just because he feels him writhe.

The Spiritual World

Against all doubt, Browning preserved the full assurance that there is a world invisible as well as a world visible — a world supernatural as well as a world natural — and that man is living always in vital relation to both. That God is, and that he is all-beneficent — in this supreme assurance, despite all temptation to believe otherwise, Browning lived and wrote. God is not altogether such as we are, though different minds will shadow forth conceptions of him determined by their own natures and capacities. In *Caliban upon Setebos*, the half beast Caliban sprawls "flat on his belly in the pit's much mire," "kicks both feet in the cool slush," and meditates upon "that other, whom his dam called God." How "heaven-high removed" from his conception is that of David as he sings before the stricken king in *Saul*, or that of the dying apostle in *A Death in the Desert:*

> If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
> Mere man, the first and best but nothing more, —
> Account Him, for reward of what He was,
> Now and forever, wretchedest of all . . .
> Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
> Or lost!

It is the test of death that puts all human theories to the proof. Neither Browning nor we can look beyond it to know what it shall bring; but it is at least significant to know how the great poet contemplated for himself the supreme change. He taught that man is spirit and immortal, that God is and loves, that death is but the doorway to an infinite progress of life beyond. Was his doctrine an actual stay to his own soul? Did he himself face the thought of death "fearless and unperplexed"? Two of his briefer poems help to give us the answer. The first is *Prospice*, written in the noontide of his own life, but just after the death of his wife. The other is the *Epilogue to Asolando.* It is the last poem of his last volume. As he read it over in its first printed form just before his departure, he said: "It almost looks like bragging to say this, and as if I ought to cancel it; but it's the simple truth; and as it's true it shall stand." He looked on the face of death with the same bold and confident spirit that had made him one of the great masters of life.

The Test of Death

Here was a great man, strong and subtle in mind, steadfast and confident in soul. Here was also a great poet, able to bring the resources of the poet's art into the service of a splendid intelligence. To him, more than to most men, poetry was an instrument of truth. As he himself says, in *The Ring and the Book*,

A Dramatic Poet

> Art remains the one way possible
> Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least.

This truth he expresses through an objective and dramatic portrayal of life. He describes his own work as "poetry always dramatic in principle, the utterances of so many imaginary personages, not mine." We seldom hear his own direct voice, but ever the voices of the men and women whom his imagination has created. He portrays

these men and women as they exist here and now. They are bodies, with all the powers and passions and weaknesses of the flesh; they are souls, with all their infinite possibilities of joy or sorrow, of purity or degradation. They are living and acting in the midst of a real and visible world, but they are surrounded by a world invisible and spiritual. To illustrate Browning's portrayal of real men and women in the midst of their actual environment, we have only to open his volume at random and read; for this is the task of all his poetry.

Dramatic Monologue

Browning's favorite art form — a form that he made peculiarly his own — is the dramatic monologue. In principle, it is a type of poem in which the words are uttered by an imaginary speaker, who reveals his character, his attitude, his situation, and perhaps throws some light upon other persons of whom or to whom he speaks. His marvelous insight into the human soul and his no less marvelous power of imaginative conception enable Browning to realize his dramatic purpose with equal subtlety and vividness. There are in reality several different types of dramatic monologue, the distinction between which is important. There are first "Dramatic Lyrics" — like *Old Pictures in Florence*, *Saul*, *Abt Vogler*, and *Rabbi Ben Ezra* — in which the chief stress is laid upon an emotional state, and in which Browning displays a wonderful gift of pure lyric music. Then there are "Dramatic Romances" — like *The Flight of the Duchess*, *In a Gondola*, and *Childe Roland* — in which character is associated with a romantic story. Again, there are "Dramatic Idyls" — like *Pheidippides*, *Ned Bratts*, and *Clive* — in which character is thrown out against the background of a vivid picture. Browning does not always clearly discriminate all these from the dramatic monologue proper — illustrated by *Andrea del Sarto*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, and *Cleon* — but he seems to have had the several types in

mind. In the lyric and the monologue proper, the speaker is more likely to be unfolding himself — his emotional mood or his fuller personality. In the romance and the idyl, he is more likely to be unfolding the character of another.

Browning's great masterpiece is *The Ring and the Book.* It is an immense work, and practically consists of a series of extended dramatic monologues. In the first and last of the twelve books, he sets forth the pathetic story of Pompilia, a Roman girl murdered by her brutal husband, Count Guido. In each of the other ten, the case is reviewed by some more or less interested person, and we are led to see how the same simple facts make their varied impression upon different types of mind. The characters of Guido, Pompilia, Caponsacchi the noble priest, and the good Pope are magnificent creations; and the whole work is a splendid exhibition of imaginative and poetic power.

The Ring and the Book

It remains to be observed that Browning attempted some work in the formal drama. In spite of his great dramatic genius, he was comparatively unsuccessful. His power lay rather in illustrating critical moments in the history of an individual soul than in setting a picture of active life upon the stage. He was psychological and inward in his dealings with character, and showed too little the effective deeds of men. The abstruseness of his thought and the difficulties of his style were not favorable to stage presentation. In spite of these and other drawbacks, however, some of his dramas are in their way most striking productions. There, as always, he is the profound revealer of man's inner life. Probably his most effective play on the stage is *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, but *Strafford* has also been fairly successful. One of his finest masterpieces, *Pippa Passes*, is hardly to be called a drama at all. It lies rather between the true

His Dramas

drama and the monologue. One of his earliest works, it still remains one of the most beautiful and perfect. Not even in portraying the little silk-winding girl, whose simple life unconsciously touches those of the four greatest and supposedly happiest souls in her native Asolo, can Browning hold himself quite aloof from his creation ; but if he is not quite the perfect dramatist, forgetting himself in the beings he has made, he is at least the subtle interpreter of life and the soul.

Alfred Tennyson

Alfred Tennyson, the son of a cultured country clergyman, was born in 1809, at Somersby, in Lincolnshire. All his surroundings tended to develop in him the love for nature, the spirit of conservatism, and the refined culture which were so strongly marked in his character. His poetical career began while he was a member of Trinity College, Cambridge, and here, too, he formed some of the great friendships of his life. Closest of all to his heart was Arthur Henry Hallam, with whom he was a member of a famous group known as "the twelve apostles." Hallam's death in 1833 plunged him into profound sorrow, and led to the writing of his great masterpiece, *In Memoriam*. This poem was published in 1850, and the same year is marked by his marriage and by his appointment as poet-laureate. Tennyson's long life was lived in poetic seclusion. This was due partly to his temperament and partly to his conviction that the poet should watch the spectacle of life from his calm height with sympathetic interest, but should not engage in its activities. Until his death in 1892, he wrought out calmly and strongly his self-appointed tasks, unswerved by praise or blame. Fame came to him in ample measure, but better than fame was his ever widening influence for good in literature and in life. His elevation to the peerage, in 1884, with the title of Baron of Aldworth and Farringford, was a recognition of his unique place among the poets of his generation.

Tennyson, if not absolutely the greatest, was at least the most representative poet of his age. He was sensitive to all its influences, reflected all its movements, and felt a poet's sympathy with the various phases of its life. He may be said to have walked shoulder to shoulder with his time, in the first rank, but hardly a step before or a step behind. His art recognized and accepted the scientific method, and not a little of his noblest imagery and of his deepest thought was drawn from scientific sources. Above all, he accepted the scientific doctrine of evolution, and helped to reconcile that doctrine with spiritual faith. He felt and voiced the prevailing doubt and sadness of his generation. The struggle in his soul was long and bitter. His nature would not allow him the easy victory and the confident faith of Browning, but neither was he left to the cold and stoical resignation of Arnold. He was able at last to say:

Tennyson and his Age

Not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with death.

The problems most interesting to him were those which concern the development and destiny of mankind. His poetry expresses the abiding faith of man, unconquerable by temporary doubts and fears. Tennyson was also in sympathy with what is best in modern democracy, although he felt its dangers and shrank from its excesses. His artistic sympathy is displayed in his various portrayals of lowly characters and humble life, from *Enoch Arden* to *The Northern Farmer*. The democratic sympathy of the man is equally apparent. He loved England because it is

The land, where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will; . . .
Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.

"The red fool-fury of the Seine," "the blind hysterics of

the Celt," was repellent to his nature. The freedom that he loved was a democratic freedom; but it was "freedom in her regal seat of England," freedom regulated by law. In still other ways, he was thoroughly representative both of his age and his country. He was typical of the culture, the refinement, and the intellectual freedom of his time. His patriotism, his conservatism, his love of liberty, were in harmony with the underlying sentiment of the England of Victoria. More than any other English poet, he had an instinctive perception of the essential character of the age. More than any other, he was fitted to express its manifold life and thought.

Tennyson and Browning

Tennyson's poetic genius may best be defined and illustrated by comparison with that of Browning. They stand at opposite poles of poetry and of life. If we should attempt to condense this contrast into briefest terms, we might characterize the two as respectively artist and thinker. These words do not tell us everything; but they suggest what is central in each. Browning has much of the artist's temperament and skill; but above all other things, he is a thinker expressing truth in imaginative forms. Tennyson is gifted with a master's strength and fineness of thought; but he is preëminently an artist in language. This fundamental difference between the two men appears at every point and manifests itself in a great variety of ways.

Sense of Beauty

Tennyson was essentially a poetic artist. This means, first of all, that he was endowed with that exquisite sense of beauty which lies at the very heart of the poet's nature. With his own *Lotos-Eaters*, he can feel the seductive charm of that enchanted land

> In which it seemèd always afternoon.

He confesses to us that he is one

> Whose spirits falter in the mist,
> And languish for the purple seas.

Yet this sense of beauty in him is exalted by the spirit of an intense and lofty ideality. He is thrilled by the beauty of that immortal courage which sent the Light Brigade "into the mouth of Hell" at Balaklava. He feels through all his soul the beauty of Arthur's royal manhood and of Galahad's stainless chivalry. He adds a whiteness to the virgin snow in his picture of St. Agnes, the bride of Christ, who cries:

> Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
> Thro' all yon starlight keen,
> Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
> In raiment white and clean.

Imagination

Tennyson possessed also in fulness of measure that other essential gift of the poet — imagination. The clearness and picturesqueness of his conceptions is beyond praise. They are as lucid as the morning, as distinct and vivid as noonday shadows. Yet withal, this imagination can carry us out into the realms of spiritual suggestion which lie beyond all earthly images. What could be at once more powerful, more vivid, and more suggestive than such words as these:

> A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand;
> Left on the shore; that hears all night
> The plunging seas draw backward from the land
> Their moon-led waters white.

He possessed also that breadth of imagination which some have been inclined to deny him. Surely there is range between *The Miller's Daughter* and *The Lady of Shalott*, between *Enoch Arden* and *The Idylls of the King*.

Emotion

It has been sometimes said that he is lacking in the poet's passion. Yet surely this, too, is a mistake. He has not the vehement emotion of a Byron or a Burns; his is rather the full, deep stream of Wordsworth which flows with none the less power because it is broad and still. That he is a master of pathos, who

can doubt that has read *Guinevere* or *Enoch Arden* or *In Memoriam?* That he is full of manly vigor and of patriotic fervor, we may feel in his war-songs, in the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, and in his ballad of *The Revenge*. That he can portray the passion of love, is manifest beyond all question in *The Princess* and *Maud*. The latter rises even to that vehement intensity so impressive to the common mind. Its opening line strikes the passion note of the poem:

> I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood

Still other and stranger notes are struck in such poems as *The Two Voices* and *Rizpah*. Yes, he is a poet whose passion has fulness, depth, range, and at times intensity. What to some critics seems like a limitation, but what to the great sound heart of humanity will always seem a part of his highest glory, is the fact that the whole strength of his emotion is directed toward the good and true and against the false and base. Poetry to him was no mere toy or luxury, but one of the great forces of life. It has its immortal delight, but it has also its eternal duty. Both sides of his conception appear in his own description of the poet's character and mission:

> The poet in a golden clime was born,
> With golden stars above;
> Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love.

Perfect Art

It is difficult to speak in measured terms of Tennyson as a master of form. In nearly all his work there is a most exquisite perception of the harmony between thought and language. He had a wonderful ear for the music of verse, a wonderful eye for artistic effects of form and color. Hardly any poet is his superior in ease and versatility of style. Not alone in details was he a perfect master of his art; he possessed also that

fine sense of unity and proportion which can build up great and elaborate masterpieces. Tennyson was a poet born; but he was also a poet made. No man ever set himself more deliberately and persistently to self-culture in the technique of poetic art. He made himself so perfect a craftsman that, when his passion began to grow and his experience of life to deepen, he uttered his thought and his emotion with the voice of a trained singer. So flawless is his work, even when he is most profoundly stirred, that in any other man such perfection would have savored of affectation and insincerity. The evidences of this perfect art are everywhere in his poetry — almost in every line that he has written. Who can forget the enchanted music of *The Lady of Shalott* or the luxurious cadences of *The Lotos-Eaters?* The songs of *The Princess* ring in our ears with echoes as from

> The horns of Elfland faintly blowing.

Now it is the song of *The Brook:*

> I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
> Among my skimming swallows;
> I make the netted sunbeam dance
> Against my sandy shallows.
>
> I murmur under moon and stars
> In brambly wildernesses;
> I linger by my shingly bars;
> I loiter round my cresses.

Now it is the sublime lamentation for Wellington:

> Bury the Great Duke
> With an empire's lamentation,
> Let us bury the Great Duke
> To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation.

Now it is the melodious cry of *In Memoriam;* and now the description of that "last weird battle in the west" where Arthur falls with all his chivalry:

> So all day long the noise of battle rolled
> Among the mountains by the winter sea.

The Idylls of the King remind us that Tennyson was a romantic poet; but he was not forgetful of real life, as we may see in *Dora* and *The Miller's Daughter* and in many another poem. We are reminded also that his genius was largely idyllic — that it delighted in the purely picturesque. His lyric poetry is not less perfect; and it is perhaps in some of his shorter lyrics that we find the distilled essence of his poetic genius. In the drama he displays great powers and great limitations. We may be sure that his best work does not lie there; for neither he nor his age possessed in large measure the dramatic spirit. If he had given us only his dramas, we might cherish them as among our dearest treasures; but he has elsewhere given us what is better still. Tennyson's poetic interest was divided between nature and humanity. He was not exclusively the poet of one or the other. What is more typical of him is that he was everywhere the poet of culture and morality. No poetry is more truly refined; no poetry makes more for essential righteousness. And what a devotion to his art and to all that it implies. He takes himself seriously as a poet, if ever a man did; he lives the part to perfection. We shall not easily discover him "without his singing robes and garland on." He dies with his finger between the pages of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* at the song ending with words that might have been his own epitaph:

Range of Genius

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

Much of Tennyson's poetry stands simply for his enthusiastic interest in his poetic art and illustrates his conception of the significance of that art. Many of his earliest poems are simply exquisitely beautiful poetical exercises, without other significance than their melody and sensuous charm. Others, like *The Poet* and *The Poet's Mind*, show his sense of the poet's place

His Art Poetry

and mission. *The Lady of Shalott* symbolizes allegorically the artist's aloofness from the world, taking no part in its activities, but reflecting it with loving sympathy in the magic mirror of the imagination and weaving the vision into the magic web of poetry. *The Palace of Art* shows the curse that falls on the beauty-loving soul that cuts itself off utterly from its kind and shuts itself up to its own selfish enjoyment. Such poems are symbolical of one side of Tennyson's nature. Their spirit does not die out of his poetry, even to the end, but his genius becomes ever deeper and broader.

Broadening Range

Somewhat akin to such works as these, at least in their inspiration, are his poems on classical themes — finely conceived and wonderfully executed specimens of poetic workmanship. *Œnone*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Lucretius*, *Tithonus*, are all admirable in their diverse ways; but his masterpiece in this kind is *Ulysses*. Chaste in style, felicitous in expression, noble in conception, it takes rank among his most perfect works. Strongly contrasted with this classical taste, and serving to illustrate the poet's increasing breadth, are his poems dealing with common English life. Among the earliest of these are *The Miller's Daughter* and *Dora*. The finest example of all is his famous and popular *Enoch Arden*. Later came his interesting dialect studies, like *The Northern Farmer* and *The Northern Cobbler*. These indicate an interest in common life and also a patriotic spirit which is still further illustrated by specifically patriotic poems like *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, *The Revenge*, and the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*. Other phases of his genius must be illustrated by some of his longer poems and by the poems written toward the close of his life.

The Princess is a fanciful poem which Tennyson properly called a medley. It deals with the modern woman question under the guise of a fantastic story about the found-

ing of a woman's college and the breaking up of the scheme through certain love intrigues. The poem is not altogether a successful achievement, although it is filled with beautiful music and imagery and interspersed with some of his most exquisite lyrics. It is interesting as showing Tennyson's growing disposition to consider the serious problems of his time. Somewhat the same may be said of *Maud*, one of the most peculiar of his poems. It is a poem of passionate love, madness, and despair, gloomy but splendid. Its finer quality is marred by a tone of almost pessimistic satire against the baser spirit of the age.

The Princess and Maud

In Memoriam is a great elegy, inspired by the early death of Tennyson's intimate and beloved friend Arthur Hallam. Simply in its character as an elegy, it is a marvelous poem, passionate with a heart-breaking sorrow, and rich with all the powers of expression of a great poet. It is vastly more, however, than a simple elegy; it is the great poetic record of Tennyson's spiritual struggle with the demons of doubt and despair. Through a long series of lyrics bound together by their association with the one central theme, we may trace the various phases of the poet's personal grief and witness his grapple with the sternest problems of human existence. The real theme of the poem is the immortality of the soul; and the poet's final victory is based on the passionate conviction that such a love as his is and must be immortal. If the pure reason can give him no satisfaction, he hears at least the answer of the heart.

In Memoriam

> If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
> I heard a voice "believe no more"
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,

And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd "I have felt."

He concludes his "high argument" with an expression of faith in

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

Idylls of the King

In the *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson deals as a true romantic poet with the great matter of the Arthurian legends, so often handled in English literature, but never more beautifully than here. The "Idylls" are a series of twelve picturesque narratives, written independently at different times in Tennyson's career and later combined into a single great work. In his hands, the old mediæval legends are modernized into a great spiritual parable. We see Arthur, the noble guide and leader of men, coming to his kingdom; we see that kingdom growing in beauty and power under his mild and wise sway; we see everything brought to moral ruin by the sin of Lancelot and Guinevere; we see Arthur finally overthrown in his "last weird battle in the west" and passing to his place among the dead. It is the failure of spiritual dominion in a world too gross for such high ideals. The meaning of the great and beautiful poem cannot be better expressed than in Tennyson's own words, when he calls it

This old imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul.

Latest Work

In his later life, Tennyson, while never ceasing to be the true and finished artist, showed a disposition to draw still closer to real life and to its profounder problems. He wrote his great dramas, beginning with *Queen Mary*, and including such noble works as *Harold* and *Becket*. While they were not altogether successful as acting plays, they are finely poetical and show genuine

insight into life and character. Some of his later poems are rather gloomy in tone, impressing us with a sense of failure and disillusion concerning the great movements of the age and concerning human progress. Yet toward the last comes a high and serene mood of faith in that supreme power which is guiding "the whole creation" toward the "one far-off divine event," and which holds all individual souls in the hollow of his hand. In *The Making of Man*, he says:

> Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages,
> Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?

In *Faith*, he cries:

> Doubt no longer that the Highest is the wisest and the best.

In *The Silent Voices*, he sings:

> Call me rather, silent voices,
> Forward to the starry track
> Glimmering up the heights beyond me
> On, and always on!

Crossing the Bar, one of the most beautiful poems that he ever wrote, closes with this splendid expression of personal faith and courage:

> For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
>   The flood may bear me far,
> I hope to see my Pilot face to face
>   When I have crost the bar.

Such words are fitting close to the brief record of a great career, of a great century, and of a great literature.

APPENDIX

ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD (449-1066)

Period	Authors		Poetry	Prose
Pagan Poetry 449-670			Charms (portions) Widsið Lament of Deor Fight at Finnsburg Waldhere Beowulf	
Christian Poetry 670-871	**Cædmon**	c. 670–680	Hymn, etc. See text, pp. 16–19 Cædmonian Paraphrase	
	Bede	672–735	Death Song Judith, etc. Ruthwell Cross inscription Elegies. See text, p. 21	Ecclesiastical History (in Latin)
	Cynewulf	c. 750–c. 800	Elene, etc. See text, pp. 22, 23 Andreas, The Phœnix, Dream of the Rood, etc. Other poems in Exeter and Vercelli Books	
Prose Period 871-1066	**Alfred**	848–901	Battle of Brunanburh (937) Battle of Maldon (991)	Translations of Gregory, Bede, Boethius, and Orosius Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. See text, pp. 29, 30 and 33, 34 Blickling Homilies (c. 971)
	Ælfric	c. 955–c. 1025		Homilies, Lives of the Saints, etc.
	Wulfstan	d. 1023		Homilies Apollonius of Tyre Later Chronicle (to 1154)

MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD (1066–1500)

	AUTHORS		POETRY	PROSE
Anglo-Norman Period 1066-1360			Poema Morale (before 1200)	Later A. S. Chronicle (ends 1154)
	Layamon		Brut (c. 1205)	
	Orm		Ormulum (c. 1215)	
			Genesis and Exodus; Bestiary	Homilies and Lives of the Saints
			Owl and Nightingale; Lyric Poems	Ancren Riwle (c. 1225)
			Sir Tristrem, Havelok the Dane, King Horn, etc.	
	Robert of Gloucester		Chronicle (c. 1298)	
			Cycles of Romance	
			Bevis of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, etc.	
	Robert Manning		Handlynge Synne (1303)	
			Cursor Mundi (c. 1325)	
	Richard Rolle		Pricke of Conscience (c. 1335)	Religious writings
	Dan Michel			Ayenbite of Inwit
	Laurence Minot		Political Lyrics (1333–1352)	
			Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight	Mandeville's Travels
			The Pearl, Cleanness, Patience	
Age of Chaucer 1360-1400	John Wyclif	1324–1384		Translation of Bible, Sermons, etc.
	Wm. Langland	c. 1332–c. 1400	Vision of Piers the Plowman	
	John Gower	c. 1330–1408	Confessio Amantis, etc.	
	Geoffrey Chaucer	c. 1340–1400	Canterbury Tales, etc.	
Fifteenth Century 1400-1500	Thomas Occleve	c. 1365–c. 1454	Gouvernail of Princes, etc.	
	John Lydgate	c. 1370–c. 1440	Falles of Princes, etc.	
	James I of Scotland	1394–1437	The King's Quair	
	Robert Henryson		Fables, etc.	
	William Dunbar		Thistle and the Rose, etc.	
	Gawain Douglas	c. 1474–c. 1522	Palice of Honour, Æneid, etc.	
	Sir Thomas Malory			Morte d'Arthur (c. 1470)
			Ballads	
			Mysteries, Miracle Plays, Moralities	

PERIOD OF RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION (1500–1660)

	AUTHORS		POETRY	PROSE	DRAMA
Early Renaissance 1500–1579					Moralities, Interludes
	John Skelton	c. 1460–1529	Bowge of Court, etc.		Magnyfycence
	Thomas More	1478–1535		Utopia (Latin), etc.	
	Wm. Tyndale	c. 1484–1536		Bible Translation	
	Miles Coverdale	1488–1568		" "	
	David Lyndesay	c. 1490–1555	The Dreme, etc.		Satire of the Three Estates
	John Heywood	c. 1500–1565			The Four P's, etc.
	Nicholas Udall	1506–1564			Ralph Roister Doister
	Hugh Latimer	1491–1555		Sermons	
	Thomas Wyatt	1503–1542	Songs and Sonnets, Satires		
	Henry Howard	c. 1517–1547	Songs and Sonnets, Virgil		
			Tottel's Miscellany (1557)	Prayer Book (1547–1553)	
	Roger Ascham	1515–1568		The Schoolmaster	
	George Gascoigne	1525–1577	The Steele Glas		
	Thomas Sackville	1536–1608	Mirror for Magistrates		Gorboduc (1561)
			Elizabethan Miscellanies	Chronicles and Discoveries	Gammer Gurton's Needle (1566)
			Translations	Translations	
				Religious Writings	
Age of Shakespeare 1579–1625	**Philip Sidney**	1554–1586	Astrophel and Stella	Arcadia, Defense of Poesy	
	Edmund Spenser	1552–1599	Faerie Queene, etc.		
	John Lyly	1553–1600	Songs	Euphues, etc.	Endymion, etc.
	Richard Hooker	1554–1600		Ecclesiastical Polity	
	Thomas Lodge	1558–1625	Phillis, Lyrics	Rosalind	Marius and Sylla
	George Peele	c. 1558–1598			David and Bethsabe
	Robert Greene	c. 1560–1592			Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay
	Christ. Marlowe	1564–1593	Hero and Leander, etc.		Faustus, Jew of Malta, etc.
	Samuel Daniel	1562–1619	The Civil Wars, etc.		
	Michael Drayton	c. 1563–1631	Polyolbion, etc.		
	Wm. Shakespeare	1564–1616	Poems and Sonnets		Dramas
	Ben Jonson	1573–1637	Poems	Timber	The Alchemist, Masques
	Beaumont	c. 1585–1613			Philaster, etc.
	and Fletcher	1579–1625			

Age	Author	Dates	Poetry	Prose	Drama
Age of Shakespeare (Continued) 1579–1625	Geo. Chapman	c. 1557–1634	Poems, Homer		Bussy d'Ambois, etc.
	John Marston	c. 1575–1634	Satires		The Malcontent, etc.
	Thos. Dekker	c. 1570–c. 1641			Old Fortunatus, etc.
	Thos. Heywood	c. 1581–c. 1640			A Woman Killed with Kindness, etc.
	Thos. Middleton	1570–1627			The Changeling, etc.
	John Webster	? – ?			Duchess of Malfi, etc.
	Walter Raleigh	1552–1618	Poems	History of the World, etc.	
	John Donne	1573–1631	Poems and Satires		
	Francis Bacon	1561–1626		Essays, etc.	
	Wm. Browne	1590–1645	Britannia's Pastorals, etc.		
	George Wither	1588–1667	Shepherd's Hunting, etc.		
	Wm. Drummond	1585–1649	Poems and Sonnets		
	Robert Burton	1576–1640		Anatomy of Melancholy	
				"Authorized Version" of Bible	
Age of Milton 1625–1660	Philip Massinger	1584–1640			A New Way to Pay Old Debts, etc.
	John Ford	1586–c. 1640			The Broken Heart, etc.
	George Herbert	1593–1633	The Temple, etc.		
	Thomas Carew	1598–1639	Poems		
	John Suckling	1609–1641	Poems		Aglaura
	Richard Crashaw	c. 1613–1650	Poems		
	Richard Lovelace	1618–1658	Poems		
	Robert Herrick	1591–1674	Hesperides, etc.		
	Jeremy Taylor	1613–1667		Holy Living, etc.	
	Thomas Fuller	1608–1661		Worthies of England, etc.	
	Thomas Browne	1605–1682		Religio Medici, etc.	
	Abraham Cowley	1618–1667	Poems	Essays	
	John Milton	1608–1674	Paradise Lost, etc.	Areopagitica, etc.	Comus, Samson Agonistes
	Izaak Walton	1593–1683		Complete Angler, etc.	
	Henry Vaughan	1622–1695	Poems		
	Edmund Waller	1605–1687	Poems		

PERIOD OF CLASSICISM (1660–1780)

	AUTHORS		POETRY	PROSE	DRAMA AND NOVEL
Age of Dryden 1660–1700	John Bunyan	1628–1688		Pilgrim's Progress, etc.	
	Andrew Marvell	1621–1678	Poems and Satires		
	Samuel Butler	1612–1680	Hudibras		
	Wm. Temple	1628–1699		Essays	
	John Dryden	1631–1700	Satires, Lyrics, etc.	Essays	All for Love, etc.
	Thomas Otway	1652–1685			Venice Preserved, etc.
	Wm. Wycherley	1640–1715			The Plain-Dealer, etc.
	John Vanbrugh c.	1666–1726			The Confederacy, etc.
	Wm. Congreve	1670–1729			Love for Love, etc.
	Geo. Farquhar	1678–1707			The Beaux' Stratagem, etc.
Age of Pope 1700–1740	Jonathan Swift	1667–1745	Poems	Gulliver's Travels, etc.	
	Joseph Addison	1672–1719	The Campaign, etc.	Periodical Essays	Cato, etc.
	Richard Steele	1675–1729		Periodical Essays	The Conscious Lovers, etc.
	Daniel Defoe	1661–1731		Robinson Crusoe, etc.	
	Matthew Prior	1664–1721	Poems		
	John Gay	1688–1732	Poems		
	Alexander Pope	1688–1744	Satires, Poems		
Age of Johnson 1740–1780	James Thomson	1700–1748	The Seasons, etc.		
	Edward Young	1681–1765	Night Thoughts		
	Sam. Richardson	1689–1761			Pamela, etc.
	Henry Fielding	1707–1754			Tom Jones, etc.
	Wm. Collins	1721–1759	Poems		
	Thomas Gray	1716–1771	Elegy, Odes, etc.	Journals, Letters, etc.	
	Thos. Chatterton	1752–1770	Poems, etc.		
	Laurence Sterne	1713–1768		Sentimental Journey, etc.	Tristram Shandy
	Tobias Smollett	1721–1771			Humphrey Clinker, etc.
	Oliver Goldsmith	1728–1774	Deserted Village, etc.	Essays, etc.	Vicar of Wakefield
	Samuel Johnson	1709–1784	Vanity of Human Wishes, [etc.	Lives of the Poets, etc.	Rasselas
	David Hume	1711–1776		History of England, etc.	
	Edward Gibbon	1737–1794		Roman Empire, etc.	
	Edmund Burke	1729–1797		Speeches, etc.	
	R. B. Sheridan	1751–1816			School for Scandal, etc.

PERIOD OF INDIVIDUALISM (1780–1832)

	AUTHORS		POETRY AND DRAMA	PROSE	THE NOVEL
AGE OF BURNS 1780–1800	Fanny Burney	1752–1840			Cecilia, etc.
	Wm. Cowper	1731–1800	The Task, etc.	Letters	
	George Crabbe	1754–1832	The Village, etc.		
	Wm. Beckford	1759–1844			Vathek
	Wm. Blake	1757–1827	Poems		
	Robert Burns	1759–1796	Poems	Letters	
	Ann Radcliffe	1764–1823			Mysteries of Udolpho, etc.
	Wm. Godwin	1756–1836		Political Justice	Caleb Williams, etc.
	M. G. Lewis	1775–1818			The Monk, etc.
AGE OF WORDSWORTH 1800–1832	Wm. Wordsworth	1770–1850	Intimations of Immortality,	Prefaces, etc.	
	S. T. Coleridge	1772–1834	Ancient Mariner, etc. [etc.	Biographia Literaria, etc.	
	Walter Scott	1771–1832	Marmion, etc.	Life of Napoleon, etc.	Waverley Novels
	Jane Austen	1775–1817			Pride and Prejudice, etc.
	Robert Southey	1774–1843	Thalaba, etc.	Life of Nelson, etc.	
	James Hogg	1770–1835	Poems		
	Charles Lamb	1775–1834	Poems	Essays of Elia, etc.	
	Lord Byron	1788–1824	Childe Harold, etc.		
	Thos. Campbell	1777–1844	Pleasures of Hope, etc.		
	Thomas Moore	1779–1852	Irish Melodies, etc.	Life of Byron, etc.	
	P. B. Shelley	1792–1822	Prometheus Unbound, etc.	Essays, Letters, etc.	
	John Keats	1795–1821	Eve of St. Agnes, etc.	Letters	
	Leigh Hunt	1784–1859	Poems	Essays	
	W. S. Landor	1775–1864	Hellenics, etc.	Imaginary Conversations,	
	Thos. De Quincey	1785–1859		Opium-Eater, etc. [etc.	
	Wm. Hazlitt	1778–1830		Lectures, Essays, etc.	
	Sydney Smith	1771–1845		Essays, etc.	
	Francis Jeffrey	1773–1850		Edinburgh Review	
	John Wilson	1785–1854		Noctes Ambrosianæ, etc.	
	J. G. Lockhart	1794–1854		Life of Scott, etc.	
	J. S. Knowles	1794–1862	Virginius, etc.		
	B. W. Procter	1787–1874	English Songs, etc.		

AGE OF TENNYSON (1832–1892)

AUTHORS		POETRY AND DRAMA	PROSE	THE NOVEL
Thomas Hood	1798–1845	Song of the Shirt, etc.	Whims and Oddities, etc.	
John Keble	1792–1866	The Christian Year, etc.	Sermons, etc.	
T. B. Macaulay	1800–1859	Lays of Ancient Rome, etc.	Essays, etc.	
Charlotte Brontë	1816–1855			Jane Eyre, etc.
Edward Bulwer-Lytton	1805–1873	Richelieu, etc.		Last Days of Pompeii, etc.
Thomas Carlyle	1795–1881		Sartor Resartus, etc.	
Elizabeth B. Browning	1809–1861	Sonnets from Portuguese, etc.		
Benj. Disraeli	1804–1881			Coningsby, etc.
J. H. Newman	1801–1890	Poems	Apologia pro Vita Sua, etc.	Callista
Charles Dickens	1812–1870			David Copperfield, etc.
W. M. Thackeray	1811–1863	Poems	Book of Snobs, etc.	Henry Esmond, etc.
A. H. Clough	1819–1861	Poems		
Charles Kingsley	1819–1875	Poems		Westward Ho! etc.
Anthony Trollope	1815–1882			Barchester Towers, etc.
Charles Reade	1814–1884			Cloister and the Hearth, etc.
George Eliot	1820–1881	Spanish Gypsy, etc.	Essays, etc.	Adam Bede, etc.
Robert Browning	1812–1889	Ring and the Book, etc.		
Alfred Tennyson	1809–1892	In Memoriam, etc.		
Matthew Arnold	1822–1888	Thyrsis, etc.	Essays in Criticism, etc.	
John Ruskin	1819–1899		Modern Painters, etc.	
Wilkie Collins	1824–1889			The Moonstone, etc.
D. G. Rossetti	1828–1882	The Blessed Damozel, etc.		
Christina Rossetti	1830–1894	Goblin Market, etc.		
William Morris	1834–1896	The Earthly Paradise, etc.	House of the Wolfings, etc.	
R. D. Blackmore	1825–1900			Lorna Doone, etc.
Walter Pater	1839–1894		Appreciations, etc.	
R. L. Stevenson	1845–1894	Poems	Essays	Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, etc.
Edwin Arnold	1832–1904	Light of Asia, etc.		
George Meredith	1828–	Poems		The Egoist, etc.
A. C. Swinburne	1837–	Atalanta in Calydon, etc.	Essays, etc.	
Rudyard Kipling	1865–	The Recessional, etc.	Jungle Books, etc.	Kim, etc.

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Critical annotated texts of a great variety of works are provided by many publishers. Among the most important series are the Belles Lettres Series (Heath & Co.), the Athenæum Press Series (Ginn & Co.), and the Temple Editions (Dent).

AIDS TO STUDY

THE student should make it perfectly clear to himself that the great matter of importance in the study of literature is a first-hand knowledge of the literary works themselves. These he should read, and make his own judgments upon them. Afterward he should seek to enlarge and correct those judgments by comparing them with the opinions of competent critics. This book does not aim to take the place of either the literature or the criticism, but rather to serve as the student's guide to both.

English literature is vitally associated with English history. Neither can be properly understood without the other. The literary student should therefore obtain at least a general knowledge of historical events and conditions in each period from such works as those mentioned in the Reading and Study List.

Chapter I. — Anglo-Saxon Pagan Poetry (449–670).

The most important poem is *Beowulf.* At least the most striking passages should be read, and the whole poem will be found interesting. Good translations are those of Earle, of Morris and Wyatt, of Child, and of Tinker, in prose, and those of Garnett and of Hall, in verse. Garnett's and Hall's editions also contain a translation of the *Fight at Finnsburg.* *Widsið* is translated in full in Morley's *English Writers* and in Gollancz's *Exeter Book.* The *Lament of Deor* is given in Brooke's *Early English Literature.* For further selections, including passages from the *Charms,* see Brooke and Morley.

Practically all of the poems mentioned in this and the next two sections are translated in Cook and Tinker's *Translations from Old English Poetry.* It is the best single volume for the student, and contains nearly all that he is likely to need.

Originals of practically the whole body of Anglo-Saxon poetry are to be found in the Wülcker-Grein *Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Poesie.* There are also various separate editions of the more important poems. A knowledge of the language may be

obtained from such works as Bright's and Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Readers* and Cook's *First Book in Old English;* these also contain interesting texts.

The history of this period is mainly concerned with the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain; the gradual conquest of the larger portion of the island; the extermination of the Britons or their retreat into Scotland, the Lake Region, Wales, Cornwall, and Ireland; the settlement of the Anglo-Saxons in their new home; the establishment of a number of petty kingdoms; the advent of Christianity and the struggle of paganism against the new religion. The character and significance of these events should be learned from some standard history, together with the main facts concerning the pagan religious beliefs and the social life of the Anglo-Saxons.

In what ways is this poetry affected by the religious conceptions and feelings of the race? What traits of character and what ideals of life does this poetry reveal? What light does this poetry throw on the position of the *scop* and the conditions under which poetry was created? Give an outline of the narrative of *Beowulf*. What qualities of substance or of style make *Beowulf* superior as literature to all other Anglo-Saxon poems? Explain the principles of alliteration and accent on which Anglo-Saxon metre is based, and note how Anglo-Saxon differs from modern English verse.

Chapter II. — Anglo-Saxon Christian Poetry (670–871).

Cædmon's *Hymn* is given in King Alfred's West-Saxon version in MacLean's *Old and Middle English Reader* and Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*. This version may be interestingly compared with the original Northumbrian form and the modern translation given in this book. Many of the best passages from the Cædmonian Paraphrase, from Cynewulf, and from the other poetry of this period, are translated in Morley and Brooke. Cook's *Judith* gives the complete original and translation of that interesting poem. The *Wanderer*, the *Seafarer*, and the *Dream of the Rood* are translated in Brooke, and the first two also in Morley. Cynewulf's *Elene*, together with *Judith* and the later *Battle of Brunanburh* and *Battle of Maldon*, are translated in a single volume by Garnett. Whitman's Cynewulf's *Crist* is a good prose translation. *Crist*, *Phœnix*, and *Andreas* are translated, with other poems, in Gollancz's *Exeter Book*. *Judith*, the *Wanderer*, the *Seafarer*, the *Dream of the Rood*, *Elene*, and *Phœnix* are to be especially

recommended for reading. The student should not neglect to get a conception of the Cædmonian Paraphrase through selected passages.

See Cook and Tinker, as above.

The history of this period is one of fierce struggles, but of gradual development in two important directions. Historical authorities should be consulted for the growth of Christianity and the establishment of an English church, for the terrible invasions of the Danes, and for the consolidation of the scattered kingdoms into something like an English nationality. A united church and a united nation were largely due to the stress of conflict against a common foe.

In what respects does the Christian poetry resemble the pagan poetry, and in what respects does it differ? To what extent does the poetry of this period show the direct influence of Christianity? Why was not the literary triumph of Christianity more complete and speedy? What is the character of the Cædmonian Paraphrase, and what is its probable relation to Cædmon? What was the range and character of Cynewulf's work? Give an outline of Cynewulf's *Elene*. In what dialect were most of the poems of this period written, in what dialect have they been preserved, and to what causes is this state of affairs due?

Chapter III. — Anglo-Saxon Prose Period (871–1066).

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Alfred's *Boethius* and *Orosius*, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* are translated in Bohn's Antiquarian Library. Bede's account of Cædmon may be found in Chapter XXIV. An interesting passage of the *Orosius* is Alfred's original narrative of the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan. This passage is given by Morley; and both in Morley and in Brooke's *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest* may be found Alfred's most interesting preface to his translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*. Important passages from the *Chronicle* are the entries for the years 871, 878, 893–897, 958, 975, and 1137. The *Battle of Brunanburh* and the *Battle of Maldon* are translated by Garnett — the former also by Tennyson. For these poems, see Cook and Tinker, as above.

The struggle with the invading Danes continued, but English nationality and Christianity were saved and strengthened by Alfred. Under his successors, the kingdom was extended until,

after the defeat of the heathen forces at the battle of Brunanburh in 937, Æthelstan "became immediate king of all the Teutonic races in Britain, and superior lord of all the Celtic principalities" (Freeman). Toward the close of the tenth century, Danish inroads began anew, and continued with such success that, from 1016 to 1042, Danish kings sat on the throne of England. After a quarter of a century of native rule came the Norman Conquest in 1066. These events brought with them social and religious changes which it is important for the student of literature to understand. The Norman Conquest is one of the great turning points of English history, and marks the close of the Anglo-Saxon period.

In what ways was literature affected by historical movements during the prose period? What was the relative position of prose and poetry in this period? Why is the prose inferior as literature? What was the character and extent of King Alfred's contributions to literature? What is there in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that is valuable as literature or as history? Give a brief account of the contents of the *Battle of Brunanburh*, and show its relation to historical movements. What sort of literature did Ælfric write, and what are the merits of his prose style?

Chapter IV. — The Anglo-Norman Period (1066–1360).

Layamon's *Brut* has been edited and translated by Madden. The romantic literature may be studied in Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* and in Morley's *Early English Prose Romances.* Morley's *English Writers* gives an outline of the *Brut* and of *Havelok the Dane.* Many prose and verse texts may be found in Morris and Skeat's *Specimens of Early English.* An interesting edition of *Mandeville's Travels*, with facsimiles of the curious original illustrations, is that of John Ashton. Brief selections may be found in Craik's *English Prose.* The text of *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight* has been edited for the Early English Text Society. Gollancz has edited *The Pearl* with a translation. A good idea of the changes in the language may be obtained from Lounsbury or Emerson.

The historical movements of the period are too many and too complicated for brief and comprehensive statement. Some of the most important matters that call for consideration are the growth of feudalism, the rise of chivalry and the prosecution of

the Crusades, the strife between king and baronage, the foundation of universities, the struggle between ecclesiastical and civil power, the spread of the monastic orders, the development of Parliament and constitution, the civil and foreign wars, the growth of towns and industries. The important historical results are the union of the two races, the mingling of the two tongues, and the development of a new English nationality. At the close of the period, England is at last ready for the beginnings of a great national literature.

What writers and works illustrate the native English and religious spirit? What writers and works represent the Norman and romantic spirit? What is the character of Layamon's *Brut?* What were the great "cycles of romance"? What is the character of Mandeville's *Travels?* What preparation was made by this period for the further development of English literature?

Chapter V. — The Age of Chaucer (1360–1400).

Selections from Wyclif may be found in Craik, in Morley's *Library of English Literature*, in Old South Leaflets, in Maynard, Merrill and Co's. English Classics, in Arnold's *Select English Works of Wyclif*, and in Morris and Skeat's *Specimens*. Bosworth and Waring's *Gospels* gives in parallel columns the Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Wyclif, and Tyndale versions. Selections from Langland and Gower may be found in Ward, Morley, and Morris and Skeat. The complete works of both poets are published by the Clarendon Press. The standard edition of Chaucer is that of Skeat, in six volumes. Other good editions are Skeat's *Student's Chaucer* and Pollard's *Globe Chaucer*. Corson's *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* contains the best parts of that poem, and is an excellent book for the student. Of the many essays on Chaucer, none is better than that of Lowell. The student should read the *Prologue* entire and at least one of the tales — preferably the *Knightes Tale* or the *Nonne Preestes Tale*. Effort should be made to appreciate Chaucer's masterly skill in the portrayal of character and in the telling of a story. Some of his descriptions should also be noted. Some knowledge of his pronunciation and metre is essential to an appreciation of the real beauty of his verse.

The Hundred Years' War continues through the whole of this period. The real historical interest of the age, however, lies in

certain movements of a less dramatic character. English nationality is developed in a marked degree. The power of Parliament is still further extended. Great social changes are taking place, certain phases of which are marked by the peasant revolt. The English church becomes more independent, and the great "Lollard" movement, headed by Wyclif, anticipates the Reformation. The century closes with the dethronement of Richard II by Henry of Lancaster. Literature throws much light on these movements, and is in turn illuminated by them. In addition to the ordinary historical authorities, a book like Jusserand's *English Wayfaring Life in the Fourteenth Century* will be helpful in illustrating social conditions.

How do Chaucer and Gower illustrate the romantic temper of the age? How do Chaucer, Wyclif, and Langland illustrate social and religious conditions? Give a careful description of some one or more of Chaucer's pilgrims. What is the plan of the *Prologue?* What is the plan of the *Canterbury Tales?* How does the *Prologue* illustrate Chaucer's humor and his skill in character description? Give an outline of the narrative of some one of the *Canterbury Tales* and specify Chaucer's chief excellences as a narrator. What classes of society are dealt with in the *Prologue*, and what is Chaucer's attitude toward each? Is his satire bitter or genial? Illustrate. Compare Chaucer with Langland, as a poet and as a man.

Chapter VI. — The Fifteenth Century (1400–1500).

Sufficient examples of Occleve and Lydgate may be found in Ward, Arber, Morley, and Morris and Skeat. The same authorities provide material illustrating the Scotch poets. *The King's Quair* has been edited by Skeat. Good editions of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* are those of Strachey, Gollancz (Temple Classics), and Rhys (Camelot Series, selected portions). Lanier's *Boy's King Arthur* is an abridgment, with an introductory essay. The standard collection of ballads is Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (five volumes). A condensation of this work is published in a single volume. Other important works are Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and Gummere's *Old English Ballads*. Excellent selections may be found in Ward, Arber, and Morley. For the Mysteries, Miracle Plays, and Moralities, the best volumes of selections are

Pollard's *English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes* and Manly's *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama.* Selections may also be found in Morley's *English Writers* and *Library of English Literature.* The mystery or miracle type is well represented by the Chester *Play of Noah* and the Towneley *Play of the Shepherds;* the morality type by *Everyman* and *Hyckescorner.*

The Hundred Years' War continued throughout the first half of the fifteenth century, resulting finally in the loss of the English dominions in France. The accession of Henry of Lancaster to the throne had established the right of Parliament to fix the royal succession; and under the rule of the Lancastrian kings, parliamentary power naturally grew broader and firmer. Under Henry VI the weakness of the king led almost to anarchy. Jack Cade's rebellion is an index of the prevailing disorder. This state of affairs was still further intensified by the civil wars between the Houses of Lancaster and York, known as the Wars of the Roses. By the overthrow and death of Richard III and the accession of Henry VII, the era of the Plantagenet kings came to an end, and the reign of the Tudors began. The last years of the century were years of peace. The century as a whole was one of war and turmoil; but it was marked also by industrial and commercial prosperity, by the introduction of the art of printing, and by the beginnings of the Renaissance. The history of the period largely accounts for the stagnation of literature after the splendid promise of Chaucer in the fourteenth century.

How is the influence of Chaucer manifested in Occleve, Lydgate, and the Scotch poets? What new attitude toward nature is displayed in the Scotch poets? What service did Malory perform for literature in collecting the Arthurian legends, and in what ways are modern poets indebted to his work? Give an account of the incidents and an estimate of the poetic quality of some of the more famous ballads. Give an outline of a Miracle Play and an account of the way in which it was acted (see Bates's *English Religious Drama*). Give an outline of a Morality, and compare it with the Miracle Plays for dramatic interest.

Chapter VII. — Beginnings of Renaissance and Reformation in England (1500–1579).

For the prose of this period, see Morley's *Library of English Literature* and Craik's *English Prose.* For the poetry, see

Ward's *English Poets* and Morley. For the drama, see Pollard's *English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes*, Manly's *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama*, and Morley. An English translation of More's *Utopia* may be found in Morley's *Universal Library*, in the Camelot Series, in the Temple Classics, and in Arber's Reprints. Ascham's chief works may be found in Arber's Reprints. Bosworth and Waring's *Gospels* contains the Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Wyclif, and Tyndale versions. The poems of Wyatt and Surrey may be found in the Riverside Edition, in the Aldine Edition, in Arber's *Tottel's Miscellany*, and in Arber's *British Anthologies*. The poetry of Sackville may be found in Scribner's *Library of Old Authors*; his *Gorboduc*, in Manly's *Specimens*.

The earlier part of the sixteenth century witnessed the spread of the new learning in England, and the growth of the universities under Renaissance influences. The influence of the Reformation is also to be noted. The conflict of Henry VIII with the papacy led to the reconstitution of the English church, the dissolution of the monasteries, etc. During the reign of Mary came Catholic reaction and severe persecution. With the accession of Elizabeth, Protestant influences revived and Puritanism began to grow. The reign of Elizabeth is characterized by a spirit of daring adventure and of intense patriotism. England rapidly grew into one of the first-rate powers of Europe. The history of the whole century is of great interest, and these are only a few of the movements which demand the attention of the student of literature.

What steps mark the development of the drama during this period? Give some account of the character of the first English comedy and the first English tragedy. What new spirit in poetry is illustrated by the work of Wyatt and Surrey? Who were the "humanists," and why are they so called? What writers are especially associated with the Reformation, and what sort of literary work did they produce? Who were the leading prose-writers of the period, and in what ways was prose style improved?

Chapter VIII. — The Age of Shakespeare (1579–1625).

Prose-writers. — Craik and Garnett may be consulted for the prose-writers of this and all succeeding periods. Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* is edited by Cook, the *Arcadia* by Sommer. Lyly's *Euphues* may be found in Arber's Reprints. Bacon's *Essays* may be obtained in the Temple Classics and in various other

handy editions. Some of the best of these should certainly be read, as, for instance, *Of Truth*, *Of Death*, *Of Love*, *Of Great Place*, *Of Ambition*, *Of Beauty*, *Of Studies*. For other prose-writers of the period, brief selections will suffice. Some passages from the "Authorized Version" of the Bible should be read at this point.

Poets. — Good editions of Spenser and of the *Faerie Queene* in whole or in part are easily obtained. Book I of the *Faerie Queene* should be read by every student. Also some good essay on Spenser, like Lowell's or Dowden's. For other poets of the period, the selections in Ward and in Arber's *Anthologies* will be found adequate. These works may also be consulted for later periods. The selections from the sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare in Ward should be read.

Dramatists. — Several good earlier dramas are given in Manly's *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama*. A large variety of excellent selections may be found in Morley's *Library* and in Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*. Many single plays are edited, as in the Temple Dramatists. Thayer's *Best Elizabethan Plays* contains Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Jonson's *Alchemist*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*, Fletcher and Shakespeare's *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. These five plays would alone suffice to give a good idea of the Elizabethan drama aside from Shakespeare. For students who have time to read more extensively, the Mermaid Series of the dramatists may be recommended.

Shakespeare. — Furness's *Variorum Shakespeare*, so far as published, is the authoritative edition for reference or for critical study. Good school editions are the Temple, the Arden, and the Rolfe. A wide range of reading on Shakespeare's life and work is suggested in the Reading and Study List. Some one play or more should certainly be read. For the beginner, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Macbeth* may be recommended. The first thing to be done with Shakespeare is to read him, for pure delight in his fascinating plots and his wonderful pictures of life and character. Beyond this, his work will bear the most careful and critical study; but such study should be vital and distinctively literary rather than linguistic or textual. Minute criticism is well

for the scholar; but the living interest of Shakespeare should not be spoiled for the younger student by too close attention to details.

During the reign of Elizabeth, England rose to the first rank among European powers. This was due in no small measure to the able and vigorous personality of the queen herself and to the labors and counsels of the great men by whom she was surrounded. The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, destroyed a powerful rival. The war with Spain and the shattering of the Armada humbled the power and pride of the dominant state of Europe. The achievements of great explorers, adventurers, statesmen, and men of business tended to enrich the nation and to raise the importance of the solid middle classes. Unsurpassed literary achievement added the crown to England's greatness. The reign of James I (1603–1625) is chiefly memorable for the struggle between the growing power of the people through Parliament and the Stuart doctrine of the "divine right of kings."

What is the "Spenserian stanza"? Give an outline of the narrative of Book I of the *Faerie Queene*, and explain its allegory. Select examples of Spenser's music, picturesqueness, imaginative power, and nobility of spirit. What story of Sidney's life is revealed in the sonnets of *Astrophel and Stella?* Give an outline of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* or *Jew of Malta*, and seek to make a judgment of its poetical and dramatic power. Describe the general picture of life in one of Shakespeare's dramas, bringing out the relations of the characters by showing the groups into which they naturally fall. Study some one of Shakespeare's characters (Shylock, Portia, Brutus, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, etc.), illustrating each characteristic by reference to the drama. Analyze one of Shakespeare's dramatic plots, showing the connected series of events presented in each scene and in each act. Find illustrations of Shakespeare's power to represent human passions. Show the range of Shakespeare's sympathy with a great variety of human beings. Find illustrations of Shakespeare's poetic power. Give examples of Shakespeare's vivid imagination. Which does Shakespeare portray best — men or women? Illustrate. Show how the plot of Ben Jonson's *Alchemist* illustrates the classical unities.

Chapter IX. — The Age of Milton (1625–1660).

Prose-writers. — The miscellaneous prose literature will be sufficiently illustrated for the ordinary student by selections in

Craik, in Garnett, and in Morley's *Library*. Most students would be interested in reading Walton's *Complete Angler* entire. The rich and stately prose style of the time may be profitably compared with the prose of the previous period and with the clearer and more modern prose of the Age of Dryden.

Poets. — Herrick's poetry may be satisfactorily studied in the selections of the Golden Treasury Series or of Hale's *Poems of Herrick*. Excellent selections from Herrick and other poets in Ward; at least as much of Herrick's poetry as is there given should be read. Also a few of the best songs of Suckling and Lovelace.

Milton. — *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, *Lycidas*, and Book I of *Paradise Lost* should be read carefully. There are many annotated editions. *Areopagitica* or selections from Craik and Garnett will illustrate his prose. Macaulay's *Essay on Milton* is a brilliant and interesting work. Corson's *Introduction to Milton* will be of great assistance.

The conflict between "divine right" and civil liberty led to the famous Petition of Right. The dramatic struggle between Charles I and the Long Parliament is full of interest because of the great men and the great principles involved. When all else failed, the differences between king and people came to the decision of civil war. Charles was defeated and beheaded. Then follows the era of the Commonwealth under Cromwell. The age was one of civil and religious conflict. The great issues were civil and religious liberty. The result was the temporary triumph of the Puritan party. Literature was strongly influenced, in both positive and negative ways, by the historical situation. Gardiner's *First Two Stuarts and the Puritan Revolution* and Dowden's *Puritan and Anglican* will be found instructive and illuminating, in addition to the ordinary histories.

Compare the Cavalier Poets with Milton as to the spirit and quality of their poetry. Compare Milton's *Areopagitica* and Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying*, as to style and sentiment. Make a careful comparison of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* as to the plan of treatment and the mood expressed. In what ways do *Comus* and *Lycidas* illustrate or contrast with the Puritan temper? Study the series of great descriptions in Book I of *Paradise Lost* and note what poetical qualities they illustrate. Is *Samson Agonistes*

a great drama? How does its method compare with that of Shakespeare? Of the Greek dramatists?

Chapter X. — The Age of Dryden (1660–1700).

Prose-writers. — The great prose masterpiece of the age is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. At least the first part should be read. The selections in Craik and Garnett will give a good idea of the style of Temple, Dryden, and other prose-writers.

Poets. — In poetry Dryden is the great figure. His *Song for St. Cecilia's Day* and *Alexander's Feast* should be read as representative of his lyric poetry, and *Absalom and Achitophel* as representative of his satires. The two lyrics and the best parts of the satire may be found in Ward. An instructive comparison between Dryden and Chaucer may be made by reading *Palamon and Arcite*, which is a free translation of Chaucer's *Knightes Tale*. Ward's selections from Butler will give the student an idea of the anti-Puritan spirit of the time.

Dramatists. — Most of the Restoration drama is entirely unfitted for the young reader. Dryden's *All for Love*, Otway's *Venice Preserved*, and Farquhar's *Beaux' Stratagem* are among the best and cleanest of these plays, though not altogether untinged by the prevailing looseness.

Less than two years after Cromwell's death, the house of Stuart was restored to the throne (1660) in the person of Charles II. The reign of Charles, in harmony with his character, was one of intrigue and licentiousness. The foreign power of England notably declined. Charles was a man of comparatively easy disposition, but toward the close of his reign, the old Stuart tyranny was in large measure revived. This state of affairs was made still worse under James II. In 1688 James fled from England, and the throne was declared vacant. Parliament elected to the throne as joint monarchs Mary, the daughter of James, and her husband, William of Orange. Under their reign began a new era, of constitutional monarchy, of comparative civil and religious freedom, of revived national power, of greater decency in social life. These historical conditions are strikingly reflected in literature.

What is the nature of the allegory in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress?* What are the reasons for its great popularity and influence? Compare Bunyan's style with Dryden's, and note some

reasons for the difference. How does Butler's *Hudibras* reflect the spirit of the age? What are the characteristic merits of Dryden as a lyric poet? Illustrate by examples Dryden's gift of satiric portraiture. What was the nature of Dryden's work as a dramatist? What marked changes in the drama were produced by the Restoration Period?

Chapter XI. — The Age of Pope (1700–1740).

Prose-writers. — In Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the first and second voyages should be read. *The Battle of the Books* may be found in Garnett. Addison and Steele are best represented by the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers.* An admirable edition, containing also other papers from the *Spectator* and Macaulay's *Essay on Addison*, is Thurber's *Select Essays of Addison.* Every student should read Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and his *Journal of the Plague Year* is also extremely interesting and characteristic. Good selections from all of these writers may be found in Craik, Garnett, and Morley.

Poets. — Good selections from all the poets in Ward and Arber. *The Rape of the Lock* should be read entire, and also some selections from the translation of the *Iliad.* The *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* will illustrate Pope's skill as a satirist, and selections from the *Essay on Criticism* and *Essay on Man* his didactic verse. These last are given in Ward.

The most interesting historical events of the reign of Queen Anne have to do with foreign wars and domestic politics. Both have left their mark on literature; but more important than either is the study of social and industrial conditions. At the death of Anne, the throne fell to George I, the first of the Hanoverian kings. For a quarter of a century the history of England is largely the history of Whig politics and of English trade. Political life was corrupt and cynical, and social life was extremely materialistic. The "practical" seemed to have completely superseded the ideal.

What characteristics of a good story are to be found in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels?* What is the nature of its satirical purpose? For what qualities is Swift's style noteworthy? Compare Addison's style with Swift's. Illustrate from the *De Coverley Papers* the portrayal of characters from real life. How does the method

of portrayal compare with that of Chaucer in the *Prologue?* What personal qualities of Addison and Steele are revealed in the *Spectator* essays? By what means does Defoe succeed in producing realistic effect? Compare Pope with Dryden as to the method and spirit of his satire. Illustrate from Pope the spirit and the manner of Classicism. Why is the *Rape of the Lock* Pope's most perfect work? Why is Pope's poetry especially fitted for quotation?

Chapter XII. — The Age of Johnson (1740–1780).

Poets. — The selections in Ward, Arber, and Morley will suffice to give an idea of the poetry of Thomson, Young, Collins, Chatterton, Johnson, and the lesser poets. The best of Gray and good selections from Goldsmith will be found in the same works; but these two writers deserve to be read more fully. Gray's *Elegy*, *Progress of Poesy*, and *The Bard* should certainly be read carefully, and at least Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* entire. All of these poets should be compared with Spenser, Milton, and Pope, in order that the student may judge whether romantic or classical influences were most felt by them.

Novelists. — Good selections from Richardson's *Pamela*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* — as well as from earlier prose romance — are given in Simonds's *Introduction to English Fiction;* and from various novels of these and other writers, in Craik and Morley. The one novel of the period that should certainly be read entire is Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield.* This and Johnson's *Rasselas* are printed in many good editions. It is desirable that the student should read at this point some brief work on the history of the novel. Any of the works mentioned in the Reading and Study List will be found interesting and instructive.

Prose-writers. — Goldsmith is one of the most exquisite prose-writers of the literature, and some of his charming essays should be read. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* will represent him at his best. If possible, parts of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* should be read. Burke is not to be neglected. His speech on *Conciliation with America* should be known to every student, both for its matter and for its style. These and other prose-writers are

admirably represented by the selections in Craik, Garnett, and Morley.

Dramatists. — Goldsmith's *Good-Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer* are published in one volume in the Belles Lettres Series. Sheridan's *Rivals* and *School for Scandal* are published separately in the Temple Dramatists. The second drama in each case will represent the author at his best.

Foreign wars and domestic politics still continue to play a prominent part in history. The condition of politics is vastly improved. Patriotism becomes something more than an empty word or a cloak for corruption, and higher political and social ideals prevail. The great Methodist revival under the Wesleys marks a quickened moral and religious sense among the people. England's modern industrial system is growing, and bringing with it great ecomomic changes. The winning of the Indian empire is balanced by the loss of the American colonies as a result of the American Revolution. There is a notable struggle for the freedom of the press. The names of Chatham and Burke indicate the high level of British statesmanship.

What poets of the age represent the growing interest in nature and the tendency toward romanticism? To what extent are these same movements represented in the non-poetic literature of the time? What writers are conservative or reactionary? What phases in the development of the novel are marked by this period? What is the difference between a novel and a romance? Characterize the style of each of the great prose-writers of the age, and compare them with earlier masters of prose style. What writers represent in their works the growing spirit of individualism? What writers reflect in their works the historical movements or conditions of the age?

Chapter XIII. — The Age of Burns (1780–1800).

The poets of the period are fairly represented in Ward, Arber, and Morley. Some of the charming lyrics of Blake should be read, and the quality of Cowper should be studied in such works as *John Gilpin's Ride*, *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture*, *The Castaway*, and portions of *The Task*. Burns is, of course, the great poetic figure of the age, and every one should be familiar with his best poems. *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *Tam O'Shanter*, *To a*

Mouse, Auld Lang Syne, To Mary in Heaven, The Banks o' Doon, Farewell to Nancy, Highland Mary, Bannockburn, A Red, Red Rose, A Man's a Man for a' that, are all indispensable ; and the student may go much farther with both interest and profit.

In this period the history of the eighteenth century culminates. For all Europe, as well as for England, the French Revolution is the great central fact of the age. What France achieved through a tremendous convulsion, England was achieving through slow but steady progress. The spirit of individualism was asserting itself with irresistible power. For the time being, England found herself compelled to war with France in defence of order and law, yet the two nations were moving in the same direction. During most of the period the younger Pitt was prime minister, and he proved a worthy pilot through the great storm. Other important movements of the time were those for prison reform and for the abolition of the slave trade.

In what ways is the development of the novel continued during this period? How are the four leading poets of the period related to the principle of individualism? What are some of the evidences of Cowper's importance as a poet of nature? What are the peculiarities of Crabbe as to subject-matter and method of treatment? What are the distinguishing qualities of Blake's poetry? What qualities in Burns's poetry account for its great popularity? How are man and nature associated with each other in Burns's poetry? Illustrate from his poems Burns's lyric gift, his humor, his breadth of sympathy, his poetic imagination, his passionate feeling, his independence of spirit.

Chapter XIV. — The Age of Wordsworth (1800–1832).

Poets. — The various poets of the age are well represented by the selections in Ward. Each of the six poets discussed in the text should be carefully studied through at least a few typical selections. The best of Wordsworth's poetry is gathered in Arnold's volume of selections in the Golden Treasury Series. The introductory essay in this volume is one of the best on Wordsworth. Lowell's essay is also to be recommended. Excellent annotated volumes are George's edition of the *Prelude* and *Selections from Wordsworth.* The student will need a guide amid the mazes of Wordsworth's rather unequal poetry ; and either Ward, Arnold, or George will guide him safely and wisely to the very

best. Ward or George's *Select Poems of Coleridge* should be used in the study of Coleridge's poetry. Coleridge's masterpiece is *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.* This, the beautiful fragment of *Christabel*, and *Dejection: An Ode*, should be known to every reader. Scott's poetry is best represented by his longer narrative works. Either *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, or *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* should be read entire. For Byron, Arnold's Golden Treasury edition will be found a helpful guide. The third canto of *Childe Harold* and the *Prisoner of Chillon* may be profitably read. The selections in Ward are good, but somewhat fragmentary. For Shelley nothing is better than the selections in Ward. *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *The Cloud*, *To a Skylark*, and *Adonais* should certainly be read. Students who have opportunity to read *Prometheus Unbound* will find Scudder's edition an admirable guide to a rather difficult poem. Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *To Autumn*, and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, together with the selections from *Hyperion* and from the sonnets given in Ward, should be read. Voluminous selections from these six poets — including most of the poems mentioned — are given in Page's *British Poets of the Nineteenth Century.*

Novelists. — Scott and Jane Austen are represented by good selections in Craik; but if possible, at least a single novel of each should be read entire. Selection may be made from Scott's *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, *Kenilworth*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Old Mortality*, *Guy Mannering*, and *The Heart of Midlothian*, and from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma.*

Prose-writers. — The selections in Craik will give a good conception of the prose literature of the time. De Quincey and Lamb should receive fuller consideration. De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium-Eater* is extremely interesting. Other fascinating works are *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*, *The English Mail Coach*, *Joan of Arc*, *Flight of a Tartar Tribe*, *The Spanish Nun.* Lamb's *Dissertation on Roast Pig* is one of the most charming of the *Essays of Elia;* but the student who has leisure can not do better than to take the *Essays of Elia* and browse among them to suit his fancy.

Much of the historical interest of the early years of the nine-

teenth century gathers around the wars with Napoleon. The battle of Trafalgar in 1805 saved England from threatened invasion. The battle of Waterloo in 1815 brought the wars to an end by the overthrow of Napoleon. In the meantime had occurred the War of 1812 with the United States. The succeeding period of peace witnessed a decided revival of liberalism. Economic distress and labor troubles favored the growing demand for parliamentary reform. After a bitter struggle, extending over several years, the great Reform Bill was passed in 1832. While it did not secure ideal conditions, it greatly extended the elective franchise, transferred political power to the great middle class, and marked the beginning of democratic conditions in England. One of the earliest acts of the reformed Parliament was the abolition of slavery in the British dominions, and this was shortly followed by factory and pauper legislation which relieved the worst wrongs of the white slaves of the modern industrial system.

What poems or passages from Wordsworth illustrate his spiritual insight into the significance of common things and common men? Illustrate from Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* the peculiar character of his imagination. Give an outline of the story of Scott's *Marmion* or *Lady of the Lake*. Show how Byron's poetry reflects his own personality and experience. Compare Shelley's *Adonais* as an elegy with Milton's *Lycidas*. Illustrate from Keats's poetry his love for sensuous beauty. Characterize Scott and Jane Austen as novelists, and compare them with each other. Give a brief statement of Coleridge's critical views on Wordsworth and on romantic literature (see Beers's *Selections from the Prose Writings of Coleridge*). What elements of great literary genius are revealed in the writings of De Quincey? What qualities give such a peculiar charm to Lamb's prose style?

Chapters XV–XVII. — The Age of Tennyson (1832–1892).

Prose-writers. — Craik's selections will be found invaluable for the many excellent prose-writers of the period. From Macaulay should be read at least one of the historical essays (*Lord Clive*, *Warren Hastings*, *Earl of Chatham*, *William Pitt*, etc.), one of the literary essays (*Milton*, *Bunyan*, *Addison*, *Goldsmith*, *Johnson*, etc.), and the famous third chapter of his *History of England*. Carlyle's *Essay on Burns* will perhaps best serve the purposes of the average student. *Heroes and Hero-Worship*

is among his most important and characteristic works. One of the finest passages of his masterpiece, *Sartor Resartus*, is the chapter on "The Everlasting Yea" (Book II, Ch. VII). From *The French Revolution*, Chapter VI of Book V and Chapter X of Book VII may be read. Ruskin is best represented by a volume of selections, like that of Vida D. Scudder. *Sesame and Lilies* should be read entire. From *Modern Painters* read "Of the Open Sky" (Part II, Sec. III, Ch. I, first few pages), "Of Water, as painted by Turner" (Part II, Sec. V, Ch. III, last three paragraphs), "The Mountain Gloom" and "The Mountain Glory" (Part V, Chaps. XIX and XX). From *Stones of Venice* read "St. Mark's" (Vol. II, Ch. IV). For Arnold's prose, Gates's volume of selections is to be recommended; it has an admirable introductory essay. Arnold's *Introduction* to Ward's *English Poets* should be read, and also his essays on Gray and Keats in Ward and his essay introductory to his edition of Wordsworth.

Novelists. — There are good selections in Craik from the novelists of the period, but these can not take the place of the reading of complete novels. Dickens is well represented by *Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Oliver Twist*, or *The Old Curiosity Shop*. From Thackeray should be read *Vanity Fair*, *Henry Esmond*, or *The Newcomes*. For George Eliot, choice should be made of *Silas Marner*, *Adam Bede*, or *The Mill on the Floss*. Representative works of the minor novelists are suggested after their names in the Chronological Outline.

Poets. — Voluminous selections from the eight leading poets of the period (Tennyson, Mrs. Browning, Robert Browning, Clough, Arnold, Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne) are given in Page's *British Poets of the Nineteenth Century*. Good selections from these and other poets in Ward. The selections from Arnold in Ward are especially full and judicious. Poems of Arnold to be particularly recommended are *Dover Beach*, *The Forsaken Merman*, *The Strayed Reveller*, *Sohrab and Rustum*, *The Scholar-Gypsy*, *Thyrsis*, *Palladium*, and *Rugby Chapel*. The selections in Ward from Mrs. Browning — as also those from Robert Browning — are very unsatisfactory. The *Sonnets from the Portuguese* are given in full by Page. These and *Cowper's Grave* should be read.

For Browning, one needs a guide; and Corson's *Introduction to Browning* or George's *Select Poems of Browning* may be recommended. A few of the best poems are *My Last Duchess*, *The Flight of the Duchess*, *The Last Ride Together*, *Prospice*, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, *Old Pictures in Florence*, *Andrea del Sarto*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church*, *Abt Vogler*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *A Grammarian's Funeral*, *An Epistle of Karshish*, *Saul*, *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*, *Cleon*, *A Death in the Desert*, *Epilogue to Asolando*, *In a Gondola*, *In a Balcony*, *Pippa Passes*. Van Dyke's *Poems by Tennyson* is a good introductory volume, and the selections in Ward are reasonably satisfactory. Among poems that should be read are *The Poet*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Two Voices*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, "*You ask me, why, though ill at ease*," *Morte d'Arthur*, *Dora*, *Ulysses*, *Locksley Hall*, *Godiva*, *St. Agnes' Eve*, *Sir Galahad*, "*Break, Break, Break*," *The Brook*, *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, *Northern Farmer*, the songs from *The Princess*, *Maud*, *Guinevere* from *Idylls of the King*, *Enoch Arden*, *The Revenge*, *Merlin and the Gleam*, *The Making of Man*, *The Silent Voices*, *Crossing the Bar*, and from *In Memoriam*, the Prelude and Lyrics IX–XIX, LIV–LVII, LXXXV, CVI, CIX, CXIV, CXX, CXXVI, CXXXI.

The history of the Victorian Period has been more complicated, though less dramatic, than that of previous eras. The student will be called upon to consider movements which develop slowly and quietly, but which are vastly important in their results. Victoria came to the throne in 1837. Her reign falls naturally into two parts. Some of the important events and movements of the first era are the progress of parliamentary reform, the effect of new inventions, the Chartist movement, postal reform, the Irish agitation, the Tractarian movement, the repeal of the corn laws, factory legislation, the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny. During this era, the old Whig and Tory parties passed away with the passing of old political issues. The second era is marked by the struggle of the new Liberal and Conservative parties on new ground and with new aims. This era is characterized by the growth of liberalism and by the further extension of the elective franchise. The whole reign is noteworthy for the advance toward democratic conditions and for the progress of material civilization.

It is marked also by the development of science, with its influence on religious thought and on practical life. The influence of these conditions on literature is discussed in the text, and may be profitably studied in the works of literary historians and critics.

What are the characteristics of Macaulay's style or method of presentation that make his works so attractive ? What is Carlyle's attitude toward the great movements of his age ? What are his special powers as a literary craftsman ? Indicate the range of Ruskin's subject-matter and the peculiarities of his style. What are some of the characteristics of Arnold as a literary critic ? How does Dickens's humor affect his portrayal of life and character ? Analyze one of Dickens's plots, and give an opinion as to his skill in the handling of a story. How are Thackeray's novels affected by his satirical purpose? What aspects of human life does Thackeray chiefly portray, and how far is he successful in the creation of lifelike characters? In what ways are the novels of George Eliot influenced by democratic and scientific tendencies? Show by illustration whether George Eliot's skill as a novelist lies chiefly in the handling of plot or in the delineation of character. What poems of Arnold illustrate his attitude toward religious faith? Characterize that attitude. What is revealed in Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* as to the quality of her poetical genius and as to her love for Robert Browning ? What does Robert Browning mean by describing his own work as "poetry always dramatic in principle"? Describe Browning's method in the use of the dramatic monologue. What is Browning's attitude toward science and religion ? What characteristics of a great poet are to be discovered in Browning's work ? What does Tennyson's poetry reveal as to his conception of the poetic art ? Illustrate from his poetry the range of subject-matter with which Tennyson deals. Compare Tennyson with Arnold and Browning in the matter of religious faith. For what poetical qualities is Tennyson's work most noteworthy? Show to what extent the democratic and scientific tendencies of the age are manifested in prose literature — in the novel — in poetry.

Additional Suggestions for Literary Study.

The following suggestions are condensed from Crawshaw's *Interpretation of Literature* and *Literary Interpretation of Life* (The Macmillan Co.).

Style. — Any good rhetoric will give the student an idea of the qualities of style to be noted in a great writer; but the following outline will perhaps be found more serviceable for purposes of literary study and criticism.

There are four great elements in the substance of all literature — Thought, Emotion, Imagination, and Beauty; and from these naturally flow four great classes of style qualities — the *Intellectual*, the *Emotional*, the *Imaginative*, and the *Æsthetic*. By *intellectual qualities* of style are meant such qualities as are determined by the character of the thinking. They are of all kinds and degrees, good, bad, and indifferent, according as the thought itself is of one sort or another. For purposes of study we may, however, note three great intellectual virtues of style — *Correctness* (rhetorical as well as grammatical), *Clearness* (including both perspicuity and precision), and *Simplicity* (as distinguished from abstruseness, ornateness, etc.). It may be noted that clearness and simplicity are not absolute virtues of style, but only relative to the subject, the writer, the occasion, etc. Perhaps a safe principle would be that the style should be as clear and simple as the thought and the circumstances will allow. By *emotional qualities* of style are meant such qualities as are determined by the character of the feeling. These qualities vary with every shade and degree of emotion; but we may note three groups or classes — *Strength* (of all degrees, from animation to vehemence, from brilliancy to sublimity), *Pathos* (expressing the tender or passive emotions), and *the Ludicrous* (wit, humor, etc.). *Imaginative qualities* of style are such as are determined by the images or conceptions to be expressed. Two may be noted — *Concreteness* (indicating the power of language actually to convey images or conceptions) and *Suggestiveness* (indicating the power of language to hint or suggest what no words can directly convey). *Æsthetic qualities* are such as are determined by the beauty of the substance. Three such qualities are *Melody* (the pleasing succession of sounds), *Harmony* (the pleasing concord of sound with sound and of sound with sense), and *Propriety* (the beautiful appropriateness of style to the subject, the purpose, the occasion, the writer, etc.). By applying these tests to style, the student may make an adequate judgment as to its merits and limitations.

Plot. — The student will often have occasion to analyze the plot of a narrative poem, a drama, or a novel. He should observe

that a satisfactory analysis does not consist of a mere running account of the events of a story. That is mere child's play, and does not involve any powers of insight or discrimination. It is hoped that the following directions will be found simple yet effective :

First, make a definite statement of the outcome of the plot, in order that you may see whither the author is directing his effort. Secondly, make an outline of the development of the plot, along the three following lines : (1) *The stages of the plot.* Show here the main divisions of the plot, indicating the important events that begin and end each stage and the important events included within each stage. (2) *Various threads of interest.* Sometimes a plot is perfectly simple, moving along one direct line. More often, however, there are several lines of movement or threads of story. These should be separated from each other and carefully stated. Then it should be shown how they are bound together into the unity of the whole plot. Sometimes these different threads of interest are so distinct and important as to constitute what are called interwoven plots. A good example of this is found in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, where the Bond plot and the Casket plot are each very strongly marked. (3) *Effective means of development.* Here the student will be called upon to observe the means (a character, an event, a situation, sometimes arising within the story and sometimes affecting it from without) by which the author gets his story under way, gives it a new impulse when it would otherwise come to a stop, turns it in some new direction, and brings it to a close. Such "effective means" are found in the temptation of the witches in *Macbeth* and in the loss of Antonio's ships in *The Merchant of Venice.* Finally, the student may observe any striking details of the plot that may serve to illustrate the author's method or his skill as a narrator.

Character. — Here there are two main objects of consideration : (1) *Character portrayal.* The endeavor should be to understand and to define what manner of man or woman the author has created. For this there is no evidence except the words, acts, and relations of the character itself, the opinions of other characters in the story as shown by their words and their attitude, or the direct descriptions and explanations of the author. The student should endeavor to avoid reading into a work his own opinions or the opinions of anybody else. The work must speak for itself.

As most characters are merely portrayed, study may usually stop with this point. (2) *Character development.* Some characters undergo a process of growth. They remain the same persons, but they are in some degree modified. Relying as before solely on the evidence of the work itself, this development should be traced through its various stages to the final result, with observation of the way in which the modifications have been brought about. The only safe way to study any character is to trace it through the work from beginning to end, weighing in its proper order every piece of evidence that the work affords. Then let the imagination endeavor to conceive the character, thus studied, as a living whole. This is not so easy a method as to form one's conception by reading the opinions of the great critics, but it is a method that will help to make the student an independent critic for himself. After his own judgments have been made, it need hardly be said that there is the very greatest value in testing his views by the opinions of more competent judges. Criticism ought not to take the place of independent judgment, but it should be used to balance and correct independent judgment.

The General Picture of Life. — Every great drama or novel involves something more than the delineation of individual characters. It involves also those associations or relations of characters which make up a complex yet unified picture of human life. This may be studied under two heads: (1) *The particular section of life portrayed.* The purpose here should be to make clear just what part of the great field of human life the author has chosen to deal with in a particular work — in a word, what are the boundaries of the little plot that he has undertaken to till. Such a section of life may be defined with reference to historical time, geographical location, social rank, tragic or comic point of view, realistic or romantic method of conception, and in various other ways that will be suggested by individual works. For instance, Thackeray, in *Henry Esmond*, has given us a realistic portrayal, in a comic rather than in a tragic spirit, of certain phases of the life of the English nobility during the reign of Queen Anne, and has involved the story of the futile efforts of the Stuart Pretender to regain the throne of England. This statement is necessarily very brief, and definition might be carried into further detail. (2) *Character relations — as shown by character grouping.* Character grouping is an interesting study, but should not be regarded as an end in

itself. It is important only as it serves to bring out the significant relations existing among the various characters. Each work will suggest its own principles of grouping. The various groups should be indicated, with the characters belonging to each. Then the relations that are indicated by this grouping should be pointed out. It should also be noted what changes in grouping take place as the work proceeds and how these changes are caused by changing relations.

Imagination and Reality. — Every literary work is a creation of the imagination; but imagination is always based upon a greater or less degree of reality. Observation should be made as to the real personages, incidents, scenes, objects, etc., involved in any work; and then the question should be raised as to how far these realities have been modified or idealized by the author's imagination. This study will often lead to the consideration of such problems as real local setting, historical setting, sources of the plot, etc. In some works this real element is so large that observation rather than imagination seems to have been the author's chief business; in others imagination has been exercised so freely that the real element is to be defined only in the most general terms.

Emotion. — The emotional element in great literary work is so large and so important that no student should ignore it. There is not much that can be done in the way of formal analysis; but one can at least observe the emotion and respond to it. It is important to note the emotion that dominates a whole work, that is manifested in some great character, that gives power to some striking scene. Minor emotions may receive attention according to their interest or significance. Just as one should be mentally alert in the reading of a great author, so one should also be emotionally alert, ready to give quick and adequate emotional response to every thrill of passion. An important distinction is that between the emotion of the author and the emotion of his characters.

Thought. — In some works — mainly intellectual in character, like the essay — it is possible to make an accurate statement of the theme and then to make a definite outline showing all the divisions and phases of the thought. In a great imaginative work, like a drama, a novel, or a poem, this is not likely to be possible, because the thought is hidden behind plot, characters, pictures,

or other imaginative symbols. Nevertheless, these symbols have meaning and are to be interpreted. Even in a story or a drama, it is worth while to attempt a statement of the author's central thought, and, so far as possible, of his whole course of thought in the work. In an allegory or a satire such interpretation of the thought is indispensable. Satisfactory judgment as to the central thought in a great imaginative work is to be reached mainly by considering the chief characters and their relations, the general effect of the picture of life, and the result of the plot. Statement of the thought should be in abstract terms, in order to distinguish it sharply from the concrete imaginative forms in which it is embodied.

Literature and Life. — This book endeavors to emphasize the fact that literature is an outgrowth of life. Because it is an outgrowth of life, it becomes in turn a revelation of life. This revelation — this literary interpretation of life — it is a large part of the business of the literary student to understand. Specific directions to this end can hardly be given in brief space ; but it may serve a useful purpose to call the attention of the student to certain broad aspects of the matter. Literature is first of all a revelation of *personality;* the man is revealed in his work. Literature is a revelation of the *age;* the whole body of literary work in a given time affords a comprehensive view of the character of the period. Literature is a revelation of the *race;* enduring racial characteristics and the ever varying modifications of these are mirrored from age to age in what the race has written. Literature is a revelation of *nationality;* institutions and governmental forms — monarchical, oligarchical, aristocratic, democratic, etc. — find expression in literary creation. Literature is a revelation of *humanity;* through the world's literature we may understand something of those fundamental human qualities that are deeper than all accidents of nationality, of race, of age, or of any single personality.

BORN IN IRELAND

Dublin - Swift, Steele, Burke, Sheridan, Moore.

Lissoy - Goldsmith.

Kilcolman Castle - Spenser.

SEA

A Literary Map of ENGLAND

Scale of Miles

0 10 20 40 60 80

BORN IN LONDON

Bacon, Blake, Browning, Byron, Chaucer, Cowley, Crashaw, Defoe, Donne, Gray, Herrick, Jonson, Keats, Lamb, Milton, More, Pope, Ruskin, Spenser, Swinburne.

INDEX

Abbotsford, 280, 424.
Absalom and Achitophel, 187, 439.
Abt Vogler, 395, 447.
Abuses Stript and Whipt, 146.
Acres, Bob, 250.
Adam Bede, 376, 377, 416, 446.
Addison, Essay on, 340, 440, 445.
Addison, Joseph, 182, 205–212 ff., 219, 235, 242, 249, 414, 420, 421, 440, 441.
Address of the Soul to its Body, 20.
Address to the Deil, 266.
Address to the English, 33.
Adonais, 299, 310, 311, 318, 444, 445.
Advancement of Learning, 148.
Ælfric, 25, 31, 32, 410, 431.
Æneid, Virgil's, 78, 95, 411.
Agincourt, Ballad of, 113.
Aglaura, 413.
Aids to Reflection, 288.
Alastor, 309, 310.
Albion's England, 113.
Alchemist, The, 137, 412, 436, 437.
Alexander's Feast, 188, 439.
Alexander the Great, 49.
Alexandrian Romances, 49.
Alfred, King, 25, 26, 27–29 ff., 410, 421, 429 ff.
Allegory, 23, 32, 43 ff., 49, 53, 59, 61, 66, 67, 76 ff., 85, 90, 108, 109, 114, 184, 185, 188, 202, 404.
All for Love, 187, 414, 439.
All's Well that Ends Well, 129.
Alps, The, 273, 302.
Alysoun, 46.
Amelia, 237.
America, 88, 249, 284, 328, 331, 361, 442.
Amoretti, 107, 112.
Anatomy of Melancholy, 151, 413.
Ancient Mariner, The, 284, 285, 288, 415, 444, 445.
Ancren Riwle, 45, 55, 411.
Andrea del Sarto, 395, 447.
Andreas, 23, 410, 429.
Angles, The, 3, 11.
Anglicanism, 103, 202, 419.
Anglo-Saxon, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17, 93.
Anglo-Saxon Christian Poetry, 12, 14–24, 27, 30, 31, 410, 429, 430.
Anglo-Saxon Conquest, 3, 8, 29, 417, 429.
Anglo-Saxon Pagan Poetry, 3–13, 14, 15, 19 ff., 27, 30, 31, 410, 428, 429.
Anglo-Saxon Prose, 16, 19, 25–34, 410, 430, 431.
Anglo-Saxons, The, 3, 4, 11, 88, 119, 429.
Anglo-Saxon Verse, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17, 40, 42, 53, 60.
Anne, Queen, 199, 218, 417, 418, 440, 451.
Annus Mirabilis, 186.
Antony and Cleopatra, 131.
Apollonius of Tyre, 33, 410.
Apologia pro Vita Sua, 416, 425.
Appreciations, 416.
Arbuthnot, Epistle to Dr., 219, 440.
Arcadia, 101, 412, 435.
Areopagitica, 174, 413, 438.
Argument against Abolishing Christianity, 202.
Ariel, 61.
Aristotle, 71.
Armour, Jean, 264, 265.

Arnold, Edwin, 416.
Arnold, Matthew, 48, 318, 327, 334, 355-358, 382-385, 398, 416, 420, 421, 424 ff., 443, 444, 446, 448.
Arnold, Thomas, 382.
Artegall, 108.
Arthurian Legends, 38, 43, 48, 49, 53, 79, 172, 406, 426, 434.
Arthur, King, 43, 48, 79, 108, 109, 400, 402, 406.
Ascham, Roger, 92, 97, 412, 435.
"Ask me no more where Jove bestows," 160.
Asolo, 397.
Astræa Redux, 186.
Astrophel, 107.
Astrophel and Stella, 111, 112, 412, 437.
As You Like It, 129.
Atalanta in Calydon, 416.
Athenian Orators, The, 340.
Atticus, 219.
Augustine, 15, 25, 41, 42.
Auld Lang Syne, 265, 443.
Aurora Leigh, 386.
Austen, Jane, 256, 295-298, 318, 359, 373, 415, 420, 421, 424, 444, 445.
Austin, Lady, 259.
Autumn, To, 317, 444.
Ayenbite of Inwit, 51, 55, 411.
Ayrshire, 265.
Azarias, 20.

Bacon, Essay on, 340.
Bacon, Francis, 147-150, 413, 420, 421, 423, 427, 435.
Ballads, 37, 45, 51, 66, 78-84, 113, 232, 284, 288 ff., 401, 411, 418, 433, 434.
Banks o' Doon, The, 443.
Bannockburn, 265, 443.
Banquo, 132.
Barabas, 116.
Barchester Towers, 416.
Bard, The, 230, 441.
Barère, Essay on, 341.
Barons' Wars, 113.
Battle of the Baltic, 326.
Battle of the Books, The, 201, 202, 440.
Beaumont, Francis, 139, 140, 142, 144, 412, 421, 436.
Beaux' Stratagem, The, 194, 195, 414, 439.
Becket, 406.
Becket, Thomas à, 69.
Beckford, William, 256, 415.
Bede, 16, 19, 26 ff., 41, 42, 410, 430.
Bedford, 184, 191.
Bennet Family, 296.
Beowulf, 8-11, 14, 410, 427 ff.
Bestiary, 44, 45, 55, 411.
Bevis of Hampton, 49, 411.
Bible, The, 16 ff., 25, 26, 31, 32, 40, 43, 44, 49, 50, 54, 57, 58, 71, 82 ff., 92, 93, 151, 152, 166, 172, 183, 185, 355, 411 ff., 432, 435, 436.
Biographia Literaria, 288, 415.
Bishop Blougram's Apology, 393.
Bishop Orders his Tomb, The, 447.
Blackmore, Richard D., 416.
Blake, William, 252, 253, 255, 260-262, 415, 423, 442, 443.
Blank Verse, 94, 95, 97, 114 ff., 130 ff., 142, 171, 176, 187, 228, 259, 309.
Bleak House, 361.
Blessed Damozel, The, 416.
Blickling Homilies, 31, 410.
Blot in the 'Scutcheon, A, 396.
Boccaccio, 65, 67, 72, 189.
Boethius, 28, 410, 430.
Boniface, 195.
Book of Martyrs, 97.
Book of Snobs, 416.
Borough, The, 260.
Boswell, James, 240 ff., 244, 421, 423, 441.
Bottom, 127.
Bowge of Court, 412.
"*Break, Break, Break*," 447.
Bride of Abydos, 300.
Bristol, 233, 234.
Britain, 3, 8, 29, 42, 97, 113, 417, 429.
Britannia's Pastorals, 145, 413.
British, 43, 49, 289, 326, 357, 442, 445.

Britomartis, 108.
Brobdingnag, 204.
Broken Heart, The, 156, 413.
Brontë, Charlotte, 380, 416, 421, 424.
Brook, The, 402, 447.
Browne, Sir Thomas, 158, 169, 319, 413, 421.
Browne, William, 145–147, 413.
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 385–388, 394, 416, 424, 446, 448.
Browning, Robert, 271, 334, 360, 387–397 ff., 416, 420, 421, 424, 425, 446 ff.
Brunanburh, Battle of, 30, 410, 429 ff.
Brut, 40–43, 44, 48, 56, 411, 431, 432.
Brut d'Angleterre, 43.
Brutus, 42, 43, 48, 49, 66.
Bulwer-Lytton, Edward, 379, 380, 416, 424.
Bunyan, Essay on, 340, 445.
Bunyan, John, 182–185, 190, 191, 213, 234, 414, 420, 421, 423, 439.
Burke, Edmund, 247–250, 255, 414, 420, 441, 442.
Burney, Fanny, 256, 415, 420.
Burns, Essay on, 445.
Burns, Robert, 227, 229, 251 ff., 262–268, 270, 275, 278, 328, 330, 348, 400, 415, 420, 421, 423, 424, 442, 443.
Burton, Robert, 151, 319, 413.
Bussy, d'Ambois, 413.
Butler, Samuel, 192, 414, 439, 440.
Byron, Essay on, 340.
Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 269, 298–305, 307, 312, 314, 400, 415, 420, 421, 424, 444, 445.
Byron, Life of, 415.

Cædmon, 16–21, 22, 27, 28, 44, 410, 429, 430.
Cædmonian Poetry, 18–20, 410, 429, 430.
Cæsars, The, 324.
Cain, 302.
Calcutta, 339, 367.
Caleb Williams, 256, 415.
Caliban, 133.
Caliban upon Setebos, 393.
Calidore, Sir, 108.
Callista, 416.
Calvin, John, 202.
Cambel, 108.
Cambridge, 103, 114, 164, 169, 170, 173, 273, 299, 338, 339, 367, 397.
Campaign, The, 206, 414.
Campbell, Thomas, 326, 415, 424.
Campion, Thomas, 112.
Canterbury, 15, 33, 69, 72, 93, 114.
Canterbury Tales, 62, 68–74, 411, 432, 433.
Caponsacchi, 396.
Captain Singleton, 212.
Capulet, 127.
Carew, Thomas, 159, 160, 413.
Carlovingian Romances, 49.
Carlyle, Thomas, 271, 333, 342–351, 352, 356, 358, 375, 416, 420, 421, 424, 445, 446, 448.
Casa Guidi Windows, 386.
Castaway, The, 258, 259, 442.
Castle of Indolence, The, 228.
Castle of Otranto, 239, 256.
Casuistry of Roman Meals, 324.
Catarina to Camoens, 386.
Catholicism, 92, 103, 109, 164, 188, 202, 435.
Catiline, 137.
Cato, 207, 414.
Cavalier Poetry, 159–163, 165, 166, 169, 192, 438.
Cavaliers, 155, 159–163, 165, 166, 169, 192.
Caxton, William, 78.
Cecilia, 256, 415.
Celtic Literature, On the Study of, 357.
Cenci, The, 311.
Changeling, The, 142, 413.
Chapman, George, 141, 143, 413, 423.
Characters, Overbury's, 151.
Charity, 258.
Charlemagne, 49.
Charles I, 167, 174, 438.

Charles II, 167, 174, 182, 186, 439.
Charles the Bold, 292.
Charms, The, 4, 5, 410, 428.
Charterhouse School, 367.
Chartism, 349.
Chatterton, Thomas, 233, 234, 414, 423, 441.
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 38, 55, 56, 60, 61, 62–74 ff., 89, 103 ff., 119, 167, 189, 218, 301, 411, 418, 420, 421, 426, 427, 432 ff., 439.
Chester, 83, 434.
Chevy Chase, 81.
Childe Harold, 300–302 ff., 415, 444.
Childe Roland, 395, 447.
Christ, 17, 23, 44, 45, 59, 60, 82 ff., 115, 177, 184, 226, 261, 393, 400.
Christabel, 285, 286, 444, 445.
Christian Hero, The, 209.
Christianity, 1, 4, 14–17, 20, 22, 25, 26, 30, 31, 59, 88, 196, 429, 430.
Christian Year, The, 416.
Christ's Hospital, 318.
Chronicle, Anglo-Saxon, 26, 27, 29 ff., 33 ff., 39, 40, 410, 411, 430, 431.
Chronicle Plays, 97, 113, 116 ff., 126 ff., 133, 141, 419.
Church of England, 181, 188, 212.
Civil War, 155, 159, 173, 434, 438.
Civil Wars of York and Lancaster, 113, 412.
Clarissa Harlowe, 236, 256.
Classicism, 64, 96, 97, 102, 117, 118, 135, 137, 139, 146, 166, 167, 169, 171, 179–182, 183, 185, 189, 190, 196–199, 205, 207, 208, 212, 214 ff., 225 ff., 236 ff., 247 ff., 258, 260, 262, 268 ff., 326, 327, 357, 359, 384, 385, 414, 422, 441.
Classics, The, 90 ff., 95, 96, 121, 135, 141, 188, 218.
Cleanness, 54, 55, 411.
Cleon, 395, 447.
Clive, Browning's, 395.
Clive, Lord, Macaulay's, 340, 445.
Cloister and the Hearth, 380, 416.
Cloud, The, 307, 308, 444.
Clough, Arthur Hugh, 385, 416, 421, 424, 446.
Cockermouth, 272.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 269, 273, 281–288, 291, 294, 297, 307, 314, 318, 321, 323, 326, 415, 420 ff., 424, 444, 445.
Colin Clout's Come Home Again, 107.
Collar, The, 164.
Collins, Wilkie, 416, 421.
Collins, William, 229, 230, 252, 275, 414, 421, 441.
Colonel Jack, 212.
Comedy, 84, 90, 91, 93, 96, 97, 114, 118, 126 ff., 131, 133, 137, 138, 140 ff., 156, 187, 193–195, 207, 209, 246, 250, 419, 435.
Comedy of Errors, 126.
Commonwealth, 181, 438.
Complaint of Rosamond, 113.
Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham, 96.
Complaints, 107.
Complete Angler, The, 158, 159, 413, 438.
Comus, 138, 171, 172, 174, 413, 438.
Conceits, 145, 164.
Conciliation with America, 441.
Confederacy, The, 194, 414.
Confessio Amantis, 61, 73, 411.
Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, 321, 322, 415, 424, 444.
Congreve, William, 194, 414, 421.
Coningsby, 416.
Conscious Lovers, The, 209, 414.
Consolation of Philosophy, 28.
Conversation, 258.
Conversations with Ben Jonson, 147.
Cordelia, 131.
Coriolanus, 131.
Corsair, The, 300.
Cotter's Saturday Night, 253, 264, 267, 268, 442.
Count Robert of Paris, 292.
Country Wife, The, 194.
Courtly Makers, 95.
Coventry, 83, 118, 373.

Coverdale, Miles, 92, 412.
Cowley, Abraham, 165–167, 190, 413.
Cowper's Grave, 386, 446.
Cowper, William, 224, 252, 253, 255, 257–260, 262, 263, 271, 275, 415, 420, 421, 423, 442, 443.
Crabbe, George, 255, 260, 262, 415, 420, 421, 443.
Craigenputtoch, 345.
Cranmer, Thomas, 93.
Crashaw, On the Death of Mr., 167.
Crashaw, Richard, 164, 165, 413.
Crist, Cynewulf's, 22, 23, 429.
Criticism, 101 ff., 139, 186, 189, 207, 210, 217, 242, 243, 281, 288, 314, 319, 323, 325, 340, 353, 354, 357, 358.
Critic, The, 250.
Cromwell, Oliver, 167, 168, 181, 186, 190, 191, 348, 438, 439.
Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, 348.
Crossing the Bar, 407, 447.
Cross, John Walter, 374.
Crown of Wild Olives, 355.
Crusades, 292.
Cry of the Children, The, 385.
Cry of the Human, The, 386.
Cuckoo Song, 45.
Culture and Anarchy, 358.
Cura Pastoralis, 27, 28.
Curse of Kehama, 326.
Cursor Mundi, 50, 55, 411.
Cycles of Romance, 48, 49, 56, 411, 432.
Cymbeline, 43, 133, 403.
Cynewulf, 21–23, 410, 429, 430.

Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins, 78.
Danes, The, 8 ff., 23 ff., 29, 30, 33, 430, 431.
Daniel, Cædmonian, 18, 20.
Daniel Deronda, 378.
Daniel, Samuel, 112, 113, 143, 412.
Dante, 64, 67, 175, 176, 261, 348.
Dante, Essay on, 340.
Darwin, Charles Robert, 332, 421.
David and Bethsabe, 114, 412.
David Copperfield, 361, 416, 446.
Davideis, The, 166.
Death in the Desert, A, 392, 393, 447.
Death Song, Bede's, 19, 410.
De Coverley Papers, 211, 212, 235, 440.
Defense of Poesy, 101, 102, 412, 435.
Defense of the English People, 174.
Defoe, Daniel, 182, 212, 213, 234, 414, 420, 421, 423, 440, 441.
Dejection, 286, 444.
Dejection near Naples, Stanzas written in, 309, 444.
Dekker, Thomas, 141, 144, 413.
Delia, 112.
Democracy, 224, 225, 227, 230, 245, 254, 257, 265, 269, 271, 328–331, 335, 338, 343, 348, 349, 351, 356, 359, 380, 385, 389, 398, 399, 445, 447, 448.
Deor, Lament of, 7, 410, 428.
De Quincey, Thomas, 320–325, 337, 350, 355, 415, 420, 421, 424, 444, 445.
Descent into Hell, 23.
Desdemona, 130.
Deserted Village, The, 224, 244, 245, 414, 441.
Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse, 66.
Devil, The, in Moralities, 90.
Dialects, 17, 24, 26 ff., 30, 31, 40, 41, 43, 44, 50, 51, 56, 63, 268, 430.
Dickens, Charles, 360–367 ff., 377, 379, 380, 416, 420, 421, 425, 446, 448.
Dictionary, Johnson's, 242.
Dido, 114, 117.
Discourses in America, 357.
Disraeli, Benjamin, 380, 416, 424.
Dissenters, 181, 212.
"Dissertation upon Roast Pig," 320, 444.
Divina Commedia, 175.
Dobbin, William, 368.
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, 380, 416.
Dombey and Son, 362.
Domett, Alfred, 390.
Don Juan, 304, 305.

Donne, John, 144, 145, 146, 159, 164, 166, 169, 413, 421, 422.
Dora, 403, 404, 447.
Double-Dealer, The, 194.
Douglases, 290, 291.
Douglas, Gawain, 78, 93, 411.
Dover Beach, 334, 383, 446.
Drama, 82–85, 89–91, 93, 96, 97, 102, 113–143, 155, 156, 172, 175, 177, 182, 186 ff., 193–195, 207, 209, 234, 246, 249, 250, 302, 311, 319, 394–397, 403, 406, 411 ff., 418, 419, 434 ff., 439, 442.
Dramatic Idyls, 395.
Dramatic Lyrics, 395.
Dramatic Monologues, 395–397, 448.
Dramatic Romances, 395.
Drapier's Letters, The, 203.
Drayton, Michael, 112, 113, 143, 412.
"Dream-Children," 319, 320.
"Dream-Fugue," 323.
Dream of the Rood, The, 23, 410, 429.
Dreme, The, 412.
"Drink to me only with thine eyes," 139.
Drummer, The, 207.
Drummond, William, 147, 413.
Dryden, Essay on, 340.
Dryden, John, 63, 64, 179, 181, 182, 185–189 ff., 196, 215, 216, 221, 240, 252, 270, 414, 419 ff., 438 ff.
Dublin, 83, 199, 200.
Duchess of Malfi, The, 143, 413, 436.
Duessa, 109.
Duke of Wellington, Ode on the Death of the, 401, 402, 404, 447.
Dunbar, William, 77, 93, 411.
Dunciad, The, 218, 219.
Dyer, Sir Edward, 112.

Earthly Paradise, The, 416.
Eastward Ho! 141.
Ecclefechan, 344, 345.
Ecclesiastical History, Bede's, 19, 28, 410, 430.
Ecclesiastical Polity, 102, 412.
Edinburgh, 147, 288, 321, 345.
Edinburgh Review, 415.
Edward I, 230.
Edward II, 116.
Edward III, 57, 65, 66, 417.
Edward VI, 93.
Egoist, The, 416.
Elegies, 20, 21, 107, 147, 167, 171, 172, 188, 224, 230, 310, 385, 405, 410, 414, 441.
Elegy, Gray's, 224, 230, 414, 441.
Elene, 22, 410, 429, 430.
Elia, Essays of, 319, 415, 444.
Eliot, George, 332, 360, 373–380, 385, 416, 420, 421, 424, 425, 446, 448.
Elizabethan Age and Literature, 64, 83, 95 ff., 100, 103, 104, 111, 112, 119, 120, 135, 136, 141, 143, 144, 146, 148, 159, 168, 172, 175, 180, 193, 223, 292, 319, 326, 417, 419, 436.
Elizabeth, Queen, 64, 92, 95, 97, 100, 104, 109, 112, 114, 118, 120, 122, 143, 144, 148, 435, 437.
Eloisa to Abelard, 218.
Emerson, 157, 422.
Emma, 297, 444.
Emotionalism, 224 ff., 229, 230, 252, 253, 259, 260, 262, 266, 269, 270.
Endymion, Keats's, 312, 315.
Endymion, Lyly's, 113, 114, 412.
England's Heroical Epistles, 113.
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, 299.
English Mail-Coach, The, 323, 444.
Enoch Arden, 398, 400, 401, 404, 447.
Epic Poetry, 7–11, 14, 19 ff., 30, 40–43, 48, 49, 53, 61, 72 ff., 76 ff., 96, 108–111, 166, 175–177, 192, 217, 218, 290, 291, 317, 406.
Epilogue to Asolando, 394, 447.
Epistle of Karshish, 447.
Epitaph on Charles II, 192, 193.
Epithalamion, 107.
Erasmus, 91.
Essay of Dramatic Poesy, 186.
Essay on Criticism, 217, 440.
Essay on Man, 219, 440.

Essays, Bacon's, 148–150, 413, 435.
Essays, Cowley's, 190, 413.
Essays, Goldsmith's, 246, 414.
Essays in Criticism, 357, 416.
Essays, Macaulay's, 338, 340, 341, 416, 421.
Essenes, The, 324.
Ethics of the Dust, 355.
Eton, 90, 306.
Eton College, Ode on a Distant Prospect of, 230.
Euphues, 100, 113, 412, 435.
Euphuism, 100, 103, 422.
Evans, Mary Ann. See Eliot, George.
Evelina, 256.
Evening, Ode to, 229, 230.
Eve of St. Agnes, 316, 415, 444.
Everyman, 85, 434.
Every Man in his Humour, 137.
Every Man out of his Humour, 137.
Excursion, The, 281.
Exodus, Cædmonian, 18.

Fables, Dryden's, 188.
Fables, Henryson's, 77, 411.
Faerie Queene, The, 106, 107–111, 112, 184, 228, 412, 436, 437.
Faith, 407.
Falles of Princes, 76, 411.
Falstaff, 127, 128.
Fare thee well, 303.
Farewell to Nancy, 265, 443.
Farquhar, George, 194, 195, 414, 439.
Fates of the Apostles, 23.
Father's Teaching, A, 20.
Faust, Goethe's, 115.
Faustus, Doctor, 115, 412, 437.
Ferdinand, Count Fathom, 238.
Fiction, Prose, 33, 73, 78, 79, 100, 101, 184, 185, 201, 202, 204, 205, 212, 213, 234, 235, 419. See also Novel, The.
Fielding, Henry, 236–238, 250, 414, 420, 421, 441.
Finnsburg, Fight at, 7, 8, 410, 428.
FitzGerald, Edward, 141, 420.
Flaming Heart, The, 164.
Fletcher, John, 64, 139, 140, 142, 144, 412, 421, 436.
Flight of a Tartar Tribe, 324, 444.
Flight of the Duchess, The, 391, 395, 447.
Flodden Field, 290.
Florence, 378, 388.
Folk-Poetry, 4, 5, 45 ff., 80, 81.
Ford, John, 155, 156, 413, 421.
Forest, The, 138.
Forsaken Merman, The, 385, 446.
Fors Clavigera, 352, 355.
Fortunes of Nigel, 444.
Four P's, The, 90, 412.
Fox, John, 97.
Fra Lippo Lippi, 395, 447.
Frederick the Great, Essay on, 340.
Frederick the Great, History of, 340.
French, 34, 36, 38, 39, 41 ff., 47 ff., 51, 52, 60, 61, 66, 76, 79, 82, 83, 141, 178, 180, 183, 198, 292, 357.
French Revolution, 249, 254, 273, 276, 283, 362, 420, 443.
French Revolution, The, 347, 348, 446.
Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, 114, 412.
Fuller, Thomas, 136, 157, 158, 319, 413.
Funeral, The, 209.

Galahad, Sir, 400, 447.
Gammer Gurton's Needle, 97, 412.
Gascoigne, George, 412.
Gawayne and the Grene Knight, Sir, 53, 55, 411, 431.
Gay, John, 214, 414.
Genesis and Exodus, 44, 55, 411.
Genesis, Cædmonian, 18.
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 42, 43, 48.
German, 198, 283, 289, 323, 345, 346, 357.
Germany, 274, 289, 349.
Giaour, The, 300.
Gibbon, Edward, 28, 247, 414, 420, 421, 423.
Gloriana, 108, 109.
Glubdubdrib, 204.

Goblin Market, 416.
God and the Bible, 358.
Godiva, 447.
Godwin, Mary, 306.
Godwin, William, 256, 306, 415, 421.
Goethe, 115, 271, 345.
Going to the Wars, 160, 161.
Golden Grove, The, 157.
Golden Targe, The, 78.
Goldsmith, Essay on, 340, 445.
Goldsmith, Oliver, 182, 224, 234, 239, 242, 244–246, 247, 250, 414, 420, 421, 423, 441, 442.
Good-Natured Man, The, 246, 250, 442.
Gorboduc, 43, 96, 97, 412, 435.
Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions, 95.
"Gothic" Romance, 253, 256, 257, 360.
Gouvernail of Princes, 76, 411.
Gower, John, 56, 60–62, 73, 76, 411, 432, 433.
Grace Abounding, 183.
Grammarian's Funeral, A, 447.
Grande Chartreuse, Stanzas from the, 383.
Gray, Thomas, 224, 230–232, 233, 414, 420, 421, 441, 446.
Grecian Urn, Ode on a, 315, 317, 444.
Greece, 300, 314, 385.
Greek, 91, 121, 151, 177, 178, 180, 190, 218, 317, 321, 323, 357, 378, 439.
Greene, Robert, 112, 114, 412.
Grey of Wilton, Lord, 104, 109.
Guiding Impulses of English Literature, 2, 4, 14 ff., 25, 26, 30, 36–38, 39, 55, 75, 87 ff., 99, 100, 104, 109 ff., 115, 119, 135, 145, 146, 148, 151, 153 ff., 163, 172, 175, 179–182, 196–199, 205, 214, 221–227, 251–255, 263, 268, 269, 283, 294, 295, 298, 313, 329–335, 343, 344, 356, 359, 398.
Guido, Count, 396.
Guinevere, 401, 406, 447.
Gulliver's Travels, 204, 205, 234, 360, 414, 440.
Guthlac, 23.
Guy Mannering, 444.
Guy of Warwick, 49, 411.
Guyon, Sir, 108.

Hallam, Arthur Henry, 397, 405.
Hallelujah, 146.
Hamlet, 129.
Hampden, Essay on, 340.
Handlynge Synne, 49, 51, 55, 411.
Harold, Bulwer-Lytton's, 380.
Harold, Tennyson's, 406.
Harrow, 299.
Hastings, 37, 49.
Hastings, Essay on Warren, 340, 445.
Hastings, Warren, 249.
Hathaway, Anne, 121.
Havelok the Dane, 48, 56, 411, 431.
Hawes, Stephen, 93.
Hawkshead, 272.
Hawthornden, 147.
Hazlitt, William, 325, 326, 415, 420, 422.
Heart of Midlothian, 444.
Hebraism, 356.
Hebrew Melodies, 303.
Hellenics, 415.
Hellenism, 356.
Hengist, 29.
Henry III, 48.
Henry IV, 66, 433, 434.
Henry IV, 128.
Henry V, 76.
Henry V, 128.
Henry VI, 434.
Henry VI, 117, 126.
Henry VII, 434.
Henry VIII, 435.
Henry VIII, 133.
Henry Esmond, 373, 416, 446, 451.
Henryson, Robert, 77, 411.
Herbert, George, 163, 164, 165, 413, 423.
Hero and Leander, 117, 412.

Heroes and Hero-Worship, 347, 348, 421, 445.
Heroic Couplet, 167, 187, 219, 220, 228.
Heroic Stanzas, 186.
Herrick, Robert, 161–163, 413, 421, 438.
Hesperides, 161–163, 413.
Heywood, John, 90, 142, 412.
Heywood, Thomas, 142, 413.
Highland Mary, 265, 443.
Highlands, 242, 290.
Hind and the Panther, The, 188.
Historical Poetry, 112, 113, 143, 186, 206.
History, English, 3, 14, 15, 24 ff., 33 ff., 47, 48, 51, 56, 57, 60, 61, 65 ff., 76 ff., 87, 88, 91, 93, 95, 104, 100, 112, 113, 118 ff., 141, 143, 144, 147, 148, 151, 154 ff., 159, 167, 168, 172 ff., 181 ff., 185, 186, 188, 192, 196, 197, 199, 206, 212, 249, 254, 271, 273, 283, 320, 339, 417, 418, 428 ff., 437 ff., 442 ff., 447, 448.
History of Edward V and Richard III, 92.
History of England, Hume's, 247, 414.
History of England, Macaulay's, 339, 341, 445.
History of England, Robert Manning's, 51.
History of Henry VII, 148.
History of the Kings of Britain, 42, 43.
History of the World, 150, 413.
Hogg, James, 415.
Holinshed, Raphael, 97.
Holy Dying, 159.
Holy Grail, 38, 49.
Holy Living, 157, 413.
Holy State, The, 157.
Holy War, The, 185.
Homer, 141, 188, 189, 218, 261, 413.
Homer and the Homeridæ, 324.
Home Thoughts from Abroad, 447.
Homilies, 25, 31 ff., 40, 45, 49, 50, 410, 411.
Hood, Thomas, 416.
Hooker, Richard, 102, 412.
Hope, 258.
Horace, 188.
Horatius, 342.
Horsa, 29.
Horton, 170.
Hotspur, 128.
Hours of Idleness, 299.
House of Clouds, The, 386.
House of the Wolfings, The, 416.
Hous of Fame, The, 67.
Houyhnhnms, 205.
Howard, Henry. See Surrey.
Hudibras, 192, 414, 440.
Humanists, 91, 92, 94, 435.
Hume, David, 246, 247, 414, 420.
Humphrey Clinker, 238, 414.
Hunt, Leigh, 415, 421.
Husband's Message, The, 21.
Huxley, Thomas Henry, 332.
Hymn, Cædmon's, 17, 18, 28, 410, 429.
Hymn on the Nativity, 170, 172.
Hymns, Spenser's, 107.
Hymn to St. Theresa, 164.
Hyperion, 315, 317, 318, 444.

Iago, 130.
Idea, 112.
Idiot Boy, The, 278.
Idler, The, 242.
Idylls of the King, 400, 403, 406, 426, 447.
Iliad, 218, 440.
Il Penseroso, 170, 229, 438.
Imaginary Conversations, 415.
In a Balcony, 392, 447.
In a Gondola, 392, 395, 447.
India, 249, 339, 340, 442, 447.
Individualism, 225 ff., 230 ff., 236, 240, 242, 244, 249, 251, 252, 254, 255, 262, 267 ff., 272, 278, 282 ff., 295, 297 ff., 301, 302, 304, 305, 313, 314, 326 ff., 338, 342, 343, 359, 415, 442, 443.
In Memoriam, 333, 397, 401, 402, 405, 406, 416, 426, 447.

Inner Temple Masque, The, 146.
Instauratio Magna Scientiarum, 148.
Interludes, 90, 96, 118, 142, 412, 434, 435.
Intimations of Immortality, 280, 281, 415.
Ireland, 102, 104, 107, 199, 200, 203, 215, 326, 429.
Irene, 250.
Irish, 15, 104, 199, 203, 206, 249, 250, 326, 447.
Irish Essays, 357.
Irish Melodies, 326, 415.
Isabella, 316.
Italian Literature, 65, 66, 67, 94.
Italy, 65, 66, 73, 94, 143, 164, 289, 300, 301, 306, 312, 385.
Ivanhoe, 292, 444.
Ivry, Battle of, 342.

Jacobean Literature, 143–152, 419.
James I, 141, 143, 144, 148, 151, 153, 154, 437.
James I of Scotland, 77, 411, 421.
James II, 181, 188, 417, 439.
Jane Eyre, 416.
Jaques, 129.
Jeffrey, Francis, 415, 425.
Jew of Malta, The, 115, 116, 412, 436, 437.
Joan of Arc, 324, 444.
John Anderson my Jo, 265.
John Gilpin, 258, 442.
John of Gaunt, 57, 66.
"Johnsonese," 243, 244.
Johnson, Essay on, 340, 445.
Johnson, Esther, 203.
Johnson, Life of, 244, 421, 423, 441.
Johnson, Samuel, 166, 181, 182, 207, 221, 222, 227, 234, 239–244, 246 ff., 252, 253, 255, 257, 270, 348, 414, 420, 421, 423, 441.
Jonathan Wild, 237.
Jonson, Ben, 121, 135–139, 141, 143, 146, 147, 150, 151, 159, 161, 169, 180, 181, 412, 422, 436, 437
Joseph Andrews, 236
Journal of the Plague Year, 212, 440.
Journal to Stella, 203.
Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, 242.
Judith, 20, 410, 429.
Juliana, 22.
Juliet, 127, 128.
Julius Cæsar, 129, 436.
Jungle Books, 416.
Junian Manuscript, 18.
Jutes, The, 3.
Juvenal, 188, 241.

Keats, John, 269, 310, 312–318, 351, 415, 420, 421, 424, 444 ff.
Keble, John, 416, 424.
Kenilworth, 118.
Kenilworth, 292, 444.
Kent, 51, 61, 65.
Killigrew, Elegy on Anne, 188.
Kim, 416.
King, Edward, 171, 172.
King Hart, 78.
King Horn, 48, 56, 411.
King John, 128.
King Lear, 43, 48, 131.
Kingsley, Charles, 380, 416, 425.
King's Quair, The, 77, 411, 433.
Kipling, Rudyard, 416, 427.
Knightes Tale, The, 72, 77, 432, 439.
Knowles, James Sheridan, 415.
Knox, John, 97, 348.
Kyd, Thomas, 114.

La Belle Dame sans Merci, 444.
Lady of Shalott, The, 400, 402, 404, 447.
Lady of the Lake, 290, 291, 444, 445.
Lagado, 204.
Lake District, 272, 274, 321, 323, 429.
Lake Poets, 326.
Lalla Rookh, 326.
L'Allegro, 170, 229, 438.
Lamb, Charles, 142, 318–320, 415, 420, 421, 424, 436, 444, 445.
Lamb, Mary, 318, 319.
Lament for the Makers, 78.

Lamia, 316.
Lancelot, 406.
Landor, Walter Savage, 326, 327, 415, 420, 421.
Langland, William, 38, 56, 58–60, 61, 89, 411, 432, 433.
Language, English, 5 ff., 11 ff., 17, 24, 26 ff., 30, 31, 34, 35, 40 ff., 49 ff., 56, 60, 61, 63, 66, 69 ff., 76, 106, 119, 418.
Laputa, 204.
Lara, 300.
Last Days of Pompeii, 380, 416.
Last Ride Together, The, 392, 447.
Latimer, Hugh, 93, 412.
Latin, 19, 26, 27, 34, 39, 41, 42, 48, 50, 52, 57, 61, 83, 91, 93, 102, 121, 148, 149, 151, 164, 172, 180, 191, 243.
Latter-Day Pamphlets, 349.
Layamon, 38, 40–43, 44, 48, 56, 411, 431, 432.
Lay of the Last Minstrel, 289, 290, 444.
Lays of Ancient Rome, 342, 416.
Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare, 288.
Leech-Gatherer, The, 278.
Legend of Good Women, 67.
Leicester, Earl of, 104, 109.
Letter to a Noble Lord, 249.
"Levana and our Ladies of Sorrow," 323, 444.
Lewes, George Henry, 374.
Lewis, Matthew Gregory, 256, 415.
Liberty, Ode to, 230.
Liberty of Prophesying, 157, 438.
Life and Death of Mr. Badman, 185.
Light Brigade, Charge of the, 400, 404.
Light of Asia, The, 416.
Lilliputians, 204.
Lincolnshire, 49, 397.
Litany, The, 162.
Literature and Dogma, 358.
Little Dorrit, 362.
Little Jo, 363.
Little Nell, 363.
Lives of the English Poets, 242, 243, 414, 441.
Lives of the Saints, 32, 45, 410, 411.
Loch Katrine, 290.
Lockhart, John Gibson, 415, 424.
Locksley Hall, 447.
Lodge, Thomas, 112, 114, 411.
Lollards, 57, 58, 89, 433.
London, 57, 58, 64, 69, 76, 83, 103, 104, 107, 111, 114, 121, 122, 135 ff., 169, 186, 189, 199, 203, 212, 234, 235, 300, 318, 321, 345, 352, 361, 362, 367, 373, 374, 388.
London, Johnson's, 241.
London Lickpenny, 76.
Lorna Doone, 416.
Lotos-Eaters, The, 399, 402, 404, 447.
Louis XI, 292.
Love for Love, 194, 414.
Lovelace, Richard, 160, 161, 413, 438.
Love Poetry, 21, 44 ff., 61, 67, 72, 73, 77, 81, 94, 107, 111, 112, 122–126, 127, 130, 140, 145, 147, 159–163, 165, 166, 192, 214, 264, 265, 387, 391, 392, 405.
Lover's Complaint, A, 123.
Love's Labour's Lost, 126.
"Love still has something of the sea," 192.
Lucifer, 176.
Lucrece, 123.
Lucretius, 404.
Luggnagg, 205.
Luther, 202, 348.
Lycidas, 171 ff., 310, 438, 445.
Lydgate, John, 76, 411, 433, 434.
Lying Lover, The, 209.
Lyly, John, 100, 102, 103, 112 ff., 412, 422, 435.
Lyndesay, Sir David, 93, 412.
Lyrical Ballads, 271, 274, 284.
Lyric Poetry, 7, 20, 21, 45–47, 51, 80, 93 ff., 106, 107, 111 ff., 117, 123–126, 138, 139, 142 ff., 159–163, 166, 169 ff., 188, 191 ff., 214, 229, 230,

233, 253, 258, 261, 268, 281, 290, 303, 307–312, 317, 384, 386 ff., 395, 396, 403, 405, 411, 412, 419, 427, 439.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 194, 337–342, 343, 347, 356, 416, 420, 421, 424, 438, 440, 445, 448.
Macbeth, 131, 132, 142, 436, 437, 450.
Macbeth, Lady, 132, 437.
Macduff, 132.
MacFlecknoe, 187.
Machiavelli, Essay on, 340.
Macpherson, James, 232.
Magnyfycence, 93, 412.
Mahomet, 348.
Maiden Queen, The, 187.
Making of Man, The, 407, 447.
Malaprop, Mrs., 250.
Malcontent, The, 141, 413.
Maldon, Battle of, 30, 410, 429, 430.
Malory, Sir Thomas, 78, 79, 411, 433, 434.
Mammon, Sir Epicure, 137.
Mandeville's Travels, 52, 411, 431, 432.
Manfred, 302.
Manning, Robert, 49, 51, 55, 411.
Man's a man for a' that, A, 227, 254, 265, 268, 443.
Mansfield Park, 296.
Marguerite, 384.
Marius and Sylla, 114, 412.
Marlowe, Christopher, 112, 114–117, 119, 135, 136, 141, 143, 147, 156, 412, 421, 436, 437.
Marmion, 290, 415, 444, 445.
Marshalsea Prison, 361.
Marston, John, 141, 413.
Marvell, Andrew, 191, 192, 414, 420.
Mary in Heaven, To, 265, 443.
Mary Morison, 265.
Mary, Queen of Scots, 109, 437.
Mary, To, 257, 259.
Mary, Virgin, 44, 45.
Masques, 138, 146, 171, 412.
Massacre of Paris, 117.
Massinger, Philip, 155, 156, 413.
Maud, 401, 405, 447.
Measure for Measure, 129.
Medal, The, 187.
Mediterranean, 311.
Melrose Abbey, 290.
Memoirs of a Cavalier, 212.
Merchant of Venice, 128, 436, 437, 450.
Meredith, George, 381, 416, 426.
Merlin and the Gleam, 447.
Merry Wives of Windsor, 128.
Metaphysical Poetry, 144, 145, 166.
Methodism, 253, 442.
Michael, 278, 279.
Michel, Dan, 51, 411.
Middle Ages, 38, 44, 49, 62 ff., 66, 68, 76, 79, 83 ff., 87, 89, 92, 93, 96, 115, 118, 223, 226, 239, 253, 257, 289 ff., 314, 349, 406.
Middle English, 35 ff., 40, 41, 43 ff., 62, 65, 79.
Middlemarch, 378.
Middleton, Thomas, 142, 413.
Midsummer Night's Dream, 126, 127.
Miller's Daughter, The, 400, 403, 404, 447.
Mill on the Floss, The, 377, 446.
Milton, Essay on, 338, 340, 438, 445.
Milton, John, 64, 138, 146, 153 ff., 159, 163 ff., 168–178, 180, 182, 183, 189 ff., 198, 229, 230, 252, 261, 270, 274, 310, 323, 413, 419 ff., 423, 427, 437, 438, 441, 445.
Minot, Lawrence, 51, 411.
Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, 289, 433.
Mirabeau, Essay on, 340.
Miracle Plays, 82, 83, 118, 411, 433 ff.
Miranda, 133.
Mirror for Magistrates, 95, 96, 412.
Misanthrope, Le, 141.
Mixed Essays, 357.
Modern Painters, 353, 354, 416, 446.
Modest Proposal, 203.
Molière, 141.
Moll Flanders, 212.

Monk, The, 256, 415.
Montague, 127.
Moonstone, The, 416.
Moore, Thomas, 326, 415, 420, 424.
Moral Epistles, 219.
Moralities, 85, 89, 90, 93, 96, 118, 411, 412, 433 ff.
Morality, 383.
Moral Ode, 40, 44, 55.
More, Sir Thomas, 91, 92, 148, 412.
Morris, William, 334, 416, 421, 426, 446.
Morte d'Arthur, Malory's, 78, 79, 411, 433.
Morte d'Arthur, Tennyson's, 447.
Mother Hubbard's Tale, 107.
Mother's Picture, On the Receipt of my, 259, 442.
Mouse, To a, 443.
Much Ado About Nothing, 128.
Muipotmos, 107.
Munera Pulveris, 354.
Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts, 324.
Musical Instrument, A, 386.
My Last Duchess, 447.
"My mind to me a kingdom is," 112.
My Nanie, O, 265.
Mysteries, 82–85, 89, 96, 118, 411, 433 ff.
Mysteries of Udolpho, 256, 415.

Napoleon, 348, 415, 445.
Napoleon, Life of, 415.
Naseby, Battle of, 342.
Nash, Thomas, 114, 117.
Nature in English Literature, 4, 5, 11, 21, 45 ff., 53, 74, 77, 78, 105, 106, 120, 122, 146, 157 ff., 161 ff., 165, 170, 214, 217, 218, 224 ff., 233, 245, 252, 259, 260, 262 ff., 269, 273–277, 279, 280, 283, 286, 287, 293, 301, 302, 305, 308–311, 314, 317, 352, 353, 392, 397, 402, 403, 420, 442, 443.
Necessity of Atheism, 306.
Ned Bratts, 395.
Nelson, Life of, 326, 415.
Nether Stowey, 284.
New Atlantis, 148.
Newcome, Colonel, 368, 370.
Newcomes, The, 368, 446.
Newman, John Henry, 416, 425.
New Way to Pay Old Debts, 156, 413.
Nicholas Nickleby, 362, 446.
Nigger Question, The, 349.
Nightingale, Ode to a, 317, 444.
Night Thoughts, 224, 229, 414.
Noble Numbers, 162.
Noctes Ambrosianæ, 415.
Norman Conquest, 27, 29, 31 ff., 35, 36, 39, 179, 221, 417, 418, 431.
Norman French, 34, 37 ff., 41 ff., 47 ff., 51, 56.
Normans, 35 ff., 43, 49, 54, 56, 119, 432.
Norse Mythology, 232, 233.
Northanger Abbey, 296.
Northern Antiquities, 232.
Northern Cobbler, The, 404.
Northern Farmer, The, 398, 404, 447.
Northumbria, 15, 17, 23, 24, 26 ff., 51, 429.
Norton, Thomas, 97.
Novel, The, 185, 211, 213, 224, 226, 227, 234–239, 245, 246, 253, 255–257, 272, 291–293, 295–298, 318, 331, 332, 359–381, 414 ff., 419, 441 ff., 446, 448. See also Fiction, Prose.
Novum Organum, 148.
Nut-Browne Maid, The, 81.

Occleve, Thomas, 76, 411, 433, 434.
Odyssey, 218.
Œnone, 404.
Old Curiosity Shop, 361, 446.
Old Fortunatus, 142, 413.
Old Mortality, 444.
Old Pictures in Florence, 395, 447.
Oliver Twist, 446.
Olney, 257, 258.
On his being arrived at the Age of Twenty three, 170.
Oratory, 156, 157, 248, 250, 325.

Oriental Romance, 33, 256, 300, 314, 326.
Orison of Our Lady, 44, 55.
Orm, 38, 43, 44, 411.
Ormulum, 43, 44, 55, 411.
Orosius, 28, 29, 410, 430.
Orphan, The, 193.
Ossian, 233.
Othello, 129, 130.
Otway, Thomas, 193, 414, 439.
Our Mutual Friend, 361.
Overbury, Sir Thomas, 151.
Overreach, Sir Giles, 156.
Ovid, 188, 189.
Owl and the Nightingale, The, 47, 411.
Oxford, 50, 56, 91, 306, 321, 357, 382.

Paganism, 1, 3 ff., 11, 14, 20, 22, 25, 26, 30, 31, 348, 429.
Pageants, 84, 118.
Palace of Art, The, 404, 447.
Palamon and Arcite, 439.
Palice of Honour, 78, 411.
Palladium, 334, 384, 446.
Pamela, 235, 236, 414, 441.
Pantisocracy, 283.
Paracelsus, 391.
Paradise Lost, 175–177, 342, 413, 438.
Paradise of Dainty Devices, 95.
Paradise Regained, 175, 177.
Paraphrase, Cædmonian, 18.
Parisina, 300.
Parlement of Foules, 67.
Parliament, 65, 191, 208, 338, 339, 432 ff., 437 ff., 445.
Passionate Pilgrim, The, 123.
Passionate Shepherd to his Love, The, 117.
Passion Play, 84.
Passions, Ode to the, 229.
Past and Present, 349.
Pastoral Care, 27, 28, 430.
Pastorals, 77, 101, 107, 129, 147, 171.
Pater, Walter, 416.
Patience, 54, 55, 411.
Paul Dombey, 363.
Pauline, 271.
Pearl, The, 53, 55, 411, 431.
Peele, George, 112, 114, 412.
Pennsylvania, 283.
Percy, Thomas, 232.
Peregrine Pickle, 238.
Pericles, 33.
Periodical Essay, 207–212, 242, 246, 414.
Persuasion, 297.
Peter Bell, 278.
Peterborough, 34.
Petrarch, 65, 73.
Petrarch, Essay on, 340.
Pheidippides, 395.
Philaster, 140, 412, 436.
Philistinism, 356.
Phillis, 412.
Philosophical Poetry, 113, 144, 145, 175, 219, 241, 280, 281, 390–393, 405 ff.
Philosophy, 147, 148, 156, 175, 190, 214, 246, 249, 256, 281, 283, 287, 316, 324, 333, 345 ff., 390.
Phœnix and the Turtle, The, 123.
Phœnix, The, 23, 410, 429.
Pickwick Papers, 446.
Piers Plowman, 58–60, 411, 421.
Pilgrim's Progress, 183–185, 234, 414, 439.
Pindaric Odes, Gray's, 230.
Pindarique Odes, Cowley's, 166.
Pippa Passes, 392, 396, 397, 447.
Pitt, William, Earl of Chatham, Essay on, 340, 445 (442).
Pitt, William, Essay on, 340, 445, (443).
Plain-Dealer, The, 194, 414.
Plautus, 90.
Pleasures of Hope, The, 326, 415.
Plutarch, 188.
Poema Morale, 40, 411.
Poet-Laureate, 188, 270, 326, 397.
Poets' Corner, 66, 104, 189.
Poet's Mind, The, 403.
Poet, The, 403, 447.
Political Justice, 414.

Polyolbion, 113, 412.
Pompilia, 396.
Pope, Alexander, 64, 147, 166, 181, 182, 196, 198, 214–220, 221, 225, 227, 240, 241, 252, 257, 270, 323, 380, 414, 419 ff., 423, 440, 441.
Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, 230.
Portia, 128, 437.
Præterita, 355.
Prayer Book, English, 93.
Prelude, The, 274, 281, 443.
Pricke of Conscience, 50, 55, 411.
Pride and Prejudice, 296, 415, 444.
Prince Hal, 76, 128.
Princess, The, 401, 402, 404, 405, 426, 447.
Printing, 78, 87, 434.
Prior, Matthew, 214, 414.
Prisoner of Chillon, 444.
Procter, Bryan Waller, 415.
Profane State, The, 157.
Progress of Error, The, 258.
Progress of Poesy, The, 231, 441.
Prometheus Unbound, 311, 312, 415, 424, 444.
Prophetic Books, 261.
Prose, English, 19, 25–34, 45, 50 ff., 57, 58, 78, 79, 92, 93, 97, 100–103, 139, 148–152, 156–159, 169, 173, 174, 183, 184, 186, 189–191, 198, 199, 202, 205, 207, 209, 211, 213, 214, 235, 241 ff., 255, 288, 297, 318, 319, 322, 324, 325, 327, 340, 341, 350 ff., 355, 358, 365, 371, 418.
Prospero, 133.
Prospice, 394, 447.
Protestant Cemetery at Rome, 305, 306, 313.
Protestantism, 57, 92, 435.
Prothalamion, 107.
Provoked Wife, The, 194.
Puck, 126, 127.
Pulley, The, 164.
Puritans and Puritanism, 57, 58, 103, 146, 152, 155, 156, 159, 161 ff., 168, 172, 173, 175, 178, 179, 181 ff., 186, 191 ff., 196, 348, 417, 419, 435, 438, 439.
Purpose in Fiction, 366, 368, 372, 379, 380.

Quantock Hills, 284.
Queen Mary, 406.
Quentin Durward, 292.

Rabbi Ben Ezra, 389, 390, 395, 447.
Race, Literature and, 1, 35 ff., 49, 56, 75, 119, 178, 180, 429, 453.
Radcliffe, Ann, 256, 296, 415.
Raleigh, Sir Walter, 104, 109, 144, 147, 150, 151, 413, 423.
Ralph Roister Doister, 90, 96.
Rambler, The, 242.
Rape of the Lock, 217, 219, 440, 441.
Rasselas, 239, 241, 414, 441.
Reade, Charles, 380, 416, 421.
Realism, 47, 60, 63, 68, 70, 74, 78, 90, 91, 103, 134, 136, 137, 140, 185, 205, 208, 212 ff., 226, 227, 235 ff., 255, 256, 260, 296–298, 330, 332, 359 ff., 368 ff., 377, 380, 381, 391.
Recessional, 416.
Recruiting Officer, The, 194, 195.
Red Cross Knight, 108, 110.
Reformation, 57, 87 ff., 92 ff., 97, 99, 104, 109 ff., 119, 153, 154, 175, 179, 348, 411, 412, 417, 433 ff.
Reform Bill of 1832, 271, 329, 339, 445.
Reign of Terror, 273, 347.
Relapse, The, 194.
Religio Laici, 188.
Religio Medici, 158, 413.
Religion, 3 ff., 11, 14–16, 22, 24 ff., 28, 33, 35, 37 ff., 42 ff., 47, 49 ff., 53 ff., 63, 75, 78, 82, 84, 85, 87 ff., 92, 94, 99, 100, 109, 111, 112, 118, 145 ff., 153 ff., 159, 162 ff., 169, 172, 173, 175, 178, 179, 181, 183, 184, 186, 188, 196, 224 ff., 229, 252, 253, 258, 259, 262, 266, 267, 270, 333, 334, 344, 356, 375, 382, 385, 389, 429, 448.

Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, 232.
Renaissance, 83, 87 ff., 91, 92, 94, 99, 100, 104, 109 ff., 115, 119, 135, 145, 146, 148, 151, 153 ff., 172, 175, 179, 223, 226, 265, 411, 412, 418, 419, 434, 435.
Restoration, 174, 182, 183, 185, 186, 189, 191 ff., 195, 197, 199, 215, 246, 417, 439, 440.
Retirement, 258.
Revenge, The, Tennyson's, 401, 404, 447.
Revenge, The, Young's, 250.
Revival of Learning, 87, 91, 92, 435.
Revolutionary Spirit, 225, 231, 257, 269, 273, 298, 299, 305, 306, 311, 313, 329, 348.
Revolution of 1688, 188.
Rhyme of the Duchess May, 387.
Richard I, 292.
Richard II, 67, 126, 433.
Richard III, 126, 127, 132.
Richardson, Samuel, 224, 235 ff., 256, 414, 420, 421, 423, 441.
Richelieu, 416.
Ring and the Book, The, 394, 396, 416.
Rivals, The, 250, 442.
Rizpah, 401.
Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*, 48, 51, 411.
Robin Hood, 80.
Robinson Crusoe, 213, 234, 235, 414, 440.
Robyne and Makyne, 77.
Rochester, John Wilmot, Earl of, 192, 193.
Roderick Dhu, 290.
Roderick Random, 238.
Rolle, Richard, 50, 55, 411.
Romance, 33, 35, 37 ff., 42 ff., 47 ff., 51 ff., 61, 62, 66 ff., 72 ff., 77 ff., 85, 100, 101, 103, 114, 120, 126 ff., 132 ff., 137, 142, 148, 179, 185, 204, 212, 213, 223, 234, 239, 288, 330, 395, 396, 431 ff. See also Romanticism.
Roman Empire, Decline and Fall of the, 247, 414.
Romanticism, 104, 113, 117, 135, 136, 138 ff., 166, 172, 179, 180, 193, 205, 217, 218, 221 ff., 232, 233, 236, 239, 242, 245, 252, 253, 256, 257, 260, 262, 265, 266, 269, 283, 285 ff., 291 ff., 305, 313, 314, 319, 324, 326, 327, 334, 359, 360, 362, 380, 385, 403, 406, 420, 424, 441, 442. See also Romance.
Rome, 15, 21, 22, 28, 109, 129, 138, 305, 306, 312.
Romeo and Juliet, 126, 127.
Romola, 378.
Rosalind, 412.
Rosamond, 207.
Rossetti, Christina, 416, 426.
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 416, 420, 421, 423, 425, 426, 446.
Round Table, 43, 79.
Rousseau, 348,
Roxana, 212.
Royalists, 159–161, 166, 186.
Royal Society, 339.
Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, 141.
Rugby, 382.
Rugby Chapel, 334, 384, 446.
Ruins of Rome, 107.
Ruins of Time, 107.
Ruin, The, 21.
Runes, 22, 24.
Ruskin, John, 351–355, 356, 358, 416, 420, 421, 424 ff., 446, 448.
Ruthwell, Cross, 20, 23, 410.

Sackville, Thomas, 95 ff., 412, 435.
St. Agnes' Eve, 400, 447.
St. Albans, 52, 147.
St. Cecilia's Day, Song for, 188, 439.
St. Katherine, 82, 83.
St. Mary Redcliffe, 233.
St. Patrick's, Dublin, 200.
St. Paul and Protestantism, 358.
St. Paul's, 57, 144, 169.

St. Peter, 202.
St. Ronan's Well, 292.
Samson Agonistes, 175, 177, 178, 413, 438, 439.
Sartor Resartus, 271, 345 ff., 416, 446.
Satan, 177.
Satire, 47, 63, 73, 74, 78, 93, 94, 113, 131, 137, 141, 146, 187 ff., 191, 192, 200 ff., 207, 208, 210–212, 214, 216 ff., 229, 237, 238, 241, 258, 296, 297, 299, 304, 369, 371, 372, 377, 405, 439 ff., 450.
Satire of the Three Estates, 412.
Saturn, 317.
Saul, 392, 393, 395, 447.
Savonarola, 378.
Saxons, The, 3, 11.
Scandinavian Mythology, 348.
Scenes from Clerical Life, 377.
Schiller, Life of, 345, 348.
Scholar-Gypsy, The, 385, 446.
Scholasticism, 65, 92.
School for Scandal, The, 250, 414, 442.
Schoolmaster, The, 92, 97, 412.
Schools and Universities on the Continent, 357.
Science, 147, 148, 190, 316, 328, 331–335, 343, 344, 352, 353, 356, 359, 360, 375, 381, 385, 388, 389, 391 ff., 398, 448.
Scop, 5 ff., 11, 12, 19, 21, 429.
Scotch, The, 51, 77, 78, 80 ff., 93, 141, 147, 228, 244, 264, 265, 268, 292, 293, 326, 345, 351, 433, 434.
Scotland, 20, 77, 78, 80, 81, 263, 289, 291, 345, 418, 429.
Scott, Life of, 415, 424.
Scott, Sir Walter, 239, 269, 271, 288–295, 297, 300, 313, 314, 318, 359, 379, 380, 415, 420, 421, 424, 433, 444, 445.
Seafarer, The, 21, 429.
Seasons, The, 228, 229, 414.
Sedley, Sir Charles, 192.
Sejanus, 137.
Senecan Drama, 97, 118, 180.
Sense and Sensibility, 296, 444.
Sentimentalism, 224, 226, 229, 230, 236 ff., 253, 260, 296, 363, 366.
Sentimental Journey, 224, 238, 414.
Sesame and Lilies, 355, 446.
Seven Lamps of Architecture, 353.
Shakespeare, William, 33, 64, 76, 99, 100, 111 ff., 116, 117, 118–135 ff., 147, 154, 155, 157, 166, 177, 180, 220, 223, 251, 271, 287, 301, 318, 319, 323, 326, 347, 348, 362, 373, 379, 403, 412, 419, 421, 422, 435 ff., 439, 450.
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 234, 269, 299, 305–312 ff., 318, 337, 415, 420, 421, 424, 427, 444, 445.
Shepherd's Calendar, 106, 107.
Shepherd's Hunting, 146, 413.
Shepherd's Pipe, 145, 146.
Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 246, 250, 255, 414, 420, 421, 423, 442.
She Stoops to Conquer, 246, 250, 442.
Shooting Niagara: and After, 349.
Shortest Way with the Dissenters, 212.
Shylock, 128, 437.
Sidney, Sir Philip, 64, 81, 99, 101 ff., 107, 109, 111, 112, 144, 147, 412, 420, 422, 435 ff.
Siege of Corinth, 300.
Silas Marner, 376, 377, 446.
Silent Voices, The, 407, 447.
Silent Woman, The, 137.
Sir Charles Grandison, 236.
Sir Launcelot Greaves, 238.
Sir Patrick Spens, 81, 82.
Sir Tristrem, 48, 49, 56, 411.
Skelton, John, 93, 94, 412.
Skylark, To a, 308, 444.
Smith, Sydney, 415, 420.
Smollett, Tobias, 238, 414, 421, 423.
Sohrab and Rustum, 384, 385, 446.
Solitude, On, 166.
Somersby, 397.
Somersetshire, 273, 284.
Song of Roland, 37, 49.
Song of the Shirt, 416.
Songs of Experience, 261.

Songs of Innocence, 261.
Sonnets, 94, 107, 111, 112, 122, 123–126, 147, 170, 172, 173, 281, 387.
Sonnets from the Portuguese, 386–388, 416, 446, 448.
Sonnets, Shakespeare's, 112, 123–126, 127, 143, 412, 422.
Southey, Robert, 270, 283, 323, 326, 415, 420, 421, 423, 424.
Southwark, 69.
Spain, 109, 160, 300, 437.
Spanish Friar, The, 187.
Spanish Gypsy, George Eliot's, 416.
Spanish Gypsy, Middleton's, 142.
Spanish Nun, The, 324, 444.
Spanish Tragedy, 114.
Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, 319, 436.
Spectator, The, 210–212, 242, 440, 441.
Speculum Meditantis, 61.
Spencer, Herbert, 332.
Spenser, Edmund, 64, 103–111 ff., 116, 117, 119, 144, 146, 147, 154, 169, 184, 228, 229, 265, 412, 420 ff., 427, 436, 437, 441.
Spenserian Stanza, 106, 108, 110, 111, 228, 264, 310, 437.
Spring, Ode on the, 230.
Stanzas for Music, 303.
Steele Glas, The, 412.
Steele, Sir Richard, 182, 207–212, 213, 235, 242, 249, 414, 423, 440, 441.
Sterling, John, Life of, 349.
Sterne, Lawrence, 224, 238, 239, 414, 420, 421, 423, 441.
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 380, 416, 421, 424 ff.
Still, John, 97.
Stones of Venice, 353, 446.
Storie of Thebes, 76.
Stow, John, 97.
Strafford, 396.
Stratford, 118, 120 ff., 133.
Strayed Reveller, The, 385, 446.
Struldbrugs, 205.
Sublime and Beautiful, Origin of our Ideas of the, 248, 249.
Suckling, Sir John, 160, 413, 438.
Surrey, Henry Howard, Earl of, 89, 94, 95, 412, 418, 435.
Suspiria de Profundis, 322.
Susquehanna, 283.
Swift, Jonathan, 182, 199–206, 208, 212, 213, 215, 216, 234, 356, 414, 420, 423, 440.
Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 48, 334, 416, 421 ff., 426, 446.

Tabard Inn, 69.
Table Talk, 258.
Taillefer, 37, 49.
Tale of a Tub, 202.
Tale of Two Cities, 361, 446.
Tales from Shakespeare, 319.
Tales of the Hall, 260.
Talisman, The, 292, 444.
Tamburlaine, 114, 115, 117.
Taming of the Shrew, 128.
Tam O'Shanter, 253, 265, 266, 442.
Task, The, 259, 415, 442.
Tatler, The, 210.
Taylor, Jeremy, 156 ff., 169, 198, 319, 413, 420, 423, 438.
Tears of the Muses, 107.
Teazle, Sir Peter and Lady, 250.
Tempest, The, 133.
Temple, Essay on, 340.
Temple, Sir William, 190, 199, 201, 203, 414, 421, 439.
Temple, The, 164, 413.
Tender Husband, The, 209.
Tennyson, Alfred, 48, 63, 271, 305, 327, 333, 337, 359, 386, 397–407, 416, 418, 420, 421, 424 ff., 430, 445 ff.
Testament of Creseide, 77.
Teufelsdröckh, Diogenes, 346.
Thackeray, William Makepeace, 332, 360, 367–373, 377, 379, 380, 416, 420, 421, 425, 446, 448, 451.
Thalaba, 415.
Thistle and the Rose, The, 77, 78, 411.
Thomson, James, 214, 227–229, 250, 252, 275, 414, 423, 441.

Thyrsis, 385, 416, 446.
Tiger, The, 262.
Timber, 139, 412.
Timon of Athens, 131.
Tintern Abbey, Lines composed above, 132, 277.
Titania, 127.
Titans, 311, 317.
Tithonus, 404.
Tito Melema, 378.
Titus Andronicus, 126.
Toilette of the Hebrew Lady, 324.
Tom Jones, 237, 414, 441.
Tottel's Miscellany, 95, 412, 435.
Towneley, 83, 434.
Toxophilus, 92.
Tragedy, 96, 97, 114–117, 118, 126, 127, 129 ff., 134, 137, 138, 140, 142, 143, 156, 177, 187, 193, 207, 229, 250, 419, 435.
Translating Homer, On, 357.
Traveller, The, 244, 245.
Treasure Island, 380.
Triamond, 108.
Trinity College, Dublin, 199.
Tristram Shandy, 238, 414, 441.
Troilus and Cressida, 131.
Troilus and Criseyde, 67, 77.
Trojan Romances, 42, 49.
Trollope, Anthony, 380, 416, 421, 425.
Trossachs, The, 290.
Troy, 49, 67.
Troye Book, 76.
Truth, 258.
Turner, J. M. W., 352, 353.
Twelfth Night, 129.
Two Gentlemen of Verona, 126.
Two Voices, The, 401, 447.
Tyndale, William, 89, 92, 151, 412, 422, 432, 435.
Tyndall, John, 332.
Tyrannic Love, 187.

Udall, Nicholas, 90, 96, 412.
Ulysses, 404, 447.
Underwoods, 138.
University Wits, 113, 114, 118.
Unto this Last, 354.
Unwins, The, 257.
Urn Burial, 158.
Utopia, 91, 92, 148, 283, 412, 435.

Vanbrugh, Sir John, 194, 414.
Vanessa, 203.
Vanity Fair, 368, 372, 446.
Vanity of Human Wishes, 241, 414.
Vathek, 256, 415.
Vaughan, Henry, 165, 413.
Venice, 128, 137, 388.
Venice Preserved, 193, 414, 439.
Venus and Adonis, 122, 123.
Versification, 5 ff., 11, 12, 17, 18, 39 ff., 50, 51, 53, 60, 71 ff., 80 ff., 94, 95, 97, 106, 110, 114 ff., 142, 146, 166, 167, 171, 176, 187, 192, 216 ff., 228, 259, 265, 276, 281, 284, 291, 307, 310, 384, 386, 401, 429.
Vicar of Wakefield, 239, 245, 414, 441.
Vice, The, in Moralities, 90.
Victorian Period, 335, 359, 381, 399, 420, 421, 427, 447.
Victoria, Queen, 399, 447.
Village, The, 260, 415.
Virgil, 78, 95, 188, 412.
Virgil's Gnat, 107.
Virginius, 415.
Virgins, To the, 162.
Vision of Poets, 387.
Vittoria Corombona, 143.
Volpone, 137.
Vox Clamantis, 61.

Wace, 41 ff., 48.
Waldhere, 8, 410.
Wales, 321, 429.
Waller, Edmund, 165, 167, 413.
Walpole, Horace, 239, 256.
Walton, Izaak, 158, 159, 413, 421 438.
Wanderer, The, 21, 429.
Warner, William, 113.
Warwickshire, 120, 373, 378.
Waterloo, 301, 372, 444.
Waverley, 289.

Waverley Novels, 289, 339, 415.
Way of the World, The, 194.
Webster, John, 143, 156, 413, 421, 436.
Weissnichtwo, 346.
Welsh, 42, 43, 230.
Welsh, Jane, 345.
Wesleys, The, 224, 253, 442.
Westbrook, Harriet, 306.
Westminster Abbey, 66, 104, 135, 137, 189, 210, 211.
Westminster Review, 373.
Westminster School, 135.
West-Saxon, 23, 24, 26 ff., 30, 31, 429.
Westward Ho! 416.
West Wind, Ode to the, 308, 309, 444.
Whims and Oddities, 416.
White Devil, The, 143.
"Why so pale and wan, fond lover?" 160.
Widsith, 5-7, 21, 22, 410, 428.
Wife of Bath's Tale, 61.
Wife's Complaint, The, 21.
Wilhelm Meister, 345.
William III, 188, 417, 439.
William the Conqueror, 37.
Will Summer's Testament, 114.
Wilson, John, 415.
Winchester, 27, 29, 33.
Windsor, 66, 77.
Windsor Forest, 218, 227.
Winter's Tale, 133.
Wishes to his Supposed Mistress, 165.
Wish, The, 166.
Witch, The, 142.
Wither, George, 146, 147, 413, 421.
Woman Killed with Kindness, A, 142, 413.
Women Beware Women, 142.
Worcester, 33, 34, 83, 93.
Wordsworth, Dorothy, 284.
Wordsworth, William, 132, 233, 251, 268, 269, 270–281 ff., 287, 288, 291, 294, 297, 298, 306, 307, 314, 321, 323, 326, 328, 330, 334, 400, 415, 420, 421, 424, 443, 445, 446.
Worthies of England, 157, 413.
Wulfstan, 25, 32, 33, 410.
Wyatt, Sir Thomas, 89, 94, 95, 412, 435.
Wycherley, William, 194, 414.
Wyclif, John, 38, 56–58, 89, 92, 151, 411, 421, 432, 433, 435.

Yahoos, 205, 341.
Ye Mariners of England, 326.
York, 32, 83.
Yorkshire, 16, 50.
"*You ask me, why, though ill at ease*," 447.
Young, Edward, 214, 224, 229, 250, 414, 441.

Zeus, 311, 312.

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