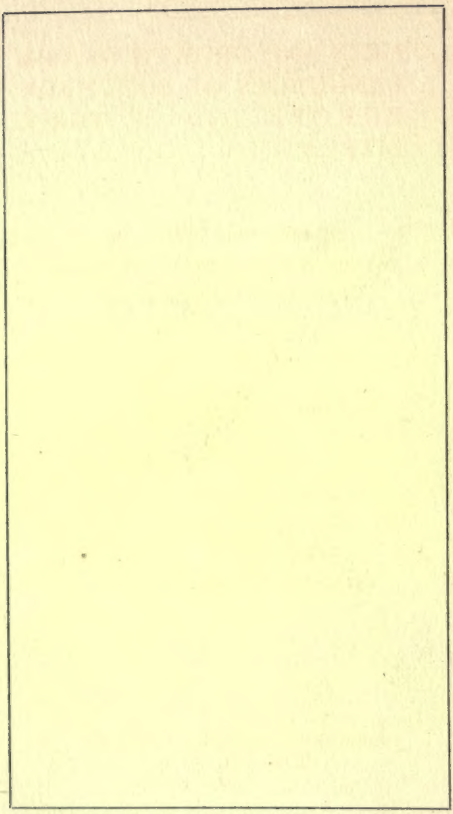
# INAUGURAL ADDRESS



# ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE LANGUAGES OF SOUTHERN EUROPE AND OF THEIR LITERATURE : : : : :

An Inaugural Address by

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Professor of Modern Languages
in Bowdoin College

*Non clamor*  *sed amor*



Delivered September 2, 1830

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## PREFATORY NOTE

AMONG the treasured books in Bowdoin College Library is a well worn copy of Horace, used by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow during his college course. From its pages, tradition tells us, he made one day so brilliant a rendering of an ode, that a prominent trustee, Hon. Benjamin Orr, present in his capacity of examining committee, never forgot the circumstance. In September, 1825, the trustees by formal vote established a professorship for instruction in the modern languages of Europe, and informally

decided, at the suggestion of Mr. Orr, to ask Longfellow, now known to many of them as a youth of marked literary tastes and unusual ability, to prepare himself to discharge its duties. With what zeal and pleasure he made preparation, we may read between the lines in Outre Mer.

Four years later he began his brief, but successful, service as a teacher in his Alma Mater. Required study of the modern languages was then unusual in New England colleges. Most institutions merely recommended certain resident foreigners as competent teachers from whom undergraduates might receive instruction at their own ex-

pense. At no other college, it is safe to say, was the study of these languages more general, the teaching more enthusiastic and more intelligent than at Bowdoin. These were the required courses in 1833, the Seniors alone having an option between Italian and German. In the first term, Sophomores, sixty recitations in French; Juniors, sixty-six in Spanish; in the second term, Sophomores, sixty recitations in French; Juniors, sixty-six in Spanish; Seniors, forty-eight in Italian or German; in the third term, Sophomores, sixty exercises in French; Juniors, sixty-six in Spanish; Seniors, thirty-two in Italian or Ger-

man. Finding the elementary treatises of the time poorly adapted to his courses, the young professor prepared seven different text-books, of which two, at least, won wide use elsewhere. Occasional lectures on historic and literary themes connected with his department were given his pupils. Ample testimony to his own mastery of the languages of southern Europe may be found in his articles in the *North American Review* and in this inaugural address, now printed for the first time in its entirety.

In those days a professor was chosen for life. His induction into office was a formal academic function.

A day in Commencement Week was assigned to it. Special music was engaged. The Trustees, the Overseers, the Faculty, and the students, as well as the general public came to hear the new teacher define his sphere of work. In Professor Longfellow's case, the ceremony was held September 2, 1830, on the same site, though not in the same structure, where forty-five years later, he delivered his Morituri Salutamus.

The manuscript of his address, a bound volume of 116 duodecimo pages, was presented to Bowdoin College Library in 1889 by his brother and biographer, Rev. Samuel Longfellow. With

the consent of the family, it is now published as the Library's contribution to the centennial of one who served as college librarian throughout his professorship, and was noted for using and helping others to use the collection under his charge. The manuscript, written in the legible hand so familiar to his admirers, is remarkably free from corrections or interlineations, and is provided with references to the authorities quoted or consulted. Aside from a few manifest slips of the pen, it has been thought best to follow the copy exactly in the older forms of spelling and in the free use of capitals then

customary. Thus the reader may see for himself the care bestowed upon a manuscript intended only for the author's eye.

Professor Longfellow apparently planned to quote three passages which he did not embody in the address, and which the writer thinks he did not actually use on the occasion of its delivery. The first would naturally appear on page 11. His note in the manuscript leaves a blank after the abbreviations for volume and page. The proper numerals have now been added without reprinting the paragraph to which allusion is made. On page 94 it is clear from the promi-

nence given the title and from an *etc.* omitted in printing, that the two lines are only a part of an original translation, which the writer regrets he cannot supply. On page 95 the occurrence of the word "following" in the manuscript has made desirable the reprinting of Lockhart's translation of the poem, though it was never copied into the space left for it in the text of the address.

It may be of interest to state that the paragraphs on pages 61–66 were taken from the introduction of a college lecture upon troubadours, and that with alterations they were again used in the article, The Defense of Poetry,

in the *North American Review* of January, 1832; an article which was included in the first edition of Outre Mer but omitted in the final revision of his prose writings. The paragraphs on pages 90-95 may be regarded as the foundation of the chapter on Ancient Spanish Ballads in Outre Mer. The student of Longfellow's text will observe the changes made in the Ballad of the Five Farthings, and in view of the poet's subsequent study of Dante will be interested in his early rendering of the opening lines of the third canto of the Inferno found on page 103.

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February 27, 1907

# INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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*MR. President and Gentlemen:* I have looked forward to this day with feelings of pleasure and solicitude. Having been engaged already one year in the duties of my profession, it is natural for me to have desired an occasion on which I might express to you how grateful to my feelings has been the confidence you have reposed in me, in conferring upon me the Professorship of the Modern Languages in this institution. When a man's duty and his inclination go hand in hand, surely he has no small reason to rejoice,

no feeble stimulus to act. The truth of this I feel. I regard the profession of a teacher in a far more noble and elevated point of view than many do. I cannot help believing, that he who bends in a right direction the pliant disposition of the young, and trains up the ductile mind to a vigorous and h e a l t h y growth, does something for the welfare of his country and something for the great interests of humanity.

Feeling such motives to action as these, and feeling, moreover, the great responsibility which is inseparable from such motives, I cannot on an occasion like the present banish all sensations of

solicitude. Reduce a man's duties to as narrow limits as you will, no one can feel certain that he has done all that he might have done. Enlarge their sphere, and you increase this uncertainty. Perfection is rather to be aspired after, than to be hoped for. And if I have in anything failed to discharge worthily the duties reposed in me, I ask that you would place it to the score of inexperience and human fallibility, rather than to a want of interest and a want of exertion.

A knowledge of the principal languages of modern Europe forms in our day an essential part of a liberal

education. That such is your belief, gentlemen, you have sufficiently declared by establishing in this institution the professorship, whose duties at present devolve upon me. In the exercise of this office I am happy in believing it one of noble import. I cannot regard the study of a language as the pastime of a listless hour. To trace the progress of the human mind through the progressive development of language; to learn how other nations thought, and felt, and spake; to enrich the understanding by opening upon it new sources of knowledge; and by speaking many tongues to become a citizen of the world;

these are objects worthy the exertion their attainment demands at our hands.

The mere acquisition of a language then is not the ultimate object: it is a means to be employed in the acquisition of something which lies beyond. I should therefore deem my duty but half performed were I to limit my exertions to the narrow bounds of grammatical rules: nay, that I had done little for the intellectual culture of a pupil, when I had merely put an instrument into his hands without explaining to him its most important uses. It is little to point one to the portals of the magic gardens and enchanted halls of learning,

and to teach him certain cabalistic words at whose utterance the golden hinges of its gates shall turn: he must be led through the glittering halls and fragrant bowers, and shown where the richest treasures lie, and where the clearest fountains spring. And it will be my aim, not only to teach the turns and idioms of a language, but, according to my ability and as soon as time and circumstances shall permit, to direct the student in his researches into the literature of those nations whose language he is studying.

To give you a general outline of what I conceive to be the field of my duty, will be

the object of the discourse, which according to custom on similar occasions, will occupy the remainder of the time we shall be together. The points, then, to which I would principally direct your attention are these: the decline of Roman literature; the origin of the modern languages; the state of the human mind and of society during the middle ages, and its influence on the revival of Letters. In treating a subject so vast as this I cannot hope to do anything more than to bring you to a point of view, from which you may survey the whole field, and thence to point out to you its most important sites and land-

marks. And if in this my remarks should be deemed immature and inadequate, may it be attributed in part, at least, to a want of time to go more thoroughly into the investigation of this subject.

It was in the first half of the fourth century, that the religion of the cross, emerging from the gloom of the dungeon and the blood of the scaffold, ascended the throne of the Cæsars. The dust and ashes of its martyrs were enshrined, its sacred evidence, its holy and everlasting truths, were written with the finger of God upon the hearts of kings and rulers, the voice of its devotion arose amid the magnificence of an oriental

court and echoed along the golden palaces of Byzantium.[1]

It is from this epoch that we generally date the decline of Letters. The removal of the Roman Court to Byzantium, the dismemberment of the Western Empire, and finally the invasions and long dominion of the Goths and Vandals in the South of Europe, are the causes to which this memorable event in the history of the human mind is generally attributed. But if we recur to the annals of those ages, which immediately preceded the reign of Constantine, we shall find that the decline of Letters had already commenced. We learn, it is true, that Philoso-

phy still mused amid her groves and porticos, that Poetry still breathed to the living lyre, that Eloquence still lifted up her voice amid the people and before the throne: but of the Philosophers, and Poets, and Orators of those days the world knows but little. What now remains of their daily toil and nightly study is a melancholy record of the mutability of literature, and the perishable nature of earthly renown.

The Attic Nights of the Grammarian Aulus Gellius are the most valuable relic of those ages. Even these bear witness to the sad decay of letters. The Roman essayist mourns the corruption

of literature in his day, and gives us the name of a Roman Rhetorician,[2] who boasted that he alone of his age could understand the writings of Sallust. From this we may at least infer, that the Roman language had become corrupted.[3] We know, indeed, that the Latin language in its purity was limited in its duration to the single century which elapsed from the days of the last Scipio Africanus to those of Augustus. Speaking of Cicero, a Roman author observes, "Before him there are few who can please us, and none whom we admire, unless those who saw him, or who were seen by him."[4] In

all probability literature has not lost much in losing the songs of the hundred bards of Gallien,[5] and the productions of that Orator, whom a writer of the fourth century compares to Cicero, and calls "*the other* honor of Roman Eloquence."[6]

Political events had completely tamed the noble spirit of eloquence to servile adulation: and the people who one day rent the air with shouts and acclamations when the Poet was crowned at the Capitol, were called the next to see their monarch hurled from his throne by the hands of the Prætorian Soldiery.

It appears, then, that even

before the reign of Constantine the decline of letters had already commenced. No sooner did he ascend the throne than other causes conspired to accelerate their downfall. The character of the age became emphatically a religious one. The schisms and heresies that had torn the bosom of the church since the commencement of the second century, uniting with the mighty struggle that was going on between Christianity and paganism, brought into action all the genius of the age. The cause of Christianity was pleaded before the thrones of the Roman Emperors: and "the voice of one crying in the wilderness"

rang with persuasive energy through the halls of the Roman Senate. All minds were intensely bent towards one great, one infinitely great and momentous theme: and from this sprung up a new literature, bearing upon its front the character of the age, and filling whole libraries with its profound and voluminous works. The fourth century was the golden age of Ecclesiastical Literature. The names of Basil, Chrysostôme, Gregory, Augustin and Lactantius filled the whole century with their glory. The new literature had its schools in Persia, in Egypt, in Palestine, and its influence in erasing from the

human mind all recollection of the classic models of Grecian and Roman literature, was immediate and almost irresistible. By a canon of the church the Bishops were prohibited to read the Pagan Authors, and Saint Jerome mourns bitterly over those priests who, neglecting the Evangelist amused themselves with the comedies of the ancients, or were often seen with Virgil in their hands. He even says that he was whipped by an angel for reading Plautus and Cicero.[7]

I have alluded the more willingly to these facts, because they have been perverted by Infidelity, and

unwarrantable conclusions drawn from them. It has been boldly asserted on grounds like these, that Christianity darkened the intellectual vision, riveted shackles upon the human mind, and threw a stumbling-block before its feet; in a word that Christianity circumscribed the energies of the intellectual principle within us. To show the weakness and futility of such assertions would require no great depth of reasoning. All great revolutions in a state, of whatever nature they may be, give a temporary check to the human mind, so far as literature is concerned, because they necessarily divert it to new

objects and new interests. But if a great revolution in modes of thought and principles of action open to the mind a wider field for the exercise of its powers, if it change its earth-born dreams to heavenly aspirations, and open upon its expanding vision the immortal glories of revelation, and a prospect as vast and illimitable as eternity itself, is this, I ask, to fetter the human mind? And what if the glowing zeal of the early Christian Fathers did efface from their parchments some strophes of the Grecian and Roman muse, in order to inscribe there in living characters the defense of our holy faith, and the

inspired writings of the apostles! who is there that would barter the Evangelist for an amorous ballad or a bacchanalian song? Nay who can read that earnest appeal of Justin Martyr commencing, "To the Emperor Antonine the Pious, to Lucius, the son of Cæsar, to the venerable assembly of the Senate and the Roman people, in the name of those who amongst all men are unjustly hated and persecuted, I one of that suffering multitude address this discourse and this prayer:" or the stern defiance of another writer who thus braves the fury of persecution, "Go on, ye Magistrates, condemn, strike,

torment, exterminate our bodies! . . . . Your ingenious cruelty has become powerless: it is an incitement to the courageous soul. We multiply in proportion as we are mown down; and Christians are born from the blood of the Martyrs." Who, I repeat, can read such firm and resolute appeals as these, and think that Christianity fettered the energies of the human mind? or, even for a moment bring into competition with these writings the lost comedies of Meander, or the lyric poems of Sappho and Corinna?

Ere long Ecclesiastical Literature declined. The northern barbarians swept like a

deluge over all the lands that acknowledged the Roman sceptre. This tempest shook alike the palace and the convent, the throne and the altar: and the gradual dusk that had long been gathering over the world, at length closed in the gloomy night of the dark ages.

I need give you no detailed description of the disastrous twilight of those ages. From the fifth to the tenth century the South of Europe was the scene of continual wars. Nation was struggling against nation. Prince against prince, and baron against baron. In every hamlet some barbarian conqueror held his little court, guarded by a handful of his

hardy soldiery, and lording it over the sorry remnant of the conquered people, who answered the despotic cruelty of their prince with the sullen hate of an unwilling vassalage. The features of those ages are too strongly marked to be mistaken. During the dominion of the Gothic Kings in Italy, Theodorick, who had been educated at Constantinople, and whose name is written among those of the Patrons of Letters, could not even write his own name: but we read in the chronicles that speak of those days, that the Gothic monarch had a tablet of gold through which were cut the first five letters of his name,

and that it was by drawing a pen through these, he signed his letters and edicts.[8]

Even more deplorable seems to have been the state of letters beneath the iron yoke of the Lombards, which for two centuries galled the weary neck of Rome. During this long period, the warrior's foot was ever in the stirrup, and his hand upon his sword. Italy groaned beneath the continual surges of a bloody sea, upon whose bosom floated the wreck of thrones and empires, and whose ebb and flow, now washed out the footsteps of a nation, and now swallowed up the bubble world of some self-created monarch.

For nearly five centuries, I mean from the beginning of the fifth till towards the close of the ninth, the South of Europe may be said to have been without a language. During this period the unpolished idioms of the Teutonic or northern dialects were slowly mingling with the corrupted forms of the Latin. Every city, every town, every hamlet had its dialect, which was understood within its own precincts only. Each of these was a rude jargon, formed from the necessity of intercourse between the conqueror and the conquered: possessing neither precision nor uniformity, and varying from

year to year, as a new inroad from the north brushed off some petty sovereignty, and introduced a new barbarous dialect, in the place of that, which its predecessor had spoken.[9]

The languages which now divide the South of Europe had their origin between the commencement of the ninth, and the middle of the twelfth century. They were all formed by the union of the dialects of the north with the vulgar Latin spoken in Spain, in Italy, and in the Gauls: and accidental circumstances, rather than any marked distinctions in the character of these nations, produced the difference which exists

between the Italian, the Provençal, the French, the Spanish, and the Portuguese. Sister branches of the same paternal tree, though differing in the richness of their blossoms and the luxuriance of their foliage, these several languages shot forth and grew up together. During the first periods of their existence, we can hardly distinguish and identify their intermingling boughs. But in an after season they begin to diverge, until at length each casts its separate shade, assumes its peculiar verdure, and invites the literary pilgrim to linger and repose beneath it.

When, after the long vicis-

situdes of war, the northern invader at length looked upon himself as the lawful possessor of the lands he occupied, and felt that the luxuriant though uncultivated fields around him had become his country and his home, the soil was again tilled, population increased, and the discordant elements of society began once more to assume something like harmonious order. But still each city, with its suburbs and its adjacent villages, forming a separate community, looked upon its neighbours with a suspicious eye; and the inhabitants being drawn together by the ties of mutual protection and com-

mon safety, what at first had been at best but an illformed and shapeless jargon, acquired in the course of time the regularity of an uniform dialect.

Hence very naturally arose the great diversity which still exists in the language of different cities in the same province, particularly remarkable in Italy. The Lombard of Milan does not speak like the Lombard of Pavia and Lodi: and a practiced ear will readily detect the difference of dialect spoken at Florence, Pisa, and Sienna, though all of them are in Tuscany.

At a later period, as mankind grew more friendly and

confiding, these little circles widened and widened, and one inclosed the other. What was at first the language of a city, became that of a province, and afterwards of a nation: and thus out of a general wreck of all language, sprung up those which are now spoken from the mouth of the Tagus to the mountains of Calabria.

The name of Romance was given to all the several dialects which originated from the union of the languages of the north with the Latin: a name they received from the circumstance that the Latin or Roman tongue predominated in their composition. They were designated by the

names of the provinces in which they were severally spoken: as for example the Romance Provençal, or the language spoken in the kingdom of Provence: the Romance Catalan, or the language spoken in the province of Catalonia. The first of these dialects which gained an ascendency over the others, and thus assumed the dignity of a new language, was the Provençal, in the latter half of the ninth century. Sheltered by the Alps on one side and on the other by the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean, the kingdom of Provence had reposed in peace for nearly two centuries, whilst the kingdoms around her lying

more exposed to inroads from the north, were torn by the continuous discords of war. This repose was favorable to the development and the cultivation of a newly formed language, and to the revival of letters. Under such auspicious circumstances originated the Romance of Provence, or the Provençal language. It is a tongue no longer spoken: and it is only the songs of the troubadours which give it a "local habitation" in Literary History.

Half a century later, I mean in the first half of the tenth century, the Roman Wallon, another branch of the same stock, became the court language of the Dukes

of Normandy. It was not, however, until the time of William the Conqueror, that this language was called the French. Pleased with the accents of his mother tongue, that monarch was assiduous in cultivating and enriching it. It not only prevailed in the north of France, but followed the Norman Conquest into England. The Laws were promulgated in it, it was taught in the schools, and became the Court language. Since that day it has undergone numerous and great revolutions: greater and more numerous than any other of the modern languages. "I write," says the celebrated Montaigne, an author of the

sixteenth century, "I write for few readers and for few years: had it been a matter of importance I would have committed it to a more stable language: for according to the continual changes which have followed our own until the present day, who can hope that its present form will be in use fifty years hence! Day by day it steals away from us, and even within the short limits of my own life, it is one-half changed."[10]

Next in the order of time comes the Castilian, or the Court language of Spain, which dates from the commencement of the eleventh century, one century later than the French. At the time

of the northern invasions Spain shared the fate of those European provinces which acknowledged the dominion of Rome, were governed by her laws, and spoke her widespread language. This fruitful land was pillaged and laid waste by the Suevi, the Vandals and the Alani, till at length in the fifth century it passed under the sceptre of the Visigoths. During their reign of nearly three hundred years their language became incorporated with the Latin, and a Spanish Romance dialect was formed which differed little from that spoken in France at the same epoch. The Moorish invasion in the eighth century, and their long

dominion, marked with peculiar liberality and gentleness towards the conquered inhabitants of the country, produced a revolution in the language, introducing into it new sounds and idioms and that oriental pomp and magnificence of expression by which it is now characterized and which have designated it as by preëminence "the noble tongue."

Even before the Moorish invasion the Spanish Romance language had assumed the forms of three separate dialects. In the eastern provinces of Catalonia and Valencia, the Catalan was spoken: in the centre, that is, in the provinces of Cas-

tile, Leon, and the Asturias, the Castilian from which the modern Spanish originated: and in Galicia and the provinces bordering on the Atlantic, the Gallego, from which is derived the Portuguese.

That one dialect should gain an ascendancy over all others spoken within the limits of the same country must be attributed to some circumstance of literary or political preëminence in that province in which it is spoken. It was so with the Castilian. During the reign of Ferdinand the Great, about the middle of the eleventh century, the warlike achievements of the famous Cid Campeador exalted the name

of Old Castile, his native province, to a signal point of glory. The Castilian dialect became the language of the Spanish Court: the songs in which the deeds of its heroes were celebrated served to enrich and to perpetuate it: and thus it at length prevailed over the other dialects which had sprung up coëval with it.

The next of the southern dialects which claimed for itself the appellation of a language was the Portuguese. This was at the commencement of the twelfth century[11] at the Court of Henry, the founder of the monarchy. It is a prevalent but a very erroneous opinion, that the

Portuguese is a dialect of the Castillian. Surely this is it not. Like the Ionic and Doric dialects of Greece, these two languages are branches of the same stock, springing from the same root but not growing the one out of the other.

Last of all in this catalogue stands the Italian, dating as a language from about the middle of the twelfth century.[12] Under Roger I. it became the language of the Sicilian Court, and was early consecrated to the inspirations of poetry. It was, however, in Tuscany that it was most cultivated and enriched: and even to this day the Tuscan dialect is consid-

ered the pure fountain head of the Italian idioms. It remained, however, comparatively rude and unformed till the commencement of the fourteenth century when the all immortal Dante, the father of Italian song, gave it stability and permanency by building with its still rude materials an edifice whose foundations were as broad and deep as the foundations of the world itself, and whose top pierced the heaven of heavens.

I am aware that some writers give a different account of the origin of the Italian language, and maintain that the dialects of the north had little influence in

its formation. They say that it is coëval with the Latin, and that both were in use at Rome at the same time: the Latin by learned men in the writings and discourses, and the Italian by the lower orders of the people, and in familiar intercourse.[13] One fact alone, were others wanting, seems sufficient to refute this proposition. In the comedies of Plautus we have the language of the Roman populace, which is as far from being Italian as it is from being the rich vernacular of Sallust and Cicero and Cæsar. One well-attested fact of this kind would seem to set the question at rest forever: and consequently

the sober and erudite criticism of other literary men has checked the patriotic ardour of those who would give a spurious antiquity to their language, and has assigned it its place at the commencement of the twelfth century.

Having thus briefly considered the origin of the several languages of the South of Europe, and adverted to the periods from which they respectively date as languages adapted to the use of society and literature, in contradistinction to the unintelligible jargons which preceded them, the origin of the literature of these several nations next invites your attention. In

order to place this subject the more clearly before you, I would first turn to the history of the human mind during those centuries which more immediately preceded the revival of letters, and endeavour to show as distinctly as the narrow compass of this discourse will permit, the influence of the spirit of those ages upon the origin of modern literature.

From the seventh century to the middle of the tenth, at which period the human mind had reached its lowest point of degradation, the South of Europe presents a scene hardly less appalling than the gloom and desolation which marked the foot-

steps of the northern barbarians. Lawless freebooters lurked amid the smouldering ruins of cities, forests again sprung up in the fruitful valley and the once populous mart, and moated castles sentinelled the rugged hill, and lorded it over the oppressor's wide domain. To the pillage of the Stranger had succeeded the bloody anarchy of the Feudal System.[14] Europe groaned beneath the triple tyranny of her Kings, her feudal lords, and her licentious priesthood. The human mind had become hoodwinked and enslaved. The utmost limits of its highest aspirations were the cloudy regions of

theological subtilty. Beneath the cowl and hood lurked a most saintly rottenness, and morality was nought but the charlatanry of religious imposture, and the misguided zeal of religious fanaticism. *The priesthood had found in heaven a point on which to rest the lever which was to move the world.*[15] Crimes were set to sale and paradise itself was bartered for gold.[16] "Redeem your souls from destruction," says the canonized Bishop of Noyons, St. Egidius, "whilst you have the means in your power: offer presents and tithes to churchmen: come more frequently to church: humbly implore the patronage of the

saints: for, if you observe these things you may come with security in the day of retribution, to the tribunal of the Eternal Judge and say, 'Give to us, O Lord, for we have given unto thee.'"[17] The ambition of the priesthood for universal sway, seems to have been rivalled only by their insatiable cupidity. "St. Martin serves his friends well," said Clovis, King of the Franks, "but he makes them pay soundly for his trouble."[18]

Greedy of the wealth of the church many of the northern invaders assumed the stole and cassock: and actuated by the desire of temporal aggrandizement, intro-

duced scandalous abuses into the church, and corrupted the severity of ecclesiastical discipline. Having amassed property, and become lords of rich manors and seignories, many prelates and abbots led in person the bands of their vassals to battle, and throwing aside the ghostly missal, and abandoning the repose and meditation of the monastery, seized the destroying sword and gloried in the sounds of war.[19]

It was in this way that the Priesthood was enabled to set its foot so completely on the neck of the people. The Gothic Druids and Scandinavian Priests, possessed an unlimited sway over the minds

of the superstitious people of the north and were invested by them with the attributes of a more than mortal nature. When the barbarians embraced the Christian faith, these feelings of superstitious reverence were transferred to the clergy; and they paid the same homage to the shaven crown, that they had before paid to the flowing beard. With such prerogatives as these the ambition and riotous excesses of the priesthood were without bounds: and from being the shepherds of their spiritual flocks, the pious almoners of souls, they became the apostles of corruption, the bold, ambitious, insatiable

usurpers of the people's rights.

Such was the ignorance prevailing in the ninth and tenth centuries, that the world was led blindfold into a thousand superstitious observances. A single example will suffice to give an idea of these extravagances. In many of the French churches was celebrated the "Festival of the Ass" in commemoration of the flight of the Virgin Mary into Egypt. An ass richly caparisoned was led in procession to the high altar of the church, bearing upon its back a young girl richly dressed, with an infant in her arms, and accompanied by priests, who sung in cho-

rus a puerile canticle of which the following is one stanza:[20]

Gold from Araby the blest,
Myrrh that burning Saba offers,
The virtues by this Ass possest,
Have brought into the church's coffers.

High Mass was said: and when the ceremony was concluded, the officiating priest, instead of the customary benediction, brayed three times, and the people responded with another bray equally devotional.

The colours in which I have drawn the portrait of these ages are dark and gloomy: happily for the history of the human mind some brighter touches enliven its features. Here and there

through the lapse of centuries glimmers a solitary beacon: but so distant and so indistinct, that watchfire hardly answers to watchfire. The brightest epoch during this long period of intellectual night, was the brilliant reign of Charlemagne during the last half of the eighth century. He was the noble patron of letters: and the friend and companion of the learned. He established schools and academies throughout his realm, and laid the foundation of the University of Paris: whilst the celebrated Clement shouted through the streets of the capital, "Wisdom for sale!" The no less celebrated Alcuin, speaking

of his school in the Abbey of St. Martin de Tours, where he alone taught nearly all the sciences then known, observes "For some I cause the honey of the holy scriptures to flow: I intoxicate others with the old wine of ancient history. These I nourish with the fruits of grammar, gathered by my own hands: and those I enlighten by pointing out to them the stars, like lamps attached to the vaulted ceiling of a great palace."[21]

But this ray of mental light soon faded and disappeared: it was the dying lamp that gleamed up in its socket. A darker and more rayless night, a more impenetrable gloom succeeded and shad-

ows, clouds, and darkness again enveloped the human mind.

At length in the eleventh century letters began once more to revive. The aspiring and immortal principle of the human mind though buried deep beneath the ruins of social institutions, had not become extinct. It once more burst its cerements, and struggled to be free. Still the mists of theological prejudices obscured its vision, and it wandered in the vain pursuit of dreams and phantoms. Its efforts were wasted on such speculations as the manner of the miraculous conception of the Virgin, and the digestion of the eucharist.[22]

Indeed even down to the thirteenth century we find scholastics and churchmen engaged in discussing subjects of a similar character. The subtle Thomas Aquinas, called by preëminence the Angelical Doctor,[23] composed vast folios on questions like the following: whether Angels existed in any particular place: whether many could be at the same time in the same place: whether one could be at the same time in different places: whether Angels move from one place to another by going through the intermediate space: whether the image of God existed in man according to power, or according to habit, or accord-

ing to action: and whether woman was in reality made out of the rib of a man.[24]

Preëminent among the combining causes, which aroused the human mind from its sleep, and dispelled the fearful visions of that intellectual darkness, stand the institutions of Chivalry and the Crusades. To indulge myself in any detailed account of these great and momentous events in the history of the world, would lead me too far from the main topic of this discourse. I allude to them, because they represent in bold relief the strong and deep-marked features of the spirit of the age, and are seen reflected in defi-

nite lines and shadows upon the broad extent of the literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They denote the spirit of their age in this that chivalry introduced gentleness of manners, high minded feelings, and a refinement of honour and courtesy, unknown amid the convulsions of feudal anarchy. "In knighthood and in the clergy," says an ancient ballad, "reside all courtesey,"[25] "The virtues required in a true knight," says another ancient writer, "are the three Christian virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity: and the four cardinal virtues, Justice, Prudence, Strength and Temperance."[26] The female char-

acter was elevated to a noble rank, and its gentle influences predominated over the rough spirit of the warriors. The lady's scarf graced the breastplate of the knight, and the jewel from her finger glistened like a victorious star upon his helm.

They denote the spirit of their age too in this, that the Crusades exhibit a lively portrait of the ill-directed zeal and the hoodwinked superstition of those centuries. At the close of the eleventh and the commencement of the twelfth centuries, a belief was prevalent that the prophecies of the Apocalypse were accomplished, that the thousand years from the death of

Christ being completed, the Judgment of the World was at hand. This belief was declared in the edicts of the Papal See, and in the homelies of the Waldensian Fathers.[27] Universal terror spread over Europe: all classes of society from the prince to the peasant, without distinction of sex, age, or condition, flocked in long weary pilgrimages to the Holy Land, to expiate their sins, and to witness the reappearance of the Saviour upon Mount Sion, where he was ere long to judge the Quick and Dead.[28] To protect these pilgrims from the insolence of the Turk, and to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from the

Infidel, were the main objects of the Crusades.

Whilst this convulsion shook the heart of Christendom, Peter the Hermit passed from province to province preaching the Crusade with a cross in his hand, and afterwards, with sandals upon his feet and the hermit's twisted cord around his waist, he lead an undisciplined army to the Holy Land.

I have dwelt thus long upon the political history of the eleventh century, because its influence upon the origin of modern literature in the succeeding centuries was immediate, vast, and powerful. The manner of this influence, its extent, and its nature, or

in other words how it was exerted and what it was, will next occupy our attention, without leading us far into metaphysical speculations.

The first essays in every national literature have been in poetry. In poetry the first lessons of philosophy were taught, the first laws written and promulgated.[29] Breathing thus from the lips of law-givers and philosophers, it was deemed in ancient days almost an immediate inspiration from heaven. It glimmers like a star through the darkness of the middle ages, and when that intellectual night began to dissolve, the human mind sprang upward with a song to greet the

approaching morning, as the tuneful lark salutes the day-break with its lay.

The Origin of Poetry loses itself in the shades of a remote and fabulous age, of which we have only vague and uncertain traditions. Its fountain, like that of the river of the desert, springs up in a distant and unknown region, the theme of visionary story, and the subject of curious speculation. Doubtless however it originated amid the scenes of pastoral life, and in the quiet and repose of a golden age.

There is something congenial in the soft melancholy of the groves which pervades the heart, and delights the

imagination. Their silent repose is favorable to the musings of the poetic mind: and hence in all ages poets have loved the woodland shades and have peopled them with presiding deities. The fountain that gushed in the valley was made the dwelling of a nymph: the grove that overshadowed it the abode of dryads: and the flower that grew beside it became the fairy habitation of a spirit. These woodland deities were made to preside over shepherds and their flocks, and were propitiated by songs and festive rites. Thus poetry added new charms to the simplicity and repose of bucolic life; and

the poet mingled in his song the delights of rural ease, and the praise of sylvan deities.

Such, then, was poetry in those happy ages, when, camps and courts unknown, life itself was an ecologue. In later days, it sang the praises of Grecian and Roman heroes, and pealed in the war-song of the Gothic Scald.

These earliest essays were rude and unpolished. As nations advanced in civilisation and refinement poetry advanced with them. In each successive age it became the image of their thoughts and feelings, their manners and character: for indeed poetry is but the expression of the

thoughts and feelings of a people, and we give it the appellation of national, only when the character of a nation shines visibly and clearly through it.

Thus Castilian poetry is characterised by high-sounding expressions, and that pomp and majesty so peculiar to the Spanish manners and character: the Italian, by its gay imagination, and soft voluptuous beauty: the Portuguese by indolence and melancholy reverie: the Provençal by its gallantry: the old French by a spirit of chivalry borrowed from the crusades: the German, by its *ideality*, its vague and dreamy philosophy: and finally the Eng-

lish, by its sensibility, its exquisite moral feeling and rural quiet.

If, then, the spirit of a people is thus expressed, and the leading features of national character are thus developed in its writings, the literary history of a nation must participate largely in its political history, and from the one we may form some general idea of the other. If a national literature is animated with a martial ardour, and reflects the fame of heroes and the pomp of war, we may rationally infer, that the nation to which it belongs, was at that period of its history at least, a warlike people skilled in arms, and habitu-

ated to the stir of camps and the sound of battle. Or, if the poetry of a country be of a gentle pastoral kind, it conveys to our minds the image of a people enjoying the delights of peace, and gathering unmolested the fruits of their vineyards and the products of their fields. Again, if the history of a nation is one of war and revolution, we should have no doubt that whatever literature it might possess would resound with the praises of its heroes and the achievements of its arms: or if we read in history that a people had long turned its swords into ploughshares and its spears into pruning-hooks,

we may naturally infer that its literature is redolent with the charms of pastoral scenes and the delights of pastoral life.

Of these remarks we shall find ample illustration in the wide field of literature which now opens before us.

The earliest productions of modern literature which have reached our day, belong to the commencement of the twelfth century. We can trace back the current of the human mind no farther. Whatever was written previous to that epoch was either written in Latin, or has been lost and forgotten. As the earliest language was the Provençal so was the earliest

literature. In the sweet accents of that now voiceless tongue, the muse of modern song first lisped her imperfect numbers. The devotion of the knight to his lady, and the nice pundonor of a chivalrous age broke forth in poetry, and through the whole south of France a nation of poets sprung up as if from the touch of an enchanter's wand. These were the Troubadours. Wandering from castle to castle, and from province to province, they sung the charms of beauty and the glory of arms to the sound of lute and viol. The delight of kings and princes, they sang at the festive board and around the winter hearth:

and in recompense they received rich presents of robes, and jewels, and horses, from those through whose domains they wandered.

Thus the poetry of the Troubadours seems to have originated from the spirit of chivalry predominant in ages of which I speak, and to have been fostered by the peculiar manners and customs then prevalent. Poetry became a p a s s i o n, and kings and princes were as proud of its laurels as of the regal crown, to which it gave new lustre. In imitation of their sovereigns, the nobles and feudal barons were either p o e t s themselves, or the patrons of poets. Each chateau vied

with the other in the splendour of its little court: and it was the pride of every lord and cavalier to hear the song of the Troubadour echo along his gothic halls. Thus a crowd of poets almost numberless found the means of a livelihood in the customs of the feudal ages. In return, the themes they most delighted to sing were such as accorded with the character of the age, and pleased the ear of knight and lady. The prowess of knighthood and the devotion of ladie-love. Thus sings one of these Troubadours:

The beautiful spring delights me well,

When flowers and leaves are springing;
And it pleases me to hear the swell
Of birds' sweet voices ringing
In the echoing wood;
And I love to see all scatter'd around
Pavilions and tents on the martial ground;
And my spirit finds it good
To see, on the level plains beyond,
Gay knights and steeds caparisoned.

But I tell you nothing my soul can cheer
Or banqueting or reposing,
Like the onset cry "charge home! charge home!"
When the burnished ranks are closing,
And the horse's neigh,
And the call to aid is echoing loud;

And there on the earth the lowly and proud
In the foss together lie;
And yonder is piled the mingled heap
Of the brave that scaled the trench's steep. [30]

Another with exquisite tenderness and delicacy describes the reveries of a lover:

"All I behold recalls the memory
Of her I love. The freshness of the hour,
Th' enamell'd fields, the many-colored flower
Speaking of her, move me to melody." [31]

And again a third, who deals more largely in figures of speech, says of his lady: "My heart is inundated for

her with a torrent of love that penetrates it on all sides as water p e n e t r a t e s a sponge." [32]

These extracts which I have drawn from a thousand of a similar kind, though trivial in themselves, serve to show us in what direction the current of popular feeling set, as a straw or a bubble will show the direction of the rising or falling tide.

Other poems of the Troubadours are imbued with the religious spirit of the age. They are hymns to the Virgin, or songs to excite the neighbouring princes and barons to join in the Crusades. The familiarity and apparent levity with which

these poets approach subjects of serious import and even heavenly themes have something repugnant and revolting in them. Yet even this fact, unpalatable as it is, gives us a true transcript of the feelings of that day in regard to religion. The form existed, adorned with all the symbols of external pomp and magnificence, but the immortal soul that should animate it was not there. One of the Troubadours lamenting the death of his friend says, "He sang so well that the nightingales grew silent with admiration and listened to him. Therefore God took him for his own use. . . . If the Virgin Mary is fond

of genteel young men, I advise her to take him."

The Crusades, too, called forth all the enthusiasm of the Troubadours. The joys of paradise are promised in their songs to those who followed the banners of the cross into Palestine, and their curses are bitter against those who withheld their aid. Of the influence of the Crusades on modern literature I shall have occasion to speak hereafter in connection with the French Literature of a later period.

In accordance with the poetry of the Troubadours we find their lives were full of romantic adventure. As we peruse their history we

seem to step back into the precincts of the chivalrous ages: and their biographies afford examples of such strange and ludicrous adventure, that they would have been read as caricatures even in the Knight of La Mancha. There was one, Pierre Vidal, the master-fool of his age, known alike for the sweetness of his verse and the follies of his life. Enamoured of all the ladies of Provence, he fancied he had only to present himself in order to see them all enamoured of him: a foible of human nature which unfortunately has outlived that century. In honor of one, whose name translated from the original

was Wolf, he disguised himself in the skin of a wolf, was hunted through a forest by dogs, and being brought back nearly dead, was laid down as a kind of trophy of the chase at his lady's feet.

But time admonishes me to leave this part of my discourse. Let us now turn to the origin of French literature, as it flourished in the north of France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and examine for a few moments the influence of the Crusades.

Returning from the Holy Wars, both warriors and pilgrims, both chief and vassal, had their tale of wonder from a distant land, embellished

with the magic of oriental exaggeration. The soft luxuriance of the eastern clime bloomed in the song of the bard: and the wild and romantic tales of regions so far off as to be regarded almost as a fairy-land, were admirably suited to the childish credulity of an age, when what is now called the old world was in its childhood. This was the origin of the old Romances of Chivalry, which for so many centuries made the delight of court and cottage. It is not my intention to occupy this ground fully, to lead you through its magic islands and enchanted halls, nor to entertain you with its histories of

dwarfs and giants, of fairies, and fiery dragons, and necromancie. There is another point in French Literature to which I would more particularly direct your attention, as more clearly showing the influence of the Crusades. I mean the origin of the modern drama, which like the Romances of Chivalry, we owe to the influence of oriental feelings and customs.

Pilgrims returning from Palestine brought with them a taste for the scenic representations, which they witnessed in Constantinople and in other cities of the Orient, and thus were introduced into western Europe those singular dramas which under the

titles of Misteries and Moralities were so celebrated during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The spirit of the age stamped them with a religious character, and at the same time with all that was visionary, wild and romantic. I have already alluded to the mummeries of the church festivals and the spiritual farces by which the temples of Religion were profaned. Yet even these hardly prepare us to see the evangelists turned into comedies, and the deity itself introduced upon the stage, as is the case in the early French Theatre.

The most ancient drama, of which we have any ac-

count, is entitled "The Misterie of the Passion." It is the history of the life of our Saviour, from his baptism to the resurrection. It is so long that several days were necessary to its performance, and in the representation upwards of eighty personages are introduced. Amongst them are the three persons of the Trinity, the twelve Apostles, six Archangels, Herod and his court, and John the Baptist who preaches a sermon on the stage.

But I have already said enough to illustrate the influence of Chivalry and the Crusades on the origin of French Literature, and to

show how completely its spirit became identified with that of the age. I will pursue the topic no farther. I will only remark that it was not before the middle of the sixteenth century that the French language acquired much of that ease and gracefulness which now characterise it, or that its literature assumed that classic form under which it now presents itself.

The origin of Spanish literature was a little posterior to that of France: since the earliest Spanish poem, whose date is well authenticated, belongs to the middle of the twelfth century. The spirit of the age, too, whose influence upon the origin of

French Literature I have endeavoured to show, was modified in Spain by great political revolutions, which produced a corresponding difference in the tone of Spanish Literature.

When the Moors had overrun their country, a few hardy chiefs of Spain, fugitives from their fruitful vales, but carrying unquenched within them the ardent flame of liberty, took refuge in the mountains of Biscay and Asturias. From these rocky fastnesses they issued under the banners of Pelagius, whose name and victories are sung in the ancient ballads. They wrestled with the armies of the Moslem, and disputed step

by step and day by day the territory and dominion of their native land. At length the achievements of the Cid Campeador shook the foundation of the Moorish throne, and finally at the close of the fifteenth century, Ferdinand and Isabel leading the chivalry of Leon and Castile entered the spacious gates of Granada, and planted the banner of the cross on the walls of the Alhambra.

During this protracted war of centuries many heroes became renowned for their wisdom in council and their intrepidity in battle. The glory of the nation became associated with their names. They were the first heroes of

Spanish song. Whilst the lyre of the Troubadours breathed the soft voluptuousness of love, and the triumphs of imaginary heroes swelled the song of the Norman trouvères, here was a nobler theme for the majesty of the Castilian muse. It was a blast from the wild loud horn of Fontarabia that resounded, and not an echo from the lute of Avignon. The genius of Spain, rocked on the stormy hills and breathing of the free mountain air, first broke forth in the rude Epic. It sang the heroic deeds of the Cid, in a strain which gained for him through whom it spake, the name of the Spanish Homer. It is true, that

the language and versification of this earliest Epic of modern literature are but a step from absolute barbarism: and yet its antiquity, the noble spirit it breathes and the simple, unaffected dignity which animates it, place it among the most curious and remarkable works of modern literature.

The ancient ballads of Spain constitute one of the most prominent features of her literature. For their number, their simplicity, and their singular beauty they stand unrivalled in the history of letters. They record the noble deeds of Moorish Knights, and Christian Paladin and Peer; a high and

peculiar tone of national feeling sounds through every line; and the majestic lineaments of the ancient Spanish character stand in clear and bold relief upon their face.

The dates of the ancient ballads are lost, and with them have perished the names of their authors. They bear marks, however, of being as old as any Spanish Poetry extant, and consequently were written during the long dominion of the Moors in Spain.[33]

There is no page in the history of the warlike ages, which to my eye presents a portrait of more signal moral beauty, than that in which are portrayed the outlines of

the Moorish sovereignty in Spain. As the eye glances over the records of those days, even at this distant period, we catch glimpses of something like a golden age. It is true that the heart of Castile still throbbed with the pulsations of liberty and the iron tempest of war beat against the northern frontier of their realm. But in the quiet bosom of the country, all was peace. No terrors had followed the footsteps of the Moslem Conqueror: no captive chained to his chariot wheels adorned his triumph: no iron sceptre smote the land, and blasted the fruitful field. The husbandman sowed his seed and gath-

ered his harvest in security: and the spires of the Christian Church arose amid the domes of the Saracen Mosque. The conquerors and conquered seem to have had common interests and common pleasures: and they sat together beneath the shadow of the palm-tree and the olive, and sang their mutual loves and jealousies. There was nothing but the difference of religious creeds, which prevented these people from uniting together and blending into one. The tolerance that prevailed in this is every way remarkable: for in the zeal of the Moorish Government to spread their learning and arts through the country,

Colleges and Libraries were established in all the principal cities of the south of Spain, and thrown open alike to Mahomedans, Jews, and Christians.

These genial influences gave a softer tone to national feeling, and though the spirit of the warrior is visible in a great portion of the Spanish romances, in others the knight throws down his spear and unclasps his helmet. The sound of the Moorish flute mingles with the brazen voice of the trumpet; and the rough feelings of the chieftain give way to gentler affections and more peaceful dreams.

The ancient Spanish Bal-

lads naturally divide themselves into three classes, according to the subjects of which they treat. These are: the Historical; the Romantic; the Moorish. Of each of these classes I shall offer illustrations.

The Historic Ballads, as the name sufficiently indicates, are those which commemorate historic events. They are instinct with all the native pride of the Castilian character, and show the spirit of civil liberty, which once filled the bosom of a people who are now bowed down to the dust by the weight of a despot's throne. The following extract is from a ballad entitled the "Ballad of the five

farthings" (Maravedis). King Alfonso the Eighth, after long and continual wars had exhausted his finances, wished to levy a tax of five farthings upon each of the Castilian Hidalgos, in order to defray the expenses of a three-days' journey homeward. This proposition was met with disdain by the Hidalgos, who regarded it as an infringement of their personal rights and property: and the Count of Lara, says the ballad, laying aside all fear in his anger, spake thus to the King:

"Our noble ancestors," quoth he,
"ne'er such a tribute paid,
Nor shall the king receive of us
what they have once gainsaid.

The base-born soul who deems it
just, may here with thee re-
main,
But follow me, ye Cavaliers, ye
Noblemen of Spain."

Three thousand noble knights and
brave went with the Count of
Lara,
And rallied round his banner
broad in the pleasant fields of
Glara,
They tied the tribute to their
spears and raised it in the air,
And sent to tell their lord and
king, his tax was ready there,
"He may send and take by force,"
said they, "this paltry sum of
gold,
But the goodly gift of Liberty can
ne'er be bought and sold." [34]

The Romantic Ballads are those which celebrate the achievements of the Paladins of Charlemagne, and other

imaginary heroes, in whom was embodied the spirit of the Chivalric ages. They speak of "high thoughts, seated in a heart of courtesy." The following is a specimen of this class:

THE DEATH OF AGRICAN

Beside a crystal fountain's brink,
within the forest's shade,
Reclined against a barren rock, the
Moorish Knight was laid: 35

The Moorish Ballads are of a different character from these. They are of a more plaintive cast. A tone of subdued and gentle melancholy prevails throughout, which tends to heighten the poetical effect. They are

called Moorish Ballads, not only because their subjects are Moorish, but because they are supposed to have been for the most part of Moorish origin. The following beautiful poem, on the burial of a young Moor, is one of them. The translation is by Lockhart:[36]

At the gate of old Granada, when all its bolts are barred,
At twilight, at the Vega-gate, there is a trampling heard;
There is a trampling heard, as of horses treading slow,
And a weeping voice of women, and a heavy sound of woe!
"What tower is fallen, what star is set, what chief come these bewailing?"—
"A tower is fallen, a star is set! Alas! alas for Celin!"

Three times they knock, three times they cry,—and wide the doors they throw;
Dejectedly they enter, and mournfully they go;
In gloomy lines they mustering stand, beneath the hollow porch,
Each horseman grasping in his hand a black and flaming torch;
Wet is each eye as they go by, and all around is wailing,
For all have heard the misery.—"Alas! alas for Celin!"

Him, yesterday, a Moor did slay, of Bencerraje's blood,—
'Twas at the solemn jousting—around the nobles stood;
The nobles of the land were by, and ladies bright and fair
Looked from their latticed windows, the haughty sight to share;

But now the nobles all lament—
the ladies are bewailing—
For he was Granada's darling
knight.—"Alas! alas for Ce-
lin!"

Before him ride his vassals, in
order two by two,
With ashes on their turbans spread,
most pitiful to view;
Behind him his four sisters, each
wrapped in sable veil,
Between the tambour's dismal
strokes take up their dole-
ful tale;
When stops the muffled drum, ye
hear their brotherless bewail-
ing,
And all the people, far and near,
cry,—"Alas! alas for Celin!"

Oh! lovely lies he on the bier,
above the purple pall,
The flower of all Granada's youth,
the loveliest of them all;

His dark, dark eyes are closed, his rosy lip is pale,
The crust of blood lies black and dim upon his burnished mail;
And ever more the hoarse tambour breaks in upon their wailing,
Its sound is like no earthly sound,
—"Alas! alas for Celin!"

The Moorish maid at the lattice stands,—the Moor stands at his door;
One maid is wringing of her hands, and one is weeping sore;
Down to the dust men bow their heads, and ashes black they strew
Upon their broidered garments, of crimson, green, and blue;
Before each gate the bier stands still,—then bursts the loud bewailing
From door and lattice, high and low,—"Alas! alas for Celin!"

An old, old woman cometh forth,
when she hears the people
cry,—
Her hair is white as silver, like
horn her glazed eye:
'Twas she that nursed him at her
breast,—that nursed him long
ago:
She knows not whom they all la-
ment, but soon she well shall
know!
With one deep shriek, she through
doth break, when her ears
receive their wailing:—
"Let me kiss my Celin ere I die!
—Alas! alas for Celin!"

Italian literature had its origin in the Pastorals and amatory ballads of the muses of Sicily. In all these the influence of the Troubadours, and of Arabian poetry is visible. Pompous imagery holds

the place of a simple and delicate expression of feeling, and a tinsel of false refinement and extravagant taste glitters where a pure golden simplicity might have been looked for.

There is one striking peculiarity of Italian literature which meets us at the very threshold. The fame of the early literature of Spain, of Provence, and of the north of France is associated with the age and country of the poets and not with their names. The Old Spanish Ballads are anonymous, and the authors of the Romances of Chivalry and the poems of the Troubadours are cited by the literary antiquary alone.

But in the earliest age of Italian literature we read a poet's writings in connection with his name, and award the meed of praise not to his age and country only, but to him.

Before the close of the thirteenth century, however, no writer appeared whose works have merited the admiration of succeeding ages. Then it was that Dante, the immortal Father of Italian song, arose. It was believed in that superstitious age, that prodigies accompanied his birth: and Astrology cast the horoscope of his future glory, as if, in the words of a celebrated French poet, the creator had printed upon the forehead of the stars, what

the night of ages conceals beneath its veil.[37]

It is the high prerogative of genius to give transcendent value to whatever it touches. It copies from the material world around us, but beneath its hand material forms become instinct with life, and motion, like the marble of the Cyprian Statue. It dips its wing in the fountains of Castaly and their cold depths burn like the golden sands of Pactolus. It was by the exercise of this glorious attribute that Dante gave life and beauty to the uncouth forms of his native language: conjured into being the shadowy creations of the invisible world, and made

them to pass before him like the visible realities of an earthly pageant.

Throughout the Divina Commedia of Dante it is easy to trace the workings of the political and religious character of his age. Whether he leads you to the peaceful shades of Paradise, and describes the immortal pleasures of the "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens," or enters that broad gate over which is inscribed

"Through me you pass into the city of woe,
Through me you pass into eternal pain:
Through me among the people lost for aye,"

it is but a transcript of the stirring thoughts which agitated not only his own bosom, but the bosoms of the crowd around him, of his paternal city, of his native province, of all Italy.

I have not time to speak of the golden pen of Boccacio, nor the unrivalled melodies of that voice which sang amid the groves of Vaucluse:[38] but I cannot close this subject without recalling to your minds the great Epic Poet of Italy, Torquato Tasso. There is no better illustration of the poetical character, than is found in his life, nor of the true spirit of modern literature than his writings afford. It is said that the

poetical temperament is a melancholy one: that the waters of Helicon possess that property which has been ascribed by Latin historians to those of the river Duero, that they make all who drink of them mournful and dejected. It has been said, and truly said: for he who regards this world only from the far flight of his imagination and the ideal heaven of the poetic mind, will behold it veiled in clouds and shadows. It was thus with Tasso, even from his cradle at Sorrento to his grave in Rome. From the convent of Saint Onofrio, and a few days only before his death, he writes thus to his friend Constantini:

"It is no longer time," says he, "to speak of my cruel destiny, not to say the ingratitude of a world, which has longed even for the poor victory of driving me a beggar to my grave: whilst I thought that the glory, which this age shall receive from my writings, in spite of those who will it not, would not thus have left me without some little guerdon. I have come to this monastery of Saint Onofrio not only because its air is salubrious, but that I may commence as it were, in this high place, and in the conversation of these devout fathers, my conversation in heaven. Pray God for me: and be assured, that as I

have loved and honored you in this present life, so in that other more real life, will I do for you all that belongs to a true and unfeigned charity."

In the writings of this melancholy poet, to whom chains and a dungeon were decreed in Ferrara, and at the Roman Capitol, a crown of laurel, we find the impress of that deep religious feeling which under the form either of faith or of skepticism characterises all modern literature. I speak not now of the subtleties of the scholastic ages, for those we find in earlier writers, nor of the occasional bursts of enthusiasm on religious themes, which marked the

first efforts of modern song, and are found in the ballads of the Troubadours and the romances of Chivalry, but I mean that feeling of religious aspiration, which incorporates itself into the very nature of the mind, that deep, and intimate and unwavering persuasion that every great effort of the mind must be heavenward, that human fame is imperishable so far only as it is based on virtue and religion, that the works of human intellect are immortal so far only as they breathe a heavenly and immortal spirit, and in a word that the soul which has too long breathed the close and corrupted atmosphere of this

narrow world, must gasp and die in the element of more spiritualised natures. It was this, that irradiated the gloom of Tasso's dungeon: it was this that burst with transcendent brightness on the sightless eyes of Milton.

In the soul of the skeptic this religious feeling, if I may still give it that epithet, assumes a more terrific aspect. From the first that ever scoffed to the last that sets religion at defiance, from the first that ever doubted of a spiritual nature, to the last, that laughs to scorn the immortal attributes of the soul, the human mind has been ever pressing forward into the mysteries of the life be-

yond the grave, into the darkness it cannot pierce, the depths it cannot fathom!

It is this religious feeling, I say, this changing of the finite for the infinite, this constant grasping after the invisible things of another and a higher world, which marks the spirit of modern literature. The ancients it is true dreamt of an immortality, but their heaven was an earthly heaven, and the eye could take in at a glance the sensual paradise of the Elysian Fields, when the passions and attributes of our worldly existence were given to the disembodied spirit, and the prerogative of the soul was not that it should

grow better, but that it should live longer. But in the soul of the modern poet, the world beyond the grave presents itself with all the force of reality, and yet with all the mystery of a dream. It is a glorious certainty to some, and an appalling certainty to others. Thitherward the confiding spirit turns as to the "shadow of a rock in a weary land," or fearing, trembling, doubting, shrinks back and yet aspires, denies, and yet believes.

I feel that I have trespassed too long upon your patience. And yet I have done nothing but point out to you the landmarks of that vast field of literature, which

I hope ere long to explore with those whose situation leads them to rely upon my feeble endeavours. I hope, farther, that I shall discharge these duties with becoming zeal, without investing them with an importance they do not deserve, or attributing to them a duration they cannot possess. "For who may say," I speak in the language of an eminent literary historian, "who may say that Europe itself shall not in a few ages become as wild and deserted as the hills of Mauritania, the sands of Egypt and the valleys of Anatolia? Who may say, that in some new land . . . nations with other manners, other languages, and

other thoughts shall not arise once more to renew the human race, and to study the past as we have studied it: nations who hearing with astonishment of our existence, that our knowledge was as extensive as their own, and that we like themselves placed our trust in the stability of fame, shall pity our impotent efforts, and recall the names of Newton, of Racine, and of Tasso, as examples of the vain struggles of man to snatch that immortality of glory, which fate has refused to bestow?" [39]

# NOTES

## NOTES

1 Here quote the account of Constantine's miraculous conversion as given in the Ancient Universal History, Vol. XV, p. 555. Mosheim thinks the cross of fire to have been a vision. See Eccl. Hist., Vol. I, p. 324. The fact is attested by Eusebius, see Dupin, Eccl. Hist., Vol. II, p. 12, and also by Socrates Scolasticus, Eccl. Hist., Book I, ch, 2.

2 Sulpicius Apollinarius.

3 See Tertullian's Apologetick, Ch. VI, p. 189: where he accuses the Romans of being degenerate "in the very delicacy of the language."

4 Velleius Paterculus: cited by Ascham in his Schoolmaster.

5 The hundred bards employed by Gallien in writing epithalamia

for his grandson. Ginguené, Vol. I, ch. 1.

6 This is the eulogium which Eumenius confers upon Cornelius Fronton, one of the panegyrists of Antonine.

7 Dunlop. History of Roman Literature, Vol. II, p. 489.

8 L'Anonyme de Valois cité par Tiraboschi, Storia della Litteratura Italiana. Tom. 3, Lib. 1. c. 1.

9 The only literary productions of these ages are two of the popular songs of the soldiery. One of them was written by the followers of the Emperor Louis II, in the year 871: the other by the Modenese soldiers as they guarded their walls against the Hungarians. See Sismondi, Literature of the South of Europe. Vol. I, p. 24.

10 Essais de Montaigne, Liv. 3 ch., 9.

11 1095–1112, Sismondi.

[12] 1129–1154, Sismondi.

[13] Quadrio. Della Storia e della Ragione d'ogni Poesia, Tom. 1, p. 40. Cardinal Bembo and Leonardo Bruni (l'Arétin) cited by Ginguené, Tom. 1, p. 165–6: Tiraboschi, Abrégée de Landi, Tom. 2, p. 7. Quadrio seems inclined to think the Italian language existed before the Latin. A modest claim to antiquity. "Non andrebbe lungi dal vero chi opinasse, che l'odierna Lingua Italiana fosse prima, che la colta Latina." Storia, Tom. 1, p. 42.

[14] Mably. Observations sur l'Histoire de France. Liv. 1. ch. 3.

[15] Condorcet. Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain, p. 152.

[16] "Ils vendaient des arpens dans le ciel pour un nombre égal d' arpens terrestres; et ils avaient

la modestie de ne pas exiger de retour." Cordorcet, p. 157.

17 Mosheim. Eccl. Hist. Vol. I, p. 324.

18 Russell. History of Modern Europe. Vol. I, p. 191.

19 Oeuvres de Mably. Tom. 2, p. 13.

20 The original is quoted by M. de St. Foix in his "Essais Historiques sur Paris." Oeuvres de St. Foix. Tom. 4, p. 134.

"Aurum de Arabiâ
Thus et Myrrham de Sabâ
Tulit in Ecclesia
Virtus Asinaria."

"At Rouen they idolized a donkey in the most ludicrous manner, by dressing him up very gaily in church, dancing round him, and singing, 'Eh! eh! eh! Father Ass,' which, however flattering to him, was no great compliment to themselves." Hone, Every Day Book. Vol. I, p. 1311.

[21] Anecdotes Françoises, p. 56.

[22] Russell. History of Modern Europe. Vol. I, p. 193.

With the eleventh century commenced what are called the scholastic ages. In that century flourished Peter Lombard, celebrated as the Master of the Sentences. His celebrated work bearing the title, Sententiarum Libri Quatuor, was the great fountain head of all Scholastic Divinity. In this work we find such questions as the following:

"Utrum pater voluntate genuerit filium, an necessitate, et an volens vel nolens sit deus." Lib. I, Distinctio 6, p. 47.

"Utrum deus possit scire plura quam scit." Lib. I, Distinctio 38, p. 281.

"Quare de latere viri et non de alia parte corporis formata sit [mulier]." Lib. II, Distinctio 18, p. 92.

"De modo procreationis filio-

rum, si non peccassent primi parentes." Lib. II, Distinctio 20, p. 103.

This last discussion is a very singular one and goes to show how heedlessly and with what an utter want of reverence sacred and profane things were mingled.

23 "Thomas Aquinas, Doctor Angelicus ob acumen ingenii." Leigh, Treatise of Religion and Languages, p. 118.

24 Thomas Aquinas. Totius Theologiae Summa. Questiones 52, 53, 92, 93. Tom. I.

At school Thomas Aquinas was called the "dumb Ox" [le Bœuf muët.] See Bayle.

25 En chevalier et en clergie
Est tretoute la cortoisie.

Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie par M. de la Curne de Ste. Palaye. Memoires de l'Academie Royale des Inscriptions, Tom. 20, p. 719.

[26] M. de la Curne de Ste. Palaye. ubi sup. Tom. 20, p. 730.

[27] For illustration see the "Noble Leyçon" of the Waldenses. Morland. History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont.

[28] Russell. History of Modern Europe. Vol. I, p. 264.

[29] All that Solon and Pythagoras wrote was in verse, and Tacitus informs us that the ancient Germans had neither written laws nor historic records which were not written in the same.

[30] Chanson Guerrière de Bertrand de Born. Poètes Français. Tom. 1.

[31] Arnaud de Marveil. Roscoe's Translation of Sismondi. Vol. I, p. 174.

[32] Peyrol d'Auvergne. See Millot. Tom. 1.

[33] The language in which they

have come down to us is that of the fourteenth century. This, however, is no proof that their origin cannot be carried farther back. They may have been handed down from age to age in oral tradition, or the original copies of them, as first written may have been lost. Indeed many of them bear internal marks of having been produced, if not in the twelfth century, at least early in the thirteenth.

34 Translated from Depping's Sammlung, p. 193.

35 See MSS. translation; and the original in Depping's Sammlung, p. 264.

36 See Lockhart's Ancient Spanish Ballads, p. 134.

37 La Fontaine. Fable 13, Liv. 2.

"Aurait-il imprimé sur le front des étoiles
Ce que la nuit des temps enferme dans ses voiles."

38 The first gave a sanction to the immorality of his age by embodying it in a rich and harmonious idiom: and the second was but a mirror of the Greek Scholastics, and introduced into poetry all the nice refinements and subtle conceits of the later Platonists.

39 Sismondi. Tom. 1, Ch. 2.

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Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth
Origin and growth of the
languages of southern Europe