

Religious Thought
in Old English Verse

REV. C. J. ABBEY

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IN

OLD ENGLISH VERSE

BY



REV. C. J. ABBEY

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P R E F A C E

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to illustrate the main current of religious thought in English poetry through the long period of 1100 years which elapsed between Cædmon and the end of the last century. I am careful to say the *main* current. It has been an interest and a pleasure to me to trace through each passing century the general stream of religious thought flowing steadily and calmly on, affected far less than might have been expected by the changing circumstances and questions of the time. Those deeper and more personal feelings which so often find a natural and appropriate vent in poetry have little in common with the spirit of controversy. In religious poetry, so far as it is the language of the heart, even the Reformation itself, great as the movement was, made itself felt not so much in the disputatious and argumentative form which it displayed in most prose writings of that period, but simply, for the most part, in the evident enlargement of the general field of graver thought. Not unfrequently, it would be difficult to determine from internal evidence on which side the writer of the poem had ranged himself. Often again, although the theological views of the author are obvious enough, they serve chiefly to tone the feeling

and colour the language without in any way withdrawing the poem as a whole from that common stock of Christian literature in which all may find sympathy and interest. In compiling this work, I have never, in the writings of any century, found the slightest difficulty in selecting passages which would not be likely to jar discordantly with the distinctive religious or ecclesiastical opinions of the great majority of my readers. Though I have always kept this purpose in view, I have hardly ever found that it formed any hindrance to the choice of such lines as seemed to me on other grounds most adapted for quotation, either for the interest of their thought, or the beauty of their language, or as characteristic and illustrative of their writer.

The earliest English is of course to all practical purposes a different language from our own. Fundamentally the same from the very beginning, its identity is so disguised by disused inflections, by changed orthography, by obsolete words, by local dialect, and by all the manifold changes which attended a language in full process of growth, and perpetuated, until the invention of printing, only by manuscript or word of mouth,—that all the earlier portion of these volumes would have been, to a great extent, unintelligible to other than learned readers, if I had quoted passages in their original form. I have therefore rendered them into ordinary English, endeavouring always to make as little change as was compatible with converting them into a thoroughly readable form. I have, however, made

it a general rule to give in a footnote the first line or two of each extract in its original form. I have continued to the last to give the modern spelling. I thought on the whole that some loss of freshness and individuality would be more than compensated by the convenience of reading without any needless distraction in the form. As regards early English and its dialects, I should add that I have no pretension to personal scholarship on this subject, but that the admirable glossaries provided by the Early English Text Society and by other editors greatly facilitated a task which otherwise might have been beyond my power. As it is, I do not think I have made any serious mistakes in my renderings.

I have pleasure in mentioning the special thanks I owe to Mr. Palgrave, Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford, for some valuable suggestions and information, and for the kind spontaneous loan of many of his books. I have made some, but only a very sparing use of his excellent *Treasury of Sacred Song*. Indeed, I had very nearly completed my task prior to the publication of that work.

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RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN OLD ENGLISH VERSE

CHAPTER I

FROM CÆDMON TO THE CONQUEST

THE century and a half which followed the introduction of Christianity into Anglo-Saxon England was a most eventful period, and very fruitful in social advancement. Between the landing of Augustine, in 597, and the death of Bede, in 735, the nation, in embracing Christianity, took quite a new form, passed out of savagery into comparative civilisation, and started firmly on the progressive course that henceforth lay before it. It was in about the middle of this period that Cædmon wrote—the first of our sacred poets, and well worthy to head the *Æng* roll which was to follow. He died about 680; and his remarkable poems on the Creation and other biblical subjects were written between the middle of the seventh century and that date. His life carries us back almost to the dawn of Christianity in England. Hilda, a lady of royal blood, the noble-hearted prioress of his convent at Whitby, had been converted to the faith by Paulinus, first bearer of the Gospel to the English of Northumbria. She had remained staunch to her religion through the time of heathen reaction which followed upon Edwin's defeat by Penda. When new missionaries had been called in from Iona, and Cuthbert was winning himself a saintly memory by his apostolical labours in the northern counties, Hilda, no less venerated than he, was a sort of prophetess among her

people, consulted by kings and bishops, and gaining a special fame to her religious house by the unusual knowledge of Scripture which distinguished the priests and monks who had been trained there.

In this monastery Cædmon was one of the humblest dependants, a poor neat-herd, ignorant of Latin and unable to read. A man of grave and earnest temperament, he loved to listen to narratives from Scripture, and to muse upon them afterwards; but had little taste for the minstrelsy which delighted his companions. When, therefore, on any festal evening, the harp was passed round, he would go out before his turn arrived. I continue the account in the words of King Alfred's translation from Bede: 'Now it so happened that at one tide he left the house where the Ale was held, and went out to the neat-stall, the ward of which was that night trusted to him. And when at fitting time he laid his limbs to rest and slept, there stood by him in his dream some man, who hailed and greeted him, and named him by his name, "Cædmon, sing me somewise!" Then answered he, and quoth: "I cannot sing aught; and for that I could not, I went forth out of the Ale, and came hither." Then quoth he that was speaking to him, "Yet must thou sing to me." Quoth he, "What shall I sing?" Quoth he, "Sing to me of the beginning of things." When he got this answer, then 'gan he forthwith to sing, in praise of God the Maker, verses¹ and words which he had never heard. And the burden of them is this:—

Now shall we praise the Uprearer of the realm
Of the high heaven, and the Maker's might,
And His mind's wisdom, Father of the world;
Yea, of all wondrous workings He hath set
The first forthcomings—Lord for evermore!
He for earth's children roofed the round of heaven,
And laid this lower earth, Holy in all,
Guardian of men, great God for evermore.²

¹ 'Verses' was one of the Latin words which were early taken into English use.

² In most of these renderings from First English, something of the alliteration of the original has been preserved.

‘Then he arose from sleep and held fast in mind all that he had sung while sleeping, and put together with them in like measure many other words of God-worthy song.’¹

Such is the story how Cædmon began to be a bard of Christian verse. Great—and deservedly great—grew his fame. His prioress, and his countrymen far and wide, deemed him no less inspired than any prophet of old, and his verses became to the popular ear a sort of English Bible. There can be no question that they influenced largely and for a lengthened time the tone of religious and general thought in early England.

It is a striking coincidence that just a thousand years after Cædmon told in verse the story of Creation, of the apostate angels, and of Man’s temptation and fall, the very same theme should have been again handled by the greatest of our sacred poets. Nor was it a mere coincidence. Milton appears to have contemplated the writing of *Paradise Lost* as early as 1642, but it was not till 1658 that he regularly began the work. Two years before this date the poems of Cædmon were printed for the first time by Milton’s old friend, Francis Dujon. Francis Junius (for this is the name by which he is better known) had long devoted much study to the Teutonic languages. The one extant manuscript of Cædmon had been presented to him by Archbishop Usher, and it is in every way probable that Milton may have conversed with his friend about this remarkable work of the forefather of English sacred song, and have heard extracts from it. It may even have suggested the subject of *Paradise Lost*.

The following lines are a nearly literal rendering from the earlier part of Cædmon’s story of Creation:—

Gladness had they at onset, gleam and glow,
That throng of angels : bright their heavenly bliss,

¹ These verses begin in the original thus :

Nu we sceolan herian heofon-riches weard
Metodes mihte, and his mod-gethone
Wera Waldor-fæder.

—King Alfred’s Anglo-Saxon *Trans. of Bede* ; Thorpe’s *Cædmon*, xxi.

Their blitheness great. Thanes throned in strength on high,
 They loved their Lord of life, and with full heart
 Joyful they praised their King, and judged themselves
 To be most blessed in the bliss of God.
 They knew no sin, they worked no wickedness,
 But lived in rest with Him who liveth ever,
 Seeking nought else in Heaven but right and sooth.¹

Then, later, after telling how pride entered into the archangel's heart, and how the rebel spirits were hurled from heaven, and how earth was created, that by God's new-born creation the vacant seats might be replenished, the poem continues :—

Then Satan, sorrowing, spake—he who should sway
 In hell henceforth, and hold its gloomy depths,
 God's angel heretofore, white in the heavens ;
 Till his soul spurred him on, and most of all
 An overweening heart, that he would ne'er
 Give the Lord's mighty word its worthy meed.—
 So seethed sore thoughts within him, round his soul ;
 And hot within him heaved the wrathful fires.
 And thus he quoth—brake the words from his breast :
 ' Oh, how unlike is this strait stead of woe
 To that which erst we knew in heaven's height,
 Which my Lord laid upon me ! Now no more
 Of Him who wieldeth all things must we own,
 Which once we ruled, our realms and royalties.'²

Ah ! might I wield my hands ! and might one tide
 Fare forth from hence—one only winter's span !
 Then would I with this crew—— But round me lie
 These iron bonds, rides me this writhing chain.'³

As a sort of counterpart to Adam and Eve's morning hymn of praise to their Creator in Milton's great work, I may quote from Cædmon's paraphrase part of the *Song of the Three Children* :—

¹ Hæsdon gleam and dream heora ord-fruman
 Engla threatas ; beorhte blisse :
 Wæs heora blæd micel, thegnas thrym-fæste.

² Satan mathelode, sorgiende spræch, sethe helle forth
 Healdan sceolde, gyman thæs grundes.

³ Wa la ! ahte ic minra handa geweald, and moste ane tid
 Ute weorþan wesan, ane winter-stunde,
 Thonne ic mid thys werode—ac licgath me ymbe
 Irenbendas, rideth racentan sal.

The dusky birds of battle screamed around,
 A dewy-feathered throng, thirsty for blood,
 As scenting slaughter, and the wolves howled forth,
 Hungry for meat, their hateful even-song.¹

What little remains of Cædmon's paraphrases from the New Testament seems decidedly inferior to those of earlier portions of the Bible.

In a manuscript found at Vercelli in 1822, left there apparently by some early English pilgrim, is an interesting poem ascribed on some reasonable grounds to Cædmon. A few lines of it occur in Runic characters upon the Northumbrian Cross of Ruthwell, and the name of Cædmon, which was not, however, an uncommon one, is also engraved upon the stone. The poem is mixed, as might be expected, with a good deal of superstitious reverence for the actual visible cross, which is represented as telling in a vision its own story. But this materialism is so intimately joined in the poem with the deepest Christian feeling, that it readily lends itself to a more purely spiritual conception of the Cross of Christ. I give a translation of the latter part of it in modern rhyme, keeping as nearly as I can to the original:—

He most in the Doom may hope for rest
 Who bears in his bosom of signs the best,
 Who seeks through the might of the Cross to dwell
 With the Lord, whom on earth he had loved so well.
 I prayed at the foot of the Holy Rood,
 Breathing its power, and blithe of mood,
 I had yearned from my heart for an end of life,
 Weary of longings, faint with strife.
 But now I would live, and my strength shall be
 Christ's blessed Cross of Victory ;
 And, oftener and more than the world around,
 I will seek me aid on that holy ground.
 Few are the friends who can serve me here ;
 They have found in heaven a purer sphere :
 They have left the world, and they learn above,
 With the glorious King, a Father's love :

¹ Thorpe's *Cædmon*, xlv. :

Tha him eorla modh
 Ortrywe weordh.

And I daily wait for the blessed morn,
 When the Cross on whose arms my Lord was borne
 Shall raise me from this poor life to joy,
 To eternal bliss, and without alloy,
 With the happy saints, in the feast of God.
 May the Lord befriend me, on earth who trod,
 And who died for man on the Cross of Shame,
 Who hath loosed our bonds, and bid us claim
 Life, and a heavenly home. He died,
 And in souls by the nether fires tried
 Was quickened anew hope's gladsome light,
 When the Son of God, with conquering might,
 Led forth to the realm of peace the throng
 Of redeemèd spirits, with triumph song,
 As a King Almighty ; and angel choirs,
 And saints whom the love of heaven inspires,
 Rejoiced with a holy joy to greet
 The Lord on His throne—His rightful seat.¹

The sacred songs of Aldhelm, Cædmon's sainted contemporary at Malmesbury, are unfortunately not extant. He was a scholar of renown, and wrote various Latin treatises, but was well aware of the power which verse in their native tongue could exercise over the minds of a rude peasantry. It vexed him to see the people rushing back into the country from the mass without one further thought of sacred things. And so, abbot though he was, he would often post himself as a minstrel on the bridge and check them in their haste by charming their ear with song. Then, when he had thoroughly gained the attention of the throng, he would introduce here and there a story from sacred writ or some word of timely admonition. He gained more, says the Chronicler, by so doing than if he had dealt severely and 'cum excommunicatione.'

The poem of Beowulf may date in its existing form from the beginning of the eighth century. It is essentially a Scandinavian saga, thoroughly infused with the spirit of the old heathenism. The exploits of the hero

¹ J. M. Kemble's *Poetry of the Codex Vercellensis*, 1843: 'The Holy Rood : a Dream,' lines 231-310 :

Dhe him ær in breóstum beredh
 Beacna selest.

from whom its name is taken are told in it—how he vanquished Grindel, the horrible monster of the fens, and lost his life at a later time in a fierce combat with a dragon. But here and there Christian passages occur in it, probably the interpolations of Cynewulf or some other English poet. Such, for instance, are the following lines:—

They knew not Him who meted earth and sky,
The Judge of deeds, the Lord, the mighty God ;
They knew not how to praise the Lord of heaven.¹

And later:—

Yet he bethought him of his strength, the gift
Which largely God had given ; and holy trust
Had he in Him who only hath the sway,
His Stay and Hope, and so o'ercame the foe,
And quenched in fight the grisly fiend of hell.

Such also are the words expressive of hope of amendment and amelioration after death:—

Well shall it be to him who may
After his death-day
Seek the Lord,
And in his Father's bosom
Crave peace.²

There has been much controversy about the poet Cynewulf, who has strangely incorporated his name in detached Runic characters in various poems preserved in the Exeter and Vercelli Manuscripts. According to one view, he did not live till the age preceding the Norman Conquest, and was identical with Kenewulf, abbot of Peterborough, who died in 1014. Another leading opinion is that he was Cynewulf, a bishop of Lindisfarne in 780. Professor Morley is most inclined to the belief that he lived in the eighth century, but that he was neither priest nor monk ; that he was a man of noble birth who had taken a vigorous part in

¹ S. Thorpe's *Beowulf*, etc., 1835, vol. ii. :
Metod hic ne cuthon.

² Wel bith thæm the mot
Æfter death dæge.

the life and action of his age, and that it was he to whom we owe the beautiful sea-faring Ode of toilsome travel told in *The Wanderer*.

Without further preface, I will bring before the reader some passages of sacred song, most of them by Cynewulf, from the Vercelli and Exeter books. The Vercelli Codex opens with a long poem entitled *The Legend of St. Andrew*. It tells how St. Matthew carried the Gospel to the Mermedonians, a race of cannibals and sorcerers, but was cast in prison, and had his eyes put out. A drink also had been given to him which drove men into eating grass like cattle. His reason, however, was preserved to him by the special grace of God, and St. Andrew was sent to release him from his sufferings, and was rowed thither by three men, who, though he knew it not, were an incarnation of the Holy Trinity. The rest of the poem tells of the deeds of the apostle when he reached the land, of his recovery of St. Matthew, of the persecutions he endured, of the judgments that fell upon the land, and of the final conversion of the people. We may notice in passing how evidently saintly legends of this kind were intended to give a Christian tone to the minstrelsy which formed so conspicuous a part of old Teutonic gatherings. The story begins with the 'Hweat!' the premonitory signal of the harp, and then, in words well calculated to catch the ear of a warlike race, proceeds to tell 'of the twelve who in days of yore were heroes gloriously blessed, servants of the Lord, the renown of whose warfare failed not when banners pressed. These were famous men throughout the earth, pious leaders and bold in warfare, brave warriors, when shield and hand guarded the helmet on the battle-field.'

The first passage I will quote is that which embodies the mandate of Christ to go forth into all lands, and preach the Gospel to every creature:—

Twæs Christ's behest,
The Glorious King,—
(We are His thanes

To battle bid)—
 Wielder and Worker,
 In strength of sway,
 The King by right,
 One endless God
 Of all things made,
 Grasping in hold,
 With holy might,
 Both earth and Heaven,—
 Great Conqueror !
 Himself hath said—
 Father of folk—
 And bid us fare
 Past yawning depths
 To save Him souls.
 ‘ Fare forth o’er all
 Earth’s widest span,
 Even so far
 As the vast water rounds,
 Or as the steadfast plains
 Stretch on your way.
 Tell forth throughout the towns
 The bright belief,
 O’er the wide-bosomed world.
 I give unto you peace ;
 And in your hearts
 I whet the keen set will
 Of truest good.’¹

The second passage is where St. Andrew is on his way to Mermedonia. A great storm had arisen, and the apostle tells the mysterious rowers of a similar tempest which had once burst over the Lake of Galilee when Christ was in the boat :—

So did it hap of old :
 We on the sea-boat,
 Over the striving surge,
 Riding the billows,
 Ventured the fords.
 Gruesome and grim to us
 Was the fell water’s rage.
 Wildly the streaming tide
 Beat on the sea-board ;

¹ *Vercelli Codex: Legend of St. Andrew, 644-72: ‘Swa thæt Crist bebeád.’*

Flood back to flood again
 Answered the roar ;
 While there arose
 From its deep boiling breast,
 On to the boat's lap,
 Terror and dread.
 There the Almighty One,
 He who all men hath made,
 On the surge-cleaving ship
 Restfully waited.
 But our men became
 Filled with fear,
 And through the keel-ship
 Calling aloud,
 Prayed for peace,
 Boon from the blessed.
 Soon rose the King,
 Bliss-giver to angels ;
 Stillèd the waves,
 The weltering waters,
 Chode the wild wind,
 And the sea settled ;
 The eddied tide-flood
 Waxed smooth.
 Joy our hearts cheered,
 When that we saw
 Neath the high sun-track,
 How that the winds and waves,
 How the dread water-flood,
 Was scathed und scared,
 Fearing the Lord.¹

The Exeter Codex is a valuable collection of early English poetry, presented by Bishop Leofric to his Cathedral Church about the middle of the eleventh century. Its earlier part consists of hymns, probably by Cynewulf, to the Saviour, and the Virgin Mary, and on the Nativity, the Crucifixion, the Ascension, the Harrowing of Hell, and the Last Judgment. The tone of them all is gravely devotional and very earnest. I give a rendering of part of one on the Nativity:—

Warder and Wielder,
 Maker of man,

¹ *Vercelli Codex*, 875-920 :

Swa gesælde jú
 That we on sæ-bate.

Religious Thought in

Come, and Thy mildness
Tenderly show !
All of us need it ;
We, Thy mother's kin,
Yearn to Thy mystery,
Vainly endeavouring
To know the Father.

Bless thou this mid-earth
By Thine incoming,
Saviour Christ !
Ope thou the golden gates,—
They that in days of old
Long stood locked.
High Lord of heaven,
Seek us, O seek us,
(Sorely we need Thee)
By Thine own coming
Lowly to earth !

The wolf, the wicked one,
Ranging in darkness,
Widely hath scattered,
Lord, Thy flock,
Which, in the old days,
Thou with Thy life-blood
Hast dearly bought.
He, the baleful One,
With cruel clutch,
Though our souls rebel,
Holds us in thrall.

Wherefore to Thee, O Christ,
Warder and Guard,
Earnest, from depths of heart,
Warmly we pray.
Help us, O ! speedily,
Banished from heaven,
Weary and faint.

So may the Slayer
Into the gulph of hell
With scathe be driven !
So may Thy handywork,
Moulder of men !—
With right arise
Into the heavenly,
The noble realm !
Whence the swart spirit
In the foul lust of sin,

Drew and beguiled us,
That we of glory reft
Should in an endless harm
Painfully drudge.

But do Thou speedily,
Lord everlasting,
Shield of all beings,
Quench our Destroyer,
The death of our people,
O Living God! ¹

The Legend of St. Guthlac is a paraphrase of a Latin poem by Felix of Croyland. But there is nothing in it of the stiffness of a translation from an alien tongue. It is a story full of tender devotional feeling, touchingly and poetically told. Near the beginning he describes with vivid force a great struggle between the power of good and evil in the critical turning-point of Guthlac's life. Afterwards comes a tale of sore combats with terrible temptations, of angelic comforters, of conquests over evil, and, finally, the account of his saintly death. Here is a fair picture of the Christian life:—

They in their breast bear
Bright belief,
Holy Hope,
A clean heart;
They worship the Wielder.
They have wise thoughts,
Hastening on their onward way
To their Father's home.
They speed to gear the Spirit's house,
And with wariness
The fiend o'erfight,
Brotherly kin
Are fain to feel,
After God's will.
Their souls they freight
With godly cares;
Heaven's king's behests
They frame on earth's fields.
They ban all baneful spite,
And seek prayer,

¹ *Exeter Codex: On the Nativity*, ed. by B. Thorpe, 1842: pp. 15-17:
'Cum nu sigores.'

Shrink from sin,
 Hold sooth and right.
 They shall not rue
 After hence-going
 Into the holy burgh.
 Forthwith they fare
 To Jerusalem.
 There they for aye
 In happiness
 God's face
 Gladly behold,
 In kin and friendship.
 There in sooth they dwell,
 Beauteous, bright,
 For furthest length,
 In the bliss
 Of the land of the living.¹

The Wanderer is the pensive reverie of an aged man, who, long ago, had lost by death a powerful and generous liege, and had wandered away from his country, lonely and an exile, in quest of a new home, sailing through the rime and snows of the Northern seas. There runs throughout it a strong sense of loneliness, as he muses over the ever-changing tide of the world, of the hardships of life, the manifold forms of death, his own sad memories, his dreams of home, his recollections of good friends long ago departed. But amidst it all there is a deep spirit of pious trustfulness, and of firm faith in the guiding hand of God. It begins with gratitude for the lovingkindness he had met with, and ends with the exclamation:—

O well for him who seeketh grace,
 And comfort of his Father's face,
 In whom all fastness standeth.²

The poem on *The Endowments and Pursuits of Men* is like some Greek choral hymn, passed through a Christian mould. It tells in length how each of the dwellers among the people receives from God his

¹ *Exeter Book*, 150: 'Beradh in breóstum.'

² *Id.*: *The Wanderer*, 293: 'Wel bidh tham the him are secedh.'

separate gifts, in wisdom or in craft, in comeliness or strength, in council or in war, in eloquence, in skill of books, in hymnody and song, and knowledge of mysteries. Thus excellently doth the Lord dispense His bounty, and show to man His tender mercies. So doth He quell pride, that no man may deem that he alone is great, and, for that greatness, arrogance injure him. *The Various Fortunes of Men* may be looked upon as a sort of companion-piece to it. The poem is full of a reverential feeling of the mystery of life, and that God rules all the infinite circumstances of destiny, in darkness indeed beyond man's exploring, but yet in wondrousness, mercy, and love. A review of the evils and woes which beset mankind in nowise shakes the poet's faith in the control of an all-wise providence, and thus he concludes :—

Even thus wondrously
Has the great God of all,
Over mid earth,
Crafts of mankind
Moulded and made ;
And to each one on earth
Of the great kin of man
Dealt His decrees.
Wherefore let each one
Yield to Him thanks for all,
Which He in His mercies
To man hath awarded.¹

The Wonders of Creation is yet again on a kindred topic. It is a pondering over 'the web of mystery (rune),' which is everywhere spread over the earth, and shows a mind keenly alive to the beauty of created things. The following translations into modern English will, I think, be found very close to the original :—

The deeply-heeding man, whose mind is set
Strongly to live, will search the hoarded craft
Of words that tell of wondrous, hidden things
In all that God hath shaped.

¹ *Exeter Book: The Various Fortunes of Men*, 332: 'Swa hrætlice.'

But as for thee, if thou wouldst learn such lore,
Behold, I ope to thee the power of God.
And if thy thought can reach widely and far,
Then, grasp its teaching. Yet be well aware,
It is not in the bourne and bound of man
Further to fathom the deep things of God
Than the Lord's gift enables. Only thank
High God, the Everlasting, who doth give
Fit store of wit, whereby each soul of man—
If it but strive to keep the King's behest,
And faint not feebly on the path He set—
May rise with ease to the blest realm on high.

.

Lo, each morn,
Comes the light brightness o'er the misty hills,
Wading o'er eastern waves, winsome and fair.
Yea, it bears light to every kin of man,
That all to whom our King hath given sight
May feel its cheer.

.

Until at eventide
O'er depths of western waters forth it fares.
Gloom calleth gloom, and soon the coming night
Holdeth the bidding of the Holy Lord.¹

A Father's Instruction to his Son is a didactic poem stored with the soundest religious morality. It is represented as the teaching of 'a man skilled in mind, old in goodness, wise-fast in words, so that he was held well worth,' who entreats his dear son to 'let his mind hold the far-forth writings and the dooms of the Lord.'

The Sea Farer is a song of travel and toil, and of the wild joy of waters. Thence, by a natural transition, it passes on to muse with a manly pathos on the pilgrim's journey of life, its deep thoughts, its trials, and aspirations. It is a fine poem, and is doubtless by the same author as *The Wanderer*. I may refer the reader to a part of it as rendered by Professor Morley in the second volume of his *English Writers*. The swooping flight and wild cry of the sea-bird stirs a responsive chord in the heart of the sea-farer:—

¹ *Exeter Book: The Wonders of Creation*, 367: 'Deop hydig mon.'

Loud cries the lone fier,
 And stirs the mind's longing
 To travel the way that is trackless,
 The death-way over the flood ;

and he muses upon the life and death, and, most of all, the memories of the blest, whose true deeds are cherished among men on earth, while their glory grows among the angels of God in the life everlasting.

The Departed Soul's Address to the Body is found both in the Exeter and Vercelli books, and is in two parts, according as he to whom the Spirit had been given had lived well or ill. It perhaps dates from a time not very much prior to the Conquest. The following is a version of a passage in the first of the two :—

God sent me to thee by His angel,
 From heaven, a living soul ;
 With the Holy Blood He bought thee,
 And delivered thee from dole.
 But thou—thou didst bind me captive,
 Didst hold me in cruel thrall ;
 And I could not but dwell within thee,
 Pened in by the fleshly wall.
 Thou didst crush me with lusts and sinning ;
 And it seemed to thy death-day
 Long as ten thousand winters
 That I tarried still thy prey.
 Thou didst sit midst wine and feasting,
 And never, alack ! didst think
 How I craved for the Lord's own body,
 How I longed for the Spirit's drink.¹

I must give one more quotation only from the Exeter Codex, from the first part of the *Supplication* :—

Help me, O Holy Lord,
 Shaper of earth and heaven,
 And of their wonders all,
 My Glory-King !
 Eternal Lord !
 Mighty and manifold !
 Hearken, great God ;—
 Lo, I do trust to Thee

¹ *Exeter Book: A Departed Soul's Address to the Body*, 368 : 'And se thurh engel.'

Body and soul,
 Words and works,
 And all my divers thoughts,
 O wise God.
 Giver of light !
 I pray Thee betoken,
 Lord, to my soul,
 How I may heedfully
 Mark Thy great will,
 Live to Thee only,
 Soothfast King !
 And in my heart
 Good rede up-raise.
 Weakly, more weakly
 Than it were well,
 O God, my Maker,
 Have I hearkened to Thee :
 Yet, let not him, the Thief,
 Scathe me in night.
 O living God,
 Do Thou forgive
 My bitter, baleful deeds !
 Not bootless in my prayer,
 If but I come to Thee.
 O, give me time, my God,
 And a wise heart ;
 Give me a will to bear,
 A mind to heed,
 All that, O faithful Lord,
 Thou dost in trial send.¹

Bede (*c.* 673-735) has not left any English verse ; but his Latin poem on the Domesday was early translated into the vernacular. Some authorities, however, ascribe the Latin original to Alcuin. The first English manuscript which contains it is of the tenth century. I give a rendering of a short extract from it :—

I rede thee, be thou quick with rueful tears ;
 Forestall the anger of the eternal Judge.
 Why dost thou lie in dust, burdened with shame,
 O flesh ! and sins ? Ah, why not cleanse away,
 With tears poured forth, thy load of troublous sin ?
 Why ask not for thyself bathings and salves,—

¹ *A Supplication*, 1-32, in *id.* 452 : ' Ahelpe min, se halga dryhten.'

Leechdoms of life—from Him the Lord of life?

Glad is the Son of God in throes of grief,
 And when thou judg'st thyself for sins on earth.
 Never will heaven's God for guilt and wrong
 Wreak wrath twice over upon any man.
 Slight not the heaving groan, the sorrowing cry,
 And of forgiveness this the ready time.¹

The same manuscript contains poetical paragraphs of the Lord's Prayer, and of the Doxology. I append a version of the lines on the 'Et nunc et semper' of the latter:—

And now for evermore Thy faithful works,
 And Thy great might abideth, clear to all.
 They tell of Thine high wisdom far and wide,
 And throughout all the world they stand for aye.
 Thy handiwork, O God, hearkens Thy word,
 And groweth ever; all things praise the Lord,
 The songs of saints, clean tongues, and Christian books,
 All this mid earth, and we men call aloud
 Here on its ground—'To Thee be thanks and praise,
 Thy will unchanging, Thine own steadfast law.'²

Salomon and Saturn is the English form of a story in dialogue, which was for many centuries exceedingly popular in almost every country of Europe. It contains both Northern and Oriental elements, and varies in the most singular ways; 'at one time a solemn and serious piece of mystical theosophy; at another, a coarse but humorous parody; at another (in the French), still further degraded.' The First-English or Anglo-Saxon is the earliest extant version of it, and 'is the only one in which it is solemnly and seriously treated.'³ There is much that is figurative in it, much that is fantastic and exaggerated, much that sounds like mere rhapsody. In the first part the Paternoster is personified, with much embellishment of Eastern hyperbole, and in the

¹ Bede's *De Domes Dage*, 75-91; Early English Text Soc. 1876: 'Ic lære the thu beo hrædra mid hreowlicum tearum.'

² *Paraphrase on the Doxology*, ll. 30-40, in *id.*: 'And nu symle thine sodhan weore.'

³ Kemble's Introduction, p. 2.

And draw him sinful to the worser side,
To do the devil's will the whole day long !

Then going forth with tears, fares on his way
The angel to his home, and sadly cries :
" I could not from his heart drive out the stone,
Which in its flinty weight cleaves to his soul !"¹

The following is a short quotation from the second part:—

Quoth Salomon, ' A little while
The leaf is green, then falloweth again,
Falleth to earth, and turneth to its dust.
E'en so shall fall they who work sin on earth,
Who live in guilt, who hide their costly hoards,
And guard them strongly in their fastnesses,
Thereby to gladden fiends. Foolish, they ween
That He the King of Heaven, Almighty God,
Will hear them in their trouble, when they cry.'²

¹ *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturn*, 974-1007, p. 175 :

Donne hine ymbegangath
Gastas twegen ; other bith golde glædra.

² *Id.* 625, p. 163.

CHAPTER II

THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

IN all its most essential features the English language remained for a long period almost unaffected by the changes which followed at the Conquest. The vast mass of the people spoke under the Plantagenets the same tongue which their fathers had spoken under Edward the Confessor, and intermarriage between the two races who now lived side by side on English soil was so general, that English was doubtless the true mother-tongue of many a young heir to Norman baronies. But still, some few generations had to pass before either the English language or the English people emerged from the yoke under which each alike had fallen. The *English Chronicle*, not without many a wail of sorrow for the troubles which had fallen upon the land, continued its old record. A few English homilies survive from the century that followed upon the Conquest. But otherwise the language of Egbert and of Alfred the Great, of Cædmon and of Cynewulf, was for the most part the spoken, but no longer the written language of the country. Clerks and learned men wrote in Latin. French was the tongue of the court and of law. Meanwhile English was undergoing more rapidly than before the change which quickly affects any vernacular which is not guarded by literary men and grammarians. It was losing its inflexions, and being chipped and shortened as it passed only from mouth to mouth. The great change by which the purity of the language was corrupted, and its powers enlarged was through a great influx of Norman. But French words were scarcely in

general operation until the latter part of the thirteenth century. Layamon's long poem of 56,000 lines, written in King John's reign, contained barely ninety words which were not of genuine English birth.

The 'Proverbs of Alfred,' in the exact form in which they now survive to us, date from the time of Henry the Third. But the poem most likely belongs to the twelfth century, and may embody sayings which for some long time previous to that had been recited or sung by minstrels in many an English home. It is not supposed that the Witanagemote at Seaford is really historical, or that the sayings ascribed to King Alfred were all of them his. The English clung with tenacity to the memory of their noble-hearted ruler, and not only kept up a traditional memory of his teaching, but fathered upon him many wise sayings which, in the very same form, had long been a sort of common property of the Teutonic family, ascribed to Hendring or to any other venerated name. But whether the subjoined words record a genuine tradition of Alfred or not, they are, at all events, worthy of him, and are inspired by a very pure and high Christian sentiment. If they were composed in the reign of Stephen, or in that of the first or second William, we can imagine with what pathetic yearning the English would turn from the miseries of their own time to the memory of days when they were free under their own heroic king:—

Alfred sate

At Seaford, 'mongst his bishops, and his thanes,
Proud earls, and knights, and his book-learned men,

He, England's darling, comforter, and lord.
Full strong was he, and lovesome. He was King
And he was Clerk, and well he loved the word
Of God. Ay, he was wise in all his words
Wary in work: he was the wisest man
On English ground. And thus he 'gan to teach

How we might in the world worship attain,
And bring our souls in one with Christ our King.

He spake, and bade us all dread Christ our Lord,
 Love Him, and please Him. He alone is good
 Above all goodness. He is wise, and He,
 Above all things of gladness, the one Bliss,
 The mildest Master, Father, Comforter
 Of all who love the one true Righteousness ;—
 A King so rich in boon that none should lack
 Ought of His will, who in the world shall live
 Heedful of His high honour.¹

Thus Alfred quoth : ‘ O son of mine, so dear,
 Sit thou beside me ; I will tell to thee
 True ways of life. O son of mine, I feel
 That my hue falloweth, my comeliness
 Grows wan, my strength is weak, my days on earth
 Are wellnigh o’er ; and soon we two must part.
 I must go hence ; but thou shalt tarry here
 In all my wealth. Harken to what I say,
 Dear son, I charge thee. Be to all thy folk
 Father and fore-lord, father to the child,
 The widow’s friend, the poor man’s comforter,
 Shield of the weak. The wrong man bring to right
 With all thy strength, and guide thee, son, by law.
 So shall the Lord be with thee ; and, above all,
 First of all other thoughts, remember well
 Thy God, and pray that He may counsel thee
 In all thy deeds. So shall He be with thee,
 And help thee to do strongly all thy deeds.’²

It would have been interesting to have had some reminiscences in old English verse of the fervid emotions excited by the early Crusades, and also of that earnest revival of religion which stirred the hearts of the people in the days of Henry the First. A solemn and meditative strain of sacred poetry, as a mode of expressing deep religious feeling, had been quite in accord with the temperament of the English before the Conquest.

¹ *The Proverbs of Alfred*, 1-60 :

Al Sevorde sete theynes monye, fele biscopes
 And feole bok-ilered, eorles prute, knyghtes egleche.

² *Id.* xxx. 573-604 :

Thus quad Alured : Sone min, swo leue,
 Site me nu bisides, and hich the wile sagen
 Sothe thewes. Sone min, ich fele,
 Thad min hew falewidth, and min wlite is wan.

Doubtless, the same spirit remained. We can well believe that in the beginning of the twelfth century the religious movements of the day found expression in many a hymn sung in native English. But I am not aware that there are any English hymns now extant of the twelfth century, except a few verses written by St. Godric, a hermit of Finchall, near Durham, who died there in 1170. The good man himself thought highly of them, supposed that they had been put into his heart by special inspiration, and recommended them as a solace in pain, and strength in time of temptation. There is, however, nothing in the least degree worth quoting in the fragments of these hymns, collected by Ritson, in his *Bibliographia Poetica*.¹

The Ormulum, as the author of it has called it from his own name, was written in unrhymed verse scarcely recognisable as verse, about the beginning of Henry the Second's reign, by Orm or Ormin, a canon-regular of St. Augustine. His aim was to put into simple English, adapted to recitation, the Gospel as read in the order of the Church, and to give a series of metrical homilies on their teaching. It had been the suggestion of his dear brother, Walter, who was one with him, he says, in brotherly love, one in baptism and faith, and one also in the canonical rule of life which both one and the other had adopted. To him he dedicated his completed work. Then, after some opening words:—

And for thee I have done it now,
 But all through Christ'es help.
 And now 'tis meet we both thank Christ
 That it is brought to end.
 I've gathered into this my book
 The gospels wellnigh all,
 Such as within the mass book are
 Through all the year at mass.

¹ One line from a petition to Saint Nicolas may be instanced as a passing illustration of the northern English of that time: 'Tymbre us faire scone hus,' *i.e.* 'Build us a fair beautiful house.'

I have after the Gospel stood,
 That which the Gospel meaneth,
 That one should tell unto the folk
 Concerning their souls' need.¹

And so he continues in the very simplest and homeliest strain, and with many repetitions, addressing himself in the most earnest sincerity of purpose to his untaught hearers :—

For all that e'er on earth is need
 For Christian folk to follow—
 In faith, in deed—they shall learn all
 In Gospel's holy lore.
 And, therefore, whoso learneth it,
 And doeth it indeed,
 He shall straightway be worthy held
 Savèd through God to be.
 And, therefore, have I turned it
 Into the English speech ;
 For that I fain would have it so,
 That all our English folk
 With ear should listen unto it,
 With heart should it believe,
 With tongue should make its tidings known,
 With doing should fulfil it,
 And so should win 'neath Christendom,
 Through God, true soul-salvation ;
 And if that they will hearken it
 And follow it with deed,
 Then with Christ's aid I've holpen them
 Shelter of Him to win.
 And I shall have, for this my toil,
 Good boon from God at last,
 If that I, for the love of God,
 And for the meed of heaven,
 Have turned it into English speech
 For their souls' weal and need.²

The following, on Luke vii., is a portion of his Gospel narrative :—

Augustus hight in olden time
 A Roman Kaiser-king,

¹ *The Ormulum*, ed. R. M. White ; Dedic. 25-36 :

Icc itt hafe forthedd te,
 Acc all thurh Cristess hellpe.

² *Id.* 130, etc. : ' Forr al thatt æfre own erthe iss ned.'

And he had waxèd Kaiser-king
 Of all man kin on earth ;
 And he 'gan thinking of himself
 And of his mickle wealth,
 And he began to think him thus
 —So as the Gospel sayeth—
 How that in sooth he well would know
 How much of fee would come
 If throughout all his kingdom, each
 A penny to him gave.¹

To shepherds there, where they that night
 Were watching by their folds,
 That angel came, and stood them by
 With heaven's light and gleam.
 And forthwith as they looked on him,
 They were full sore afraid ;
 And God's bright angel then began
 To comfort and to cheer,
 And spoke them thus on God's behalf,
 With speech both sweet and mild :
 ' Now be you not afeard of me
 But be ye very blithe,
 For I am sent from the high heaven
 To let ye ken God's will,—
 To tell you, and all folk that be,
 Now cometh mickle bliss.
 To you is born this very day,
 For healing of your sins,
 A childling that is Jesus Christ,—
 In full sooth know it ye ;—
 And here hard by that child is born,
 E'en in King David's town,
 The town that highteth Bethlehem,
 Here on this Jewish ground.
 And further, I will show to you
 A thing for a true token :
 For soothly ye shall find the child
 In winding clouts y-wounden.
 And He is in an ox-crib laid,
 And there 'tis ye may find him.'
 And soon anon as this was said
 By angel sent from God,
 A mickle crowd of angel throng
 Was come forth out of heaven.

¹ *The Ormulum*, 3270-80 :

An Romanisshē Kaserrking
 Wass Augustuss gehatenn.

And all that shepherd folk them saw
 And heard what they did sing.
 They all did sing to God one song,
 In worship and in praise.
 And thus together did they sing—
 'Tis as the Gospel sayeth—
 'To God up in the Heaven's span
 Be worship praise and meed,
 And upon earth greeting and love,
 Through God's mild heartedness,
 To each man that shall have in him
 Good heart and aye good will.'

I will give one more quotation from a more homiletic part of the discourse :—

Now mightest thou say here to me
 This word, if so befall :
 'To love both God and also man
 Why should it me beseem?
 It is enough that I love God,
 Whereby I may be saved.'—
 Of this will I now show to thee
 That which I understand
 After such little wit whate'er
 My Lord hath lent to me.
 If that thou mightest love thy God,
 So as beliketh Him,
 Without that love of every man,
 Then mightest thou be saved
 Without that love of every man,
 Loving the Lord alone.
 But thou must this full truly know :
 It is not God's good will
 That either thou canst love Him much,
 Or gladly yield Him thrall,
 If that thou lovest not all men
 Like as thou lov'st thyself ;
 And Christ thou dost not wholly love
 In all his twofold kind,
 If that thou hast not love for men
 Who share in Christ'es kind ;
 For Christ is God, and Christ is man,
 Both in His twofold kin.

¹ *The Ormulum*, 3337-84 :

Till hirdess thær thær thegg thatt nihht
 Biwoken theggre faldess.

And if thou lovest right thy Lord,
 To men thou needs must show it.
 Meet 'tis that thou for love of God,
 Shouldst well love, mend, and help them.¹

Nicholas de Guildford's *Owl and Nightingale* was written in Henry the Second's time. I quote from it a passage in which the nightingale is represented as decanting on sacred song in earth and heaven:—

'Owl, thou askest me,' she said,
 'Can I do any other deed
 Than sing throughout the summer's tide
 And scatter mirth both far and wide?
 Why askest thou of crafts of mine?
 Better my one than all of thine.
 Better from me one single lay
 Than all that ever thou canst say.
 And I would tell thee why it is :
 Know then, that man was born for this
 For blessedness of heaven above,
 Where there is song, and joy, and love.
 And thither presseth every man
 Who anything of goodness can.
 So there is song in holy kirk,
 And clerks begin their tuneful work,
 That men may think who hear the song,
 Whither they wend, and where belong,
 And holy mirth may not forget,
 But think thereof and reck of it,
 And, listening to the Churche's steven, [voice]
 May deem how glad the bliss of heaven.
 And clerks they rise at mid of night
 And sing of yonder heaven's light ;
 And through the land the priests do sing,
 When that the light of day doth spring.
 And I help them all that I may,
 And sing with them both night and day ;
 And they through me be all the gladder,
 And to their song be all the radder (more willing)
 I warn all men unto their good,
 That they be blithe in heart and mood,

¹ *The Ormulum*, 5150-80 :

Nu miht tu seygenn her to me
 Thiss word, giff thatt te thinnkethth.

And bid them seek the land on high
Where song and joy shall be for aye.¹

In John's reign, when Normandy was for the time lost to the Norman kings, and England was thrown back entirely upon herself, the English tongue, which for some time past had been gradually recovering its place as the language of the whole people, began more generally to assert itself again in literature. Then Layamon, priest of Ernley (Arley), on the banks of the Severn, wrote his chronicle in verse, in the last year or two of the twelfth century, or in the opening of the thirteenth. After much search and many travels, he got together the authorities for his projected work—Bede in English, Albinus and Austin in Latin, and Wace's translation from Geoffrey of Monmouth in Norman-French, this latter being the one to which he was mainly indebted. With his three manuscripts before him, Layamon set to work. To use his own words:—

Then Layamon before him laid these books,
And turned their leaves, and lovingly beheld them.
(May the good Lord be gracious to his soul !)
Then in his fingers took he up the quill,
And so he wrote on book-skin, and true words
He set together, gathering into one,
Three books. And now thus prayeth Layamon :
Each truly-hearted man who reads this book,
And learns these lines, let him, for love of God,
For his dear father's soul utter a prayer,
And for his mother's soul who brought him forth
To be a man ; and likewise let him pray
For his own soul, that all may well befall him.² Amen.

¹ N. de Guildford's *Owl and Nightingale*, ed. Stratmann, 1868, 707-791 :

Ule, thu axest me, heo seide,
Gif ich con eni other dede,
Bute scingen in sume tide,
And bringe blisse feor and wide.

² Layamon's *Brut*, or *Chronicle of Britain* ; ed. Sir F. Madden ; 3 vols. 1847 :

Layamon leide theos boc,
And tha leaf wende,
Heom leofliche bi-heold.—. 45, vol. i. 3.

In the course of his story,¹ Layamon never goes out of his way to moralise or make reflections, but when his subject naturally introduces anything directly connected with the history of religion in England, he describes it with evident zest and sympathy. The reader may be glad to have one or two nearly literal extracts. The first is where Arthur is told of the death of King Uther, and of his own succession to the British throne. The deputies found him in Brittany:—

Then said they, ‘Hail, O Arthur, noblest knight!
 When Uther must depart, he greeted thee,
 And bade thee, that in Britain rightful laws
 Thou hold, and help thy folk, and guard the realm,
 As good king should, and rid thee of thy foe,
 And drive him from the land. Likewise he prayed
 To the mild Son of God that thou do well,
 And hold thy land of God. So Uther died—
 Uther Pendragon—and thou art his son
 Arthur, and eke Aurelian is dead,
 Who was his brother.’ Thus they ’gan to tell:
 But Arthur sat full still, and for one while
 Was faint, and wan of hue, and then anon
 Was red, as moved in heart; then his full soul
 Outbroke, and what he spake was good.
 Thus spake he then—Arthur, the noblest knight:—
 ‘Lord Christ, Thou Son of God, O help us now,
 That I through life may hold God’s holy laws!’²

The other passage I quote is the very familiar but ever interesting story of Gregory and the Angles:—

There was in Rome, by doom of God, a pope
 Hight Gregory, a man well loved of God.
 It happed upon a time this pope would go
 Into a street, and, as he went, he saw
 Three very comely men of English birth,
 Fast bound, who should be sold, and even now
 The pence were told. Then asked the pope anon
 Who these fair men might be, and how they came,

¹ Layamon’s long work is barely entitled to the name of a ‘chronicle.’ At the end of 32,241 lines he has not advanced beyond the old days of Athelstan.

² *Brut*, 19,866, vol. ii. 412:

‘Hail seo thu, Arthur,
 Athelest cnigh ten.’

And whence they were, and in what land were born.
 Then answered one who was exceeding fair ;
 ' Yea, we be heathen men, and hither led,
 Forth sold from land of Angles. Do thou free us,
 And we would ask for baptism.' Thus they spoke,
 These English, nobly born ; and Gregory,
 Beloved of God, felt pity, and he said,
 (For he was good of heart) ' I wis ye be
 Angles, to angels likest, for of all
 Upon this earth no kin is fair as ye !'
 Then the pope questioned them of many things,
 Their laws, their lands, and of their people's king ;
 And all they wist they told him. So when he
 Had given them baptism, and made them free,
 He turned to Rome, and beck'd a cardinal,
 A chosen clerk, and holy, called Austin.
 Then said the pope unto him, counselling :
 ' Austin, thou needs must wend, with soothful thought,
 To England, to King Ethelbert, and preach
 God's gospel there, and thou shall speed thee well.
 I give thee forty right good clerks : but thou,
 See that to-morrow finds thee on thy way.'¹

One of the early Scripture paraphrases is *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, dating, in Mr. Morris's opinion, not later than 1250. The writer takes various salient incidents in the biblical accounts, and, like his fellow-writers of that period, does not scruple to mix them with fiction and legend. But there is interest in all these efforts made, a century or more before Wickliffe, to meet, in a popular form, the desire for some further knowledge of Scripture in a tongue which the people could understand. The following is the beginning of the prologue :—

Give love to him who rhymes a song,
 To teach with wit the unlearned throng,
 How they may heed with mindful look,
 Though they be learned in no book,
 To love their God and serve Him aye :
 He will requite them faithfully.
 Yea, all good and Christian men,

¹ *Brut*, 299,447, vol. iii. 180 :

Tha wes inne Rome a pape of Godes dome.

Bearing peace and love between,
 Them Almighty God shall love
 Here below and there above ;
 Give them bliss and soul'es rest
 Which for evermore shall last.
 From Latin speech I draw my lay
 Into English, sooth to say.
 Christian folk who hear it may
 Be glad, as birds, to see the day,
 When to them the tale is sung,
 In easy words and mother tongue,
 Of bliss'es hill and sorrow's dale ;
 How Lucifer, that devil-dwale, [deceiver]
 Brought mankind to sin and bale,
 Held them shut in hellish mail,
 Till God, clad in our weed,
 To man forgiveness brought and rede,
 Undid whate'er the fiend would speed,
 And holp, when He saw mickle need.—
 Father God of everything,
 Thou Lord Almighty, highest King,
 Whether that I read or sing,
 Give, I pray Thee, happy timing,
 Thee to praise in this my rhyming,
 Telling of the world's beginning.¹

And so he begins the history of Creation, and how
 Satan, through pride and rebellion,

Dragon became, who erst was knight,
 Darkness became, who erst was light ;
 And everything that held with him
 Murky became, and swart, and dim.²

Thus he tells of Jacob's dream—

At Luz he tarried out all night,
 A stone under his head set right,
 And slept, and saw in soothful dream
 From earth up unto heaven's beam
 A ladder stand, and thereupon

¹ *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, 1-34, edited by R. Morris,
 E.E.T.S. No. 7:

Man og to luven that rimes ren,
 The wisseth wel the logede men,
 Hu man may him wel loken,
 Thog he ne be lered on no boken.

² *Id.* 284: 'Tho wurth he drake, that ear was knigt.'

Angels down-coming and up-gone
 And the great God above on high
 Then Jacob roused, and speedily
 He heard Him speaking, 'God I am
 Of Isaac and of Abraham.
 This land I give unto thy seed,
 And in this wise I bid thee rede,
 That I will bring them here again
 Among all peoples blest amain.'
 Jacob awoke, and said in fear—
 'God in this stead [place] is surely here,
 A place of dread is this, God's house,
 Here is the gate of heaven 'mongst us.'¹

His story ends with some events recorded in the Book of Numbers, and so to the death of Moses. The concluding lines are:—

Besech we now great God'es might,
 That He will make our soulès bright,
 And shield us all from Hell'es night,
 And lead us into gladsome light,
 Guide us to ways aloof from sin,
 At heaven's gate to enter in,
 And live in bliss with blessed men.
 With mouth and heart we say, Amen.²

Another favourite way of imparting religious instruction, in a form attractive to the common people, was to tell of the habits and properties, real or supposed, of certain animals, and then to allegorise them in a Christian sense. One of these so-called 'Bestiaries' is supposed by Mr. Morris to be by the same author as the *Genesis and Exodus* just spoken of. It was written about the same date, 1250, and, like it, in the East Midland form of the language. Scraps from these curious compositions are often found in later writers. The natural history recorded of the animals selected is of an astonishing kind, and the spiritual and moral applications often quaint and ingenious. Of the lion the characteristics specially

¹ *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, 1603-20:
 He lay bi Luzan ut on nigȝt.
 A ston under hise heued nigȝt.

² *Id.* 4155: 'Biseke we nu godes migȝt.'

dwelt upon are that he is accustomed to watch on a hill; that when the hunter approaches he carefully erases his track by means of his tail; that when the whelp is born it does not stir until the third day, when its sire calls aloud and wakes it; and lastly, that the lion always sleeps with its eyes open. When these facts have all been turned into religious allegory, the parable passes on to the eagle, the serpent, and the ant. Of the latter it is said that

As the ant shunneth barley, when she can store up wheat,
So when we have the Gospel law, to shun the old law is meet.¹

The following is from the *Turtle-Dove*. It is put in the original into more careful rhyme than most of the rest, perhaps as being intended to be sung:—

List every faithful man hereto: once at the Church's gate,
Think of it oft—your soul did choose Lord Christ to be her mate.
He is our soul's espoused; O, love ye Him with might,
And wend ye never from Him by daylight or by night,
Though He from sight hath fared, yet be we to Him true;
When we have such an old love, why should we seek a new?
Believe we that He liveth aye, and up in heaven doth reign,
And that from thence to judge the world on earth He comes
again.²

I pass to some others of the religious poems of the thirteenth century collected by Dr. Morris in his *Old English Miscellany*. The *Poema Morale* may perhaps date from the first year or two of King John's reign. It embodies the solemn reflections of a man far advanced in years awaking to the shortcomings of his life, and anxious that the grave thoughts which come into his mind should warn and encourage others. It begins thus:—

A winter older than I was, I'm older eke in lore;
My goods are greater than they were,—my wit it should be more.

¹ *A Bestiary*, 291-94, E.E.T.S. No. 49:

The mire suneth the barlic, thanne ye fint te wete.

² *Id.* 714-29:

List ilk lefful man her-to, and herof oft reche:
Ure sowle atte kirke dure ches hire crist to meche.

Too long have I a child y-been in work, and eke in deed,
 And though my age be winter old, too young am I in rede.
 A life of little boon I've led, and still, methinks, I lead ;
 And when I think me thereupon, full sorely do I dread.
 In childishness and idleness my life is wellnigh past :
 Too late have I bethought myself, unless God's kindness last.
 Many the idle word I've said ;—sorely I speak the truth—
 Many my headstrong deeds, whereof I'm pinchèd now with ruth.
 Too often have I guilty been in work alike and word,
 Too mickle have I spent on self, too little laid in hoard :
 All that I likèd best of old, that most mislikes me now ;
 For he who follows most his will, he cheats himself, I trow.¹

Then he continues of the need of a man laying up for himself a treasure in heaven ; how no evil goes unpunished, no good unrequited, and how every one must go before his Lord and receive his wages according to his earnings. Each man shall be his own judge, and his own works will bear witness for or against him. Then comes a solemn and terrible picture of the doom of the wicked ; then of loving God with all our might and our neighbour as ourselves :—

For all that e'er we read or sing before God's holy board
 Holdeth and hangeth upon these the twain things of His Word.
 All law of God doth he fulfil, the new one and the old,
 Who hath within him there two loves, and will them well uphold.²

I next quote from a poem on *The Passion of Our Lord* :—

Then came He toward Jerusalem upon a Palm Sunday,
 He had no princely robe of fur, He wore no robe of gray,
 He had no steed to ride upon, He had no palefray, [badger's fur]
 But meekly rode upon an ass, as I to you may say, [palfrey]
 And as He came into the burgh, thus riding as a King,
 Forth came the children unto Him, and sweetly they did sing,

¹ *A Moral Ode*, 1-14, in E.E.T.S. No. 49 :

Ich am eldre than ich wes a winter and ek on lore,
 Ich welde more than ich dude, my wyt auhte beo more.
 Wel longe ich habbe child ibeo a werke and eke on dede
 Thuh ich beo of wynter old, to yong ich am on rede.

² *Id.* 305-8 :

Al that me redeth and syngeth bivoren godes borde
 Al hit hongeth and hald bi thisse twain worde.

'Yea, blessed must He be,' said they, 'that cometh in God's name,
Which filled the Jews and Pharisees with anger and with grame
[malice].¹

From *Sinner Beware!* I extract one verse mainly to exemplify the metre:—

Naked, forsooth, and bare,
With weeping and with care,
 We did begin to live,
So from hence shall we fare,
And all our boasting there
 In the grave lay and leave.²

In the poem *On Serving Christ*, the two first lines are:—

Why serve we not the Christ? his health why want?
We who were christened at the holy font.³

The verses hitherto quoted from this collection of thirteenth century composition have been by unknown authors. But next comes a sort of divine love-song written by Thomas Hales, a Minorite friar, for a certain maiden who had dedicated herself to God. I quote a couple of stanzas from it:—

Sweet are the ways, if ye but knew,
And goodly, of the Heavenly Child.
Full fair is He, and bright of hue,
His cheer is glad, His mood is mild,
Lovesome His heart, trusty and true,
Free heart, a soul with wisdom filled.
Never, believe me, would ye rue,
If ye to Him true worship yield.

¹ *The Passion of Our Lord*, 64-72, E.E.T.S. No. 49:
Tho he com toward ierusalem a palme sune-day
Ne hedde he none robe of fowe ne of gray.

² *Sinner Beware*, 212-6:
Sothliche nakede and bare,
With wope and with care,
 We come to thisse lyue.
Al so we schule fare,
And all ure prude thare
Vor-leten and bileuen.

³ *On Serving Christ*, 1-2:
Hwi ne serue we Crist and secheth his sauth,
Seoththe vs wes at the font fulluht by-tauht.

Richest is He in all the land,
 Far as man speaketh with the mouth ;
 He bendeth all into His hand,
 In East and West, in North and South.
 Henry, the king of broad England,
 Holdeth of Him, and to Him boweth,
 Maiden, He bids thee understand
 That He would have thy willing troth.¹

The next quotation is from an *Orison of Our Lord* :—

Thee, Jesu Christ—Thee, Lord, I greet,
 Thee who wert born of maiden sweet.
 Thou underwentst all our woe,
 But without sin, right well we know.
 Thou, e'en as we, didst walk and speak ;
 Thou didst bear thirst and hunger eke.
 Buxom [obedient] wert Thou, and poor, I wis,
 A Master true, and nought amiss.

Jesu, I greet Thee, Saviour mine,
 Thee, who for us didst suffer pain ;
 And wondrously by watch and fast
 For us Thy fair, dear limbs didst waste.
 That we do good, and evil leave
 Right good fore-teaching Thou didst give.
 No greater love than this may be,
 Than to bear death, us men to free.²

And so the poem continues with the last sufferings of our Lord. Another *Song on the Passion* bears more evident traces of the Romance, as it was being introduced from France, both in its tone and in the character of its versification. It begins with these verses :—

Summer is come and winter gone,
 Groweth the day both fair and long,
 And now the birdès every one
 Gladden themselves with merry song.

¹ *A Luve Ron*, 90-104, in E.E.T.S. No. 49.

A swete, if thu iknowe,
 The gode thewes of thisse childe,
 He is feyr, and bright on heowe,
 Of glede chere, of mode mylde.

² *An Orison of Our Lord*, 11-25.

Jhesuc ich the grete, as ich er seyde,
 Thu were ibore, louerd, of the swete mayde.

Yet with care my heart is bound
 All amidst the joy that's found
 In the land.
 All for a Child
 That is so mild
 In hand.

Tender is He, in sooth, and good,
 And great in heart, and wise in thought,
 And far o'er brake, and bank, and wood,
 Long while in love He sought me out.
 And, behold, He hath found me
 For the apple of a tree
 Y-bound.
 He brake the thong
 That was so strong
 With His wound.

Jesu is that Childes name,
 And King He is in every land ;
 Yet of that King did they make game,
 And smote Him with a ruthless hand :
 They hung Him on the cruel tree,
 They gave Him woundes two and three.
 Yea, all
 Mocking looked up
 And gave the cup
 Of gall.¹

From *The Duty of Christians* :—

There is day withouten night ;
 And there no heart shall sigh.
 There is peace withouten fright,
 In that realm heavenly.
 There is truth without unright,
 Ever and equally :—
 All be alike, both churl and knight,
 Both rich and poor on high.²

Here are six lines on the world-old mystery of human life. It is entitled *Three Sorrowful Tidings* :—

Each day come to me tidings three ;
 And to my heart full sore they be :

¹ *A Song on the Passion*, 1-20, 30-39, in E.E.T.S. No. 49 :

Somer is comen and winter gon,
 This day beginning to longe.

² *The Duty of Christians*, 1-8, 72-80.

This irks me first, that I must go;
 This next, that 'when' I cannot know;
 But third there comes my foremost care :—
 I know not 'whither' I shall fare.¹

I conclude my renderings from this collection of thirteenth century verses with a rather amusing extract. It is from a piece entitled *A Lutel Soth Sermun*. It begins :—

Hearken to me ye good folk all
 And sit ye still adown.
 Listen, and I will tell to you
 A little Sooth Sermoun.

Then, after a short preface about the fall of man and about the redemption by Christ, he first pronounces his warnings against the graver sins of violence and theft; then he speaks against petty cheating in trade, chapmen who use short measures, bakers who palm off on the poor bad bread, and brewers who brew bad ale. Then, in a lighter strain, of the lads and froward lasses who thought of their lovers more than of their prayer-books :—

Each one, when to Church he comes,
 On a holy day,
 Fain is he his love to see,
 If perchance he may.
 She beholdeth Walter-kin
 Glad with merry eye;
 At home her Pater Noster is
 Locked up in her tie [chest].
 Masses she and Matins
 Reckoneth for nought,—
 Williekin or Wattiekin
 Be in all her thought.
 Robin carries Gillot dear
 With him to the ale;
 There they two together sit,
 Sit, and tell their tale.
 He will quit her reckoning :
 Ever 'tis the same—

¹ *Three Sorrowful Tidings :*

Vyche day me cumeth tydinges threo,
 For wel swithe sore beoth heo.

Evening she must go with him :
 Pincheth her no shame,
 Threaten father, threaten dame,
 That they her will beat.
 Robin she will not forego,
 Not for all their threat.¹

And so the heedless girl comes to sorrow ; and the homilist again changes his tone, and beseeches the people that for God's love they will forsake their sins, and tread in the way to heaven.

Stories of martyrs have always been to the popular mind a fascinating part of Christian literature. This taste was abundantly provided for in the lives of saints. The sufferings of St. Juliana are told in one of the manuscripts which survive from Anglo-Saxon times. Among the different versions of *St. Margaret, Maiden and Martyr*, the earliest, transcribed about 1230, appears to have been composed in English about the middle of the twelfth century, and is therefore particularly interesting to students of early English. The torments to which the virgin was subjected by the tyrant Olybrius are told in a vivid narrative, doubtless all the more attractive by being so highly coloured. I quote from one of the prayers put into the mouth of the martyr. It is in alliterative verse :—

Dark are Thy dooms, dear Lord, but doughty all ;
 Both heaven and earth to Thee do bow and bend,
 For hope Thou art and help to all that hear Thee.
 Foster and father Thou to helpless bairns,
 The weal of wedded men, the widow's warrant,
 The meed of maidens, the world's winsomeness.
 O Jesu Christ, King-born, kindled of God,
 As light of leam (gleam), look, Lord, my Life, upon me ;

¹ *A Lutel Soth Sermun*, 61-84, in E.E.T.S. No. 49 :

Hwenne heo to chirche cumeth
 to thon holy daye,
 Euersych wile his leof iseo
 ther yef he may.
 Heo biholdeth Watekin
 mid sweth gled eye
 Atom his hire pater noster,
 biloken in hire teye.

Be mild to me, Thy Maiden ; for my father
 Drove me his only daughter from his door,
 And friends are foemen for thy love, O Lord ;
 But Thee I have, High Healer, Father, Friend.¹

The following are some lines on Christ's Crucifixion, taken from, or suggested by a meditation of St. Augustine. The manuscript was given to the Durham Library by their prior between 1240 and 1258 :—

White was His hallowed breast,
 And red with blood his side ;
 Wan was His comely face ;
 His wound was deep and wide.
 Stiff were His outstretched arms,
 High spread upon the rood,
 And from five piteous wounds
 The streams ran down in blood.²

The lines next quoted come from a thirteenth century poem on the Assumption, taken most likely from the Latin :—

When Jesu Christ was slain on rood,
 And bore to die for our good,
 Then called He unto Him St. John !
 Who was to Him his own kinsman,
 And His own mother called He too,
 And other none beside these two.
 Then said He, ' Woman, lo, thy child !
 Here on the Cross this blood is spilled.
 Now an I hangèd on this tree,
 And well, I wot, it reweth thee.
 My feet and hands with blood are red,
 And without guilt I bear this ded (death).
 My people who ought me to love,
 For whom I came from heaven above,
 My own, have put me thus to shame.
 I have no guilt ; theirs is the blame.
 I ask my Father for this boon,
 That He forgive it them full soon.³

¹ *Seinte Marherete*, ed. by O. Cockayne ; E.E.T.S. No. 13 :

Deorewurdhe drihtin, thah thine domes derne beon, alle ha beodh duhti
 Alle heouenliche thing ant eordliche badhe buhedh the ant beiedh.

² *Poems, etc., of Thirteenth Century*, ed. by Furnivall, E.E.T.S. No. 15 : ' Wyth was his halude brest.'

³ *The Assumpcioun*, ed. by R. Lumby for E.E.T.S. No. 14 : ' Whan Jhesu Crist was done on rode.'

Three hymns dating from the earlier part of the thirteenth century are appended by Dr. Morris to some Early English homilies. The *Hymn to God* is by no means wanting in sublimity of thought. I quote the first four verses. The succeeding verses are mainly an amplification of the Lord's Prayer:—

Well it behoveth for to speak, to counsel, and to sing
Of Him whom none may lightly reck, great King of every king ;
For He may bind, and He may break, and He to bliss may
bring,

Lock and unbar at will, mighty o'er everything.

Father of men, heaven's Lord, health, comfort, and delight !
The things that are and were—all things are in Thy sight :
To day thou giv'st the sun, the moon unto the night :
Thy strength may no man tell, no man may tell Thy might !

Thy holy name be hallowed in heaven and in earth.
Thou wroughtest fire, wind, water, and, for fourth,
That of which men are made, the mould of holy earth.
O draw us nearer to Thee, Thou God that know'st our birth !

Father and Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in three-foldness,
Thou hast no lack nor least ; Thou hast all holiness !
Well dost Thou wot, O God, our need, our helplessness ;
But in Thy hand is might ; O look on us, and bless ?¹

A Hymn to Our Saviour is one in a collection of sacred and secular poems of Edward the First's reign :

Ah, sweetest Jesu, King of bliss,
Thou my heart's love, Thou my heart's ease,
Jesu, Thy sweetness well I wis ;
'Tis woe to him who Thee shall miss !

Ah, sweetest Jesu, my heart's light,
In Thee is day, in Thee no night ;
O give me strength, and give me might,
That I may love Thee, Lord, aright !

Jesu, in Thee my heart finds boot :
Within my heart O set the root
Of Thy dear love, that is so swote ; [sweet]
And blest by Thee forth may it shoot.

¹ *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century: with Appendix*, ed. by Rev. R. Morris; E.E.T.S. No. 53: 'Hit bilimpeth forto speke, to reden, and to singe.'

O sweetest Jesu, my heart's gleam,
 And brighter than the bright sunbeam,
 Thou, who wast born in Bethlehem,
 Art music to my soul, I deem.

Ah, sweetest Jesu, Lord of mine,
 My life, my heart, and all is Thine.
 Unlock my heart, set light therein
 And guard me from the tempter's tine.

O sweetest Jesu, my soul's food,
 Sweet are Thy works, dear Lord, and good
 Thou boughtest me upon the rood ;
 For me Thou sheddest Thy heart's blood !

Sweet Jesu, it doth rue me sore
 The guilt that I have wrought of yore :
 Thy grace, Thy mercy, on me pour.
 Ah, Lord, I fain would sin no more.

O Jesu, well to him shall be
 Who in the bliss Thy face shall see !
 If but Thy angels come for me
 I seek not here for game or glee.

Ah, sweetest Jesu, heaven's King,
 Fairest and best of every thing,
 O speed me well in my longing,
 And come to me at my ending.¹

The following is the first verse of another hymn in the same collection :—

Little doth any man take heed,
 How straitly he is bound
 By Love that on the rood did bleed,
 And bought us with His wound.
 The love of Him hath made us sound,
 And cast the grisly ghost to ground.
 Ever and aye, both night and day, He beareth us in thought,
 He would not lightly lose what He so dear hath bought.²

¹ *Specimens of Lyric Poetry of the Reign of Edward I.*, ed. by Th. Wright. Percy Society, vol. iv. No. xviii :

Suete Jhesu, King of blysse
 Myn huerte love, min huerte lisse.

² *Id.* No. xl. : 'Lutel wot hit any mon.'

The *Cursor Mundi*, or *Course of the World*, is a work of something the same character as the *Ormulum*. The four existing manuscripts of it as a whole are of various dates in the fourteenth century, but there is a copy of parts of it which is supposed to have been made about 1300. It was written originally in Norman-French, and was evidently translated into our own tongue by one who lived at a time when the line between Englishman and Norman and English and Norman-French was still tolerably strongly marked. There is something almost defiant in the loving tone with which he dwells upon the name of Englishman. Let, he says, the 'frankis-man'—the Frenchman—have what is most profitable to him. But no Englishmen can understand it; let them have what they can take in. Wherefore, he continues, I translate this book

In to Inglis tong to rede,
For the love of Inglis lede [people]
Inglis lede of England.¹

He writes with an earnest hope that the book may arrest the attention of those who have been living heedlessly and for the world :

And to those folk I speak the maist
Who dwell in unwork and in waste,
In trifling and in trewantise } truants from the
right way.
Jesu to me His good grace send
That what I write may them amend.²

The *Courier of the World* carries its reader through the chief events—the 'gestes principale'—of the Bible from beginning to end, not without many imaginary or legendary additions; and, looking forward to the future of the world, descants of the coming of Anti-Christ, and of the Day of Judgment. It is written with much vigour, and was deservedly popular. The Bodleian manuscript is prefaced with the heading that 'This is in

¹ *Cursor Mundi*, 233, in E.E.T.S. ed. Morris.

² *Id.* 251: 'And to thoo speke i alther-mast.'

the best boke of alle: The Cours of the Werlde men dos hit calle.' The Trinity College (Cambridge) MS. calls it 'The boke of storyes that men callen Cursor Mundi.' It is quite possible that even in our own time a well-written series of Bible stories, not written for children, but easily and graphically told in simple verse, might still be in considerable demand.

The following are some lines from the *Story of the Flood* :—

When all was wrought, there was no bide ;
 The storms uprose on every side ;
 Sun and moon their beams must hide—
 Murky was all this world so wide.
 The rain it fell full fierce and fast ;—
 The burns o'erran ; the banks were burst ;
 The sea it rose ; the earth it clove ;
 The springs o'er all the world outdrove.
 Lightning with thunder fell and rain,
 The whole earth quaked and dinned again.
 Sun and moon had lost their light,
 All this world was turned to night.
 Men saw the woe with fear and awe ;
 Their cities fell both high and low.
 The water waxed o'er all the plains ;
 The beasts ran up to the mountains.
 Men and women went them with,
 Well they weaned to win them grith [peace].
 But all for nought they toiled afoot,—
 When they came there, it was no boot.¹

The following is of St. Stephen's martyrdom :—

While they him with stoning quelled,
 Up to heaven his hand he held :
 Upon his knees he down him set,
 With prayer of price his Lord he greet.
 'Good Lord !' he said, 'to Thee, Jesu,
 Yield I my ghost, receive it now.
 Lord, these men forgive their plight,
 For of a sooth have they no sight.'
 With this his hallowed ghost he yold [yielded]
 To Jesu, that for him was sold.²

¹ *Cursor Mundi*, 1761 : 'Quen al was tift, was thar na bide.'

² *Id.* ll. 19,467-76, E. E. T. S. : 'Quils thai him with staning queld.'

I also give a specimen of the practical teaching given in the book :

Therefore this life he hath us lent
 To serve Him aye with our intent,
 To hold aye well His commandment ;
 If we do miss, do mendement.
 Ordained to travail is this life,
 Against our foes therein to strive.
 The flesh, the world, and the foul fiend
 Bounden are we to ward and fend.
 The flesh to ill lusts leadeth us ;
 Spiteful the world and covetous ;
 The fiend is fell with wrath and pride.
 These war with us on every side :
 These three then we must well forth drive
 If we would truly lead our life,
 For both may quell them—man and wife [woman]—
 That stalwartly against them strive.
 And if we stoutly will us steer,
 Christ'es good help shall be us near—
 His help, and our own wisdom eke,—
 If we will truly Him beseech.
 If we will use on them our might,
 They certes will be felled in fight.¹

Robert of Gloucester's rhymed *Chronicle* was written in the thirteenth century. He speaks, for instance, of the great darkness of the day of the battle of Evesham in 1265. It is thought that he lived at Oxford, appointed by the directors of the great abbey at Gloucester to take charge at the University of the youths who had been trained by them. I will give an extract from his work in illustration of the First Crusade. He has been speaking of the famine and pestilence which worked ravage among the Crusaders in 1098:—

Then many a one of hunger died ; how might the woe be more ?
 And amid all the Christian host was sorrow great and sore.
 No sort of hope was left to them of better time to come :
 They had not strength to carry arms, and so were overcome.
 At last our sweet Lord thought in mercy of that death :
 He came unto a holy man, and to him this word saith :—

¹ *Cursor Mundi*, 23,741-63 : 'Forthi this lijf he has us lent.'

'Go, say unto the Christian men, those of the western land
 Aforetime led I them with love, and with a gentle hand ;
 I made them win the town of Nice, that great and strong city,
 And many another battle more, the while they servèd me.
 Yet though I did all this for them, faithless from me they wend ;
 In sin and lust most woefully they do their deeds of shame
 With paynims of a heathen land, mindless of my great name.
 The savour of their evil deeds has risen to heaven on high.'
 The good man fell at the Lord's feet in all humility.
 'O, if it be Thy will,' he said, 'good Lord, in this our need
 Help them e'en now, and still forgive their foul and sinful deed.'
 'Yea, I have helped them,' said the Lord, 'aforetime, well I wis,
 And I will help in time to come. But go, and bid them this,—
 That they do turn again to Me ; so will I without fail,
 Even in these five days to come, be with them in battail.'
 — Mark ye from this how e'en a few, by sin of lechery,
 May take away the grace of God from all their company.—
 And then the holy man went forth, and told to every one
 That grace again was won to them, and wherefore grace had gone.
 So when they heard that grace was given, surely great joy was
 there ;

And for three days were orisons, fasting, and solemn prayer.
 Yea, there were many masses, many processions made,
 And then with great devotion were many confessions said.
 And when each one had owned his sin with great devotioun,
 Then weeping put he on his mail, the while his tears ran down.
 In seven parts were ranged the host under knights brave and true.
 The Earl of Flanders led the first, and the great earl, Sir Hugh.
 Duke Godfrey ruled the next, and Earl Baldwin also ;
 Robert Courthose the third, as none could better do ;
 He was best knight of all, his peer you might not see.
 The Bishop next of Padua led the fourth company.
 Sir William de Montpellier in the fifth led the right,
 Sir Richard de Pruyce, and Tancred the good knight.
 The sixth the Earl of Rasquele, and with him Earl Beaumont.
 To these the government was given ; and after this was done,
 In honour of the Holy Ghost, a seventh then made they,
 And named Sir Raymond chief. Such was the whole array.
 Sir Raymond with good company kept stalwart watch behind,
 That if the men should suffer need, here they might refuge find.
 When all was ready as they would, they blest themselves each one,
 And asked God's grace, and so to battle went anon.
 There was great calling upon God, and many a weeping eye,
 Of them that tarried from the field, but might the fray descry,
 Of bishops who were there, and priests, men of religioun.
 And thereupon the clerkly men, with good devotioun,
 In seemly robes within the church 'gan unto God to cry,
 With tears, and with processions, and sang their litany

And such like fitting orisons, praying to God for all ;
And for to see the battle stood upon the high town wall.'¹

The early romances, prose and metrical, have very commonly a strain of religious thought inwoven in their fabric. The two earliest, both of them thoroughly English in character, are *King Horn*, and *Havelok the Dane*. *King Horn*, taken apparently from an old English lay, was written in French by Waldef, in the reign of Richard I. The earliest English manuscript of it dates from the latter half of the thirteenth century. The old English lay must have had its origin at a time when the terrible irruptions of the heathen Danes were yet more or less fresh in memory. But when the French version was made, the mind of Europe was in the full ferment of the Crusades ; and so the Pagans, who had doubtless been Danes in the original story, were converted into Saracens. The tale begins with an account of an invasion of these heathens into the land of King Murry, father of Horn.

The Pagans came to land,
And took it in their hand ;
The folk they gan to quell,
The churches they did fell.²

The king was slain, and Horn fell into the hands of the heathens. The queen, Godhild, fled.

She went out of hall
From her maidens all.
Under a rock of stone
There she lived alone,
There she served God,
Against Pagan forbode [prohibition] :
There she served Christ,
Though no paynim wist,
Ever she prayed for her child
That Jesu Christ be to him mild.

¹ *Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle*, 2 vols., ed. by T. Hearne, 1724 :
Vor honger deyde monyon, hou mygte be more wo ?
Muche was the sorwe, that among hem was tho.—p. 404-6.

² *King Horn*, l. 59 ; ed. by R. Lumby, E.E.T.S. No. 14 :
The pains come to londe,
And neme hit in here honde.

Horn was in Pagan hand
 With the people of the land :
 Mickle was he fair in face ;
 Christ had made him so by grace.¹

When Horn had conquered the Saracens, his first work was to rebuild the ruined churches.

Horn let work, [caused to be built]
 Chapell and kirk,
 He let bells ring
 And masses sing.²

At the end Horn and his queen Rymenhild came back to their land, and lived there and died amid the love of their people ; and the poem concludes with a Christianly aspiration :—

Now be they both dead,
 Christ to heaven them lead.
 Here ends the tale of Horn.

Christ, that is heaven the King,
 Send us all His sweet blessing. Amen.³

Havelok the Dane is likewise of English origin, recovered into English from the French about 1280 A.D. The story of it is laid at Grimsby in Lincolnshire, probably in the times of Ethelbert of Kent and Edwin of Northumbria. In the beginning there is a due reminder of Christian faith and duty :—

Christ make us ever so for to do
 That we may all come Him unto,
 And may He will it may be so !
 Benedicamus Domino !⁴

¹ *King Horn*, l. 71, ed. by R. Lumby, E.E.T.S. No. 14 :

He wenten ut of halle
 From hire maidenés alle.

² *Id.* 1379 :

Horn let wurche.

³ *Id.* 1523 :

Nu ben hi bothe dede.

⁴ *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, l. 17-21, ed. by W. W. Skeat, for E.E.T.S. No. 4 (extra series).

Krist, late us hevere so for to do,
 That we moten comen him to.

It begins with telling of the good king Athelwold, who was loved by old and young, earl and baron, knight and bondsman, widows, maidens, priests and clerks, and all for his good works :—

He loved God with all his might,
And holy Church, and sooth and right.¹

The portion surviving of the story of *Floriz and Blauncheflur*, is, in its English form as taken from the French, of about the same date as *Horn* and *Havelok*. It ends with the lines, evidently a sort of pious formula proper to end a romance of any sort :—

After sorrow cometh bliss :
Pray we that God grant us this,
That we all may love Him so
That we may to heaven go. Amen.²

Tennyson has so far familiarised to our age the general subject of Arthurian romance, that no readers are unaware of the spiritual and religious element which pervades it. We should indeed carry away a very mistaken idea of it, if we transferred to its original authors all the delicate idealism and mystic charm which are due in great measure to the conception of the modern poet. But the mystical and ideal element and the lofty spiritual tone were more or less present in it very early. Scarcely, however, from the first. In the fragmentary romance, *Arthur*, which is a sort of abstract, early in the fifteenth century, of the far earlier version by Geoffrey of Monmouth, written by him about the middle of the twelfth century, there is quite a religious tone, but it is of the simplest kind. 'The story is just that of a British king, founding the Round Table, conquering Scotland, Ireland, Gothland, and divers parts of France, killing a giant from Spain, beating Lucius, the Emperor of Rome, and

¹ *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, 35 :

He lovede gode with all his micht.

² *Floriz and Blauncheflur*, l. 820, ed. Lumby, E. E. T. S. No. 14 :

. . . After bale cometh bote

God leve that us so mote.

returning home to lose his own life after the battle in which the traitor whom he had trusted, and who had seized his queen and his land, was slain.¹ At intervals the teller of the story pauses, and calls upon his hearers to say a short prayer :

Now rest ye all with me,
And say a 'Pater' and 'Ave,'²

or other words to a similar effect. The following is an extract from the story itself. Arthur had just received intelligence that 'the Emperor with his host were coming fast in great boast,' covering the land, in number four hundred thousand, a hundred and four and twenty, gathered to him of Christian and of Saracen, purposing, 'with all his wit and labour,' to destroy the British king.

With th' emperor, kings many a one
And all their power, whole and some,
Stronger men might no man see,
As full of dread as they might be.
But Arthur, he was not dismayed ;
He trusted God and was well paid [satisfied],
And prayed to the high Trinity
Ever his help and stay to be ;
And all his men with single voice
Cried unto God with hearty noise :
' Father in heaven, Thy will be done ;
Defend Thy people from their foe'n,
And let not godless heathen men
Destroy Thy people Christian ;
Have mercy on Thy servants' land,
And keep them from the heathen's hand.
The muckelness of man sans fail
Giveth not victory in battail,
But as Thy will in heaven is
So falleth victory, we wis.'³

Such stories of Arthur had probably been a subject for Welsh and Breton lays for centuries. But the

¹ *Arthur*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, E.E.T.S. No. 2.

² *Id.* l. 189 :

Now resteth alle wijth me.

³ *Id.* l. 423 :

Wyth the Emperour come kynges many oon
And alle their power hoolle and soome.

regular cycle of Arthurian romance begins a little later than Geoffrey of Monmouth, with Walter de Map, the able, witty, and high-minded chaplain of Henry II. It was he who introduced into the old legend an ideal of holy purity in Sir Galahad, and the mystic story of the Holy Graal, which was once with the Knights of the Round Table a warrant of honour and peace in England, but which disappeared when men became sinful. There is no doubt that sight of the Graal means, in purpose, that 'the pure in heart shall see God.'¹

Joseph of Arimathea, or The Romance of the San Graal, comes first. The English poem dates from about 1350, and follows in the main the French of Robert de Borron, written in prose before 1209. The original is supposed to have been written by Walter de Map about 1170, the general groundwork of the story, then entirely disconnected with Britain, being the so-called 'Gospel of Nicodemus.' The following is an extract from the commission which Joseph, after a forty years' captivity, was supposed to have received from Christ to preach the Gospel in the furthestmost parts of the earth :

'Walk, Joseph, in the world, and preach abroad my words
Unto the proudest men ; and some of them will hear.
And though men speak to thee with menace and with threat,
Be thou no whit afraid, for thee they shall not harm.'
'Lord, I was never clerk ; what if I should not know ?'
'Yea, loose thy lips atwain, and let the spirit work :
Speech, grace, and voice shall spring forth from thy tongue,
And wholly and at once all to thy lips shall come.'
So he sets forth afoot ; he takes the Holy Blood,
And in the Father's name straightway he forthward wends.²

It is in this romance that we have the red cross of England accounted for, the old crusading device of the Knight Templars. Joseph is here described as making

¹ Cf. Morley's *English Writers*, iii. 134.

² *Joseph of Arimathea, or The Romance of the San Graal*, ed. by W. W. Skeat for E.E.T.S. No. 44 : 'And, Joseph, walk in the world and preche myne wordes.'

the red cross for the shield of Evelak, king of Sarras, when he was going out to war :

Then Joseph took the shield, and shaped amidst of it
A cross of ruddy cloth, and bade him thereupon,
When stress and peril be at worst, to pray to Christ.
For, verily, no man who gazes on that cross
Shall fail to meet that day with safety in distress.¹

The white ground of the shield was held to denote chastity, the red cross, martyrdom. It was a continuation of the legend that Sir Galahad found the shield at Avelon or Glastonbury, and that he died at Sarras, after commissioning Sir Percival to carry his heart to Arthur to be buried at Glastonbury, by the side of Evelak and Joseph. The Crusading element is visible throughout this story ; for Sarras was accounted the representative town of the Saracens, who were supposed to have received Christianity from Joseph of Arimathea, and afterwards to have become renegades to the faith.²

*Merlin the Enchanter*³ was also originally by Walter de Map. In its English form it is a prose romance, with a marked religious tone running through it. It begins with several pages about the fall of man, and our Saviour's redeeming love. In it the story of the Holy Graal is recounted by Merlin to Uter Pendragon. It tells also how the void place at the Round Table, representing the vacant apostleship, should be filled again by one who was shortly to come—that is to say, by King Arthur.

Sir Launcelot, in its English form, was taken early in the sixteenth century from the French ; but the French, in all probability, from the Latin of Walter de Map. That religious feeling enters largely into this poem may be shown by the mere fact that more than 800 lines of it are a sort of homily addressed by Amytans, 'the Master,' to Arthur, when the king was

¹ *Joseph of Arimathea*, l. 445 : 'Josephe takes hys scheld, and schapes a-middes.'

² Skeat's Preface to *Joseph of Arimathea*, p. xliv.

³ E.E.T.S. series, Nos. 10, 21, 36.

disturbed by the threats of the mighty King Galiol. I quote a few lines:—

He made thee king, He made thee governour
He made thee this and set in high honour.

First, the beginning is of sapience,
To dread the Lord and His magnificence;
And what thou hast perversely Him offended,
While thou hast power, of free desire amend it.¹

The virtue and the strength of victory,
It cometh not of man; it comes only
Of Him in whom all power is: if He
Be haply pleasèd with the ways of men,
So only have they force against their foes.²

Home, therefore, to thy land thou shalt repair,
And govern thee as that I shall declare.
Firstly, thy God with lowly homage serve,
And His command with all thy might observe;
And then let pass the ever-blessed wand
Of law with mercy jointly through thy land.³

The Morte d'Arthure is another of the cycle coming indirectly through the French from Walter de Map. The English version is thought by Sir F. Madden to have been written by the Scotch poet, Huchowne. Mr. Morris thinks it was written south of the Tweed, in the Northumbrian dialect, and somewhat altered by a Midland transcriber. The copy from which Mr. Perry has edited the text was written by Robert Thornton, Archdeacon of Bedford in 1440. It is written in alliterative verse, with two accented alliterative syllables in the first part of each line, and one in the second. The story is one of bloodshed and warfare, terrible giants, and deeds of exaggerated prowess; but frequently exhibits much pathos, and a lively sense of the beauties of nature, together with many devout reflections. For example, he begins:—

¹ *Sir Launcelot of the Lake*, l. 1341 ed. by W. W. Skeat for E.E.T.S. No. 6.

² *Id.* l. 1475: 'The vertw and the strenth of victory.'

³ *Id.* l. 1597: 'Wharfor thou shalt in to thi lond home fair.'

Now may the great and glorious God, through His own
blessed grace,

Shield us from shame-deeds and from sinful works,
And give us grace to guide us rightly here,
In this weak wretched world, by works of grace ;
That we may come to His court, the kingdom of heaven,
When souls shall part, and sunder from us fly,
To be and bide, resting in bliss with Him ;
And work me wit to write some goodly words,
Not vain or void, but voice of praise to Him,
To please and profit people who will hear.¹

Sir Gawaine is a very interesting romance, both in subject and treatment, and also as a valuable example of Midland English early in the fourteenth century. The writer, or translator of it from Norman-French, has been thought by some to be Huchowne; but, as Morris shows, it is almost certainly by the same West Midland author who wrote *The Pearl*, a poem to be spoken of in the next chapter. No knight of the Round Table, except Arthur himself, is more honoured in the old romance than Gawaine—‘of alle knyghtes the kyng that undir Christe levede,’ a knight in whom were embodied all graces—of courage and truth, purity and devotion, wit and joyous courtesy :

In his five wits found faultless was the knight,
And never failed he in his fingers five,
And fixed his faith in the five blessed wounds
Which Christ bore on the cross, as the Creed tells.²

It is a gay, bright story, full of prodigy and marvellous adventure, with many details borrowed from

¹ *Morte Arthure*, l. 9, ed. by G. G. Perry for E. E. T. S. No. 8 :

Now grett and glorious Godd through grace of hymselfene
Schelde us ffro schames-dede and synfulle werkes.

² *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, l. 649, ed. by R. Morris for E. E. T. S. No. 4 :

Fyrst he wats funden fautles in his fyue wyttes
And este fayled neuer the freke in his fyue fyngres,
And alle his afyauce vpon folde wats in the fyue woundes
That cryst kast on the croys, as the crede telles.

Chrestien de Troyes' *Roman de Perceval*; but the moral teaching is throughout pure and high, its special teaching being chastity against strong temptation, while it inculcates more incidentally faith and bravery, chivalrous bearing and truth. Gawayne bore on his shield, in pure gold, that mystical pentangle of Solomon which was held to be symbolical of truth. Like most of the romances, it concludes with a devout aspiration :

Now He that bore the crown of thorns,
He bring us to His bliss.¹

I have gone as far as the limits of my subject will permit in speaking of the religious element in the early romances. In doing so, I have partly gone beyond the bounds of the century with which the chapter is chiefly concerned. But it seemed better to avoid any need of reverting to this part of the subject afterwards. It will have been made evident that the religious element in many of the romances could not properly have been altogether omitted in this work. Doubtless, they were intended primarily for amusement, and many of them were entirely confined to this purpose. But many of them took an important and notable part in teaching and fostering the noblest elements of Christian chivalry.

¹ *Sir Gawayne*, l. 2529 :

Now that bere the crone of thorne,
He bryng ous to his blysse.

CHAPTER III

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

VERY early in the fourteenth century, probably about 1305, *The Psalter*, which had been translated into our vernacular as early as the eighth century, was rendered into rhyme and metre in a North-English version, the first predecessor of innumerable later attempts to translate the Psalms of David into English verse. I will give the first psalm as an example, and will so far depart from the plan I have throughout adopted, as to give the original English. I will put it into more generally intelligible English in a parallel column, and add a short running commentary in the notes :

1.	<p>Seli¹ bern² that nocht is gan In the rede³ of wicked man ; And in strete of sinfulle nocht he stode, Ne sat in setel⁴ of storme⁵ ungede.</p>	1.	<p>Blest is he that has not gone In the rede of wicked man ; In street of sinful has not stood, Nor sat in seat of evil flood.</p>
2.	<p>Bot in lagh of Laverd his will be ai, And his lagh think he night and day.</p>	2.	<p>In the Lord's law his will is aye ; Of it he thinketh night and day.</p>
3.	<p>And als⁶ his live, swa sal it be Als⁶ it fares bi a tre That stremes of watres set is nere, That gives his fruit in time of yhere ;</p>	3.	<p>And all his life, so shall it be E'en as it fareth by a tree That streams of waters set is near, And gives his fruit in time of year ;</p>

¹ Like 'selig' in modern German, 'blest.'

² 'Bern,' from 'beorn,' a chief, a man, is probably connected with 'beran,' to bear, and so with 'bairn.'

³ In the Latin 'in consilio.'

⁴ 'A settle,' as in modern North-English. 'Setlan' = to take seat or to settle.

⁵ The Latin is 'in cathedra pestilentia.' Probably pestilence was considered to arise largely from atmospheric disturbances, in which case 'storm' and 'pestilence' would be nearly allied in idea.

⁶ 'Als' when it means 'as' is shortened from 'all se,' 'all swa,' = all-as. Compare the modern German 'als.' 'Als' is also a dialectic variety for 'all.'

And lef of him to-dreve⁷ ne sal ;
What swa he does sal soundefulle al.

And leaf of him scatter ne'er shall ;
Whatso he doth is sound-full all.

4.

Noght swa wicked men, noght swa ;
Bot als duste that wind yerthe⁸ tas⁹
fra,¹⁰

4.

Not so the wicked men, not so ;
But as winds toss dust to and fro ;

5.

And tharfore wike¹¹ in dome noght rise
Ne sinfulle in rede of rightwise.

5.

So in the doom they shall not rise,
Nor share in rede of righteous-wise.

6.

For Laverd of rightwise wate the wai,
And gate¹² of wicked for-worth¹³sal ai.

6.

The Lord of good men wots the way ;
But bad paths are forthcast for aye.

Blisse to the Fadre, and to the Sone,
And to the Hali Gaste, wit with am
wone ;¹⁴

Als first was, es, and ai sal be ;
In werld of werldes to the Thre.

Bliss to the Father, and the Son,
And Holy Ghost, dwelling in one,
As first was, is, and aye shall be ;
In world of worlds bliss to the Three.¹⁵

Some interesting religious poems, dating from the earlier part of the fourteenth century, have been published by Dr. Morris for the Early English Text Society. The name of the author is unknown. 'But,' says their editor, 'they are evidently the work of a man of birth and education ; the production of a true poet, and of one who had acquired a perfect mastery over that form of the English tongue spoken in his own immediate locality. . . . They contain many passages which, as Sir F. Madden truly remarks, will bear comparison with any similar one in the works of Douglas or Spenser.' They are written in West Midland dialect, and apparently by the same author who wrote the valuable romance of *Sir Gawain*. They are all alliterative ; but the one first to be mentioned is also rhymed. It is a poem of about 1200 lines, a pathetic

⁷ 'To-dreve' ; 'to' in composition meant not only our 'to,' but sometimes conveyed the idea of deterioration. Therefore 'to-drefian' was to drive as conquered.

⁸ 'Yerthe.' In another MS. it is 'the erthe' = the earth.

⁹ 'Tas' from 'tæsan' from which comes 'to tease.' It means to pluck, pull up, annoy.

¹⁰ 'Fra' is shortened from 'fram' = 'from,' 'fro.'

¹¹ 'Wike' is 'weak,' and so 'mean,' 'wicked.'

¹² 'Gate,' in the sense of 'way,' is still used in some parts of England.

¹³ From 'weorthan' = 'to become,' 'shall become,' 'put forth.'

¹⁴ As in modern German 'wohnen' = to dwell. From 'wunian.' Compare our 'wonted.'

¹⁵ From *The Anglo-Saxon and Early English Psalter*, edited by J. Stevenson for the Surtees Society, 1845.

memorial of the death of his infant child, a little girl of two years old. He describes her as a precious pearl which he had lost ; and then tells of his vision when he had sunk in grief upon her grave among the summer flowers. In my quotation from it, I have endeavoured to keep as near to the original as I can consistently with preserving, in some measure, the alliteration as well as the rhyme, and with keeping free of the many words which would now be perfectly unintelligible to an ordinary English reader.

Pearl¹ that might please a prince's eye,
 And set in glittering gold so clear,
 Not out of Orient Ind was aye
 Provèd, I ween, her precious peer.

¹ As I have not been able to adhere quite as literally as I could wish to the text, I subjoin some of the original :

Perle plesaunte to prynces paye [pleasure]
 To [very] clanly clos in golde so clere,
 Oute of oryent I hardyly saye
 Ne proued I neuer her precios pere.

Allas ! I leste hyr in on erbere [arbour]
 Thurg gresse to grounde hit fro me yot ;
 I dewyne [pine] fordolked [in dole] of luf daungere
 Of that pryvy perle withouten spot.
 Sythen in that spote hit fro me sprange,
 Ofte haf I wayted wyschande that wele,
 That wont watz [was] whyle devoyde [do away] my wrange,
 And heuen [upraise] my happe and al my hele [health] ;
 That doth bot thrych [through] my hert thrange [pierce],
 My breste in bale bot bolne [swell] and bele [boil],
 Get [yet] thogt me neuer so swete a sange
 As style stounde [hour] let to me stele.

I felle upon that floury flagt
 Suche odour to my hernez [brains] schot :
 I slode vpon a stepyng slagte [stroke]
 On that precios perle withouten spot.
 Fro spot my spyryt ther sprang in space,
 My body on balke [in partition] ther bod in sweuen [dream]
 My goste is gone in godez grace,
 In aventure ther mervaylez meuen [move].

Early English Alliterative Poems of Fourteenth Century, ed. by R. Morris for E. E. T. E., No 1.

Alas, I lost her in a grot
Through grass to ground she from me fell,—
That precious pearl without a spot,
And pain and pine my heart befell.
Oft wend I where I met that woe,
And longing yearn for her I lost,—
My life and light when heart was low,
Or when with care my soul was crossed.
But when the thought did through me thrill,
And when my breast did boil and bleed,
There came through the calm air, and still,
The sweetest song that ear could heed.

Sweet odours o'er my senses shot ;
I fell upon the flowers, where lay
My precious pearl without a spot,
Wafted in welcome sleep away.
My spirit sprang from me in space,
My body bode apart in dream ;
Gone is my ghost, by heaven's grace
To move in quest where marvels teem.

So, through sights of wonder and beauty, he came in vision to a beautiful river, whose banks were of beryl, and its stones—

Bright glancing in the glittering deep,
Gleam as through glass which glows with light ;
As shines with stars o'er men asleep
The welkin on a wintry night.

The dear delight of down and dale,
Of wandering waters, wood and plain,
Built in me bliss, abated bale,
Foredid my dole, destroyed my pain.

As he passed on, a joy unspeakable flooded his soul, and he thought he saw Paradise on the further side of the stream. Anon he beheld a crystal cliff—

And at its foot a child full fair,
(So well I knew that sweetest sight !)
A maiden mild and debonnair,
In gleaming robe of glistening white,
Pure as pure gold beyond compare,
So shone her sheen on yonder shore,
Long as I looked upon her there,
Ever I knew her more and more.

He was amazed and faint, and dare not speak. At last, to his great joy, she greeted him with a sweet look. Then he spoke, and told her of his sorrow for his lost gem :

For since we two were torn in twain,
I was a joyless jeweller.

Then she answered that, so far from being a lost pearl, she was in a garden of bliss, where was neither wrong nor mourning ; and, in sooth,

That thou didst lose was but a rose
Which flowers and fades as nature bids.

It was only in this better land that she had become in truth as a pearl of price. The father wonders how a little child who could neither please God nor pray to Him could be received into such bliss. She answers by telling the parable of the vineyard. She had not borne the burden and heat of the day, but neither had she sinned, and the Lord had been pleased to give to innocence no less than He gives to righteousness. God's good grace is both free and great ; and Christ Himself had called the children to Him. Then she tells of the love and glory of the Lamb of God. She shows him the outside of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as the moon began to rise he became aware of a mighty procession of maidens like his own pearl, crowned and in white robes, singing in praise of the Lamb, who went before them ; and she was there among them. At last he awakens, and the poem ends with words on the blessedness of being a good Christian, with God Himself for Lord and friend :

Keep us, good God, Thy servants true,
And pearls of price to please Thee aye.

The next poem—alliterative, but not in rhyme—is a collection of stories from the Bible on the sore punishment with which God visits the sinner for all sins of impurity. It is the pure in heart who shall see God.

Happy the atheling whose heart is clean,
For with good cheer shall he look on the Lord.¹

¹ Line 27 : The hathel clene of his hert hapenez ful fayre,
For he schal loke on our Lade with a bone chere.

First come the story of the marriage feast, and of him who came in unclean array ; from which is drawn the lesson :

O ware thee well that all thy weeds be clean,
Honouring His holy day ; else thou hast harm.
What are those weeds which ye may wrap ye in,
They that shall show you shrouded pure and sheen ?
Good works they are which thou in life has wrought ;
See thou be found both fresh and fair in life.
God loves the limbs all lapped in cleanly wise ;
So see thy Saviour in His blissful seat.¹

Then come the stories of the fall of angels and of men ; the story of the flood, of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, of the captivity of the Jews, of the defiling of the holy vessels by Belshazzar, and of the wrath which fell upon him. Of this pollution of the sacred things he remarks :

For when a soul is sanctified to God,
He wholly holds and counts it as His own ;
And loth is He to lose it through ill lust,
As when a man is reft and robbed by wrong.
Ware thee then of His wrath ; His wrath is hot,
If what was once His own be found unclean ;
Yea, be it but a basin or a bowl,
Yet to defile it God doth fast forbid.²

The third poem, with its moral of patience under provocation, is the story of Jonah. In most Anglo-Saxon and Early English poems an episode from sea adventure is told with spirit. So it is here in the account of the storm which befell the ship where Jonah was on board. The following is part of it :—

Anon from north and east the noise begins,
When blasts from both blow fierce on the blue main.

¹ *Early Alliterative Poems, etc.*, 165 :

Bot war the wel, if thou wylt, thy wedes ben clene
And honest for the haly day, lest thou harme tache.

² *Id.* 1139 :

For when a sawele is sagtled and sakred to drygtyn,
He holly haldes hit his and have hit he wolde.

Rough rack of clouds arose with thunder roar ;
 The sea sobbed sorely, marvel for to see.
 On the wan waters wrestle the strong winds,
 And the wild waves in madness welter high,
 Then bend into th' abyss where fishes breed.

No joy could cheer the ship Jonah was in ;
 For round it reeled amid the rude turmoil ;
 The billows burst abaft and broke the gear,
 Then hurled upon a heap the helm and stern,
 And many a rope was marred, and then the mast.
 On the sea swung the sail ; athwart there swept
 Cold waters ; and a call and cry arose
 To cut the cords and cast out all the gear.
 Then many a lad leapt forth to lave thereout
 And scoop the scathful tide, fain to escape ;
 For though men's lot look hopeless, life is sweet.¹

I may also quote some of the lines in which is rendered the divine remonstrance at Jonah's fretful impatience :—

What wonder I would help my handiwork ?
 Thou waxest wroth for cause of thy woodbine.
 Which caused thee no kind care its growth to keep,
 One hour it waxed, the next withered away ;
 And thou mislikest, and thy life would lose.
 But I, in mercy on the men I made,
 Relent to redeless souls who rue their sin.
 I made them for myself to be mine own ;
 Then kept I guard o'er them, with care to guide.
 If I make trip the travel of that time,
 And throw in dust yon town that turns from sin,
 That sorrow sore would sink into my soul
 Of many men who mourn their malice there.
 And some lack art to reason right and wrong ;
 And little bairns there be that ne'er wrought bale ;
 And many poor brute beasts be in the burgh,
 Who sin no sort to suffer grief of soul ;
 Shall I be wrath with them, when wights will turn
 And come to me as King, and keep my laws ?²

¹ *Early Alliterative Poems : Patience, 137 :*

Anon out of the north est the noys bigynes
 When bothe brethes con blowe vpon blo watteres.

² *Id. 496 :*

If I wolde help my honde work, haf thou no wonder
 Thou art waxen so wroth for thy wodbynde.

Robert Mannyng, of the Abbey of Brunne (Bourne, near Deeping, Lincolnshire), lived in the reigns of Edward II. and Edward III. He tells us that he began his treatise entitled *The Handlyng Synne* in 1303. It is a very free paraphrase or adaptation, with frequent additions, of the *Manuel de Péches*, written in Norman-French by William of Waddington, and a great improvement on the original. It is written in that southern dialect which was gradually becoming the English language, in a lively and interesting style well fitted to carry out the special purpose of its writer, which was to catch the attention of men who were ready anywhere for a tale, but were deaf to sedate and solemn preachers.

For many be of such mannere
 That tales and rhymes will gladly hear.
 In games and feasts, and at the ale
 Love men to hark to pleasant tale,
 That oft may fall to vylanie,
 To deadly sin and like folly ;—
 For such men have I made this rhyme,
 That they may better spend their time,
 And therein somewhat find to hear,
 As so to leave such foul mannere.¹

The plan of the work is to go through first the Commandments, then the seven deadly sins, then the Sacraments, to expand each subject in its practical bearings, and to illustrate it with some tale or legend. It is an excellent book of its kind. De Brunne is, indeed, credulous in the extreme, and the more amazing a story is, the better it satisfies him. But the whole work is thoroughly infused with high Christian purpose, with an intense feeling of the evil of sin, and of the severance which it causes between man and God. He loves simple folk, hates all forms of oppression and meanness, and speaks out openly and straightforwardly against the vices he sees around him. Yet his verse is

¹ Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, edited by F. J. Furnivall for the Roxburghe Club; Prologue, 44-54: 'For many ben of swyche manere.'

never tinged with bitterness ; and we feel that Hearne must have been right in gathering that 'he was of a cheerful pleasant humour, addicted to virtue, but very blithe and merry whenever he saw a proper occasion.' As for the name of his book, the writer of it may speak for himself :—

For sin is handled, truth I say,
In words and doings every day ;
Sins great and little still we do ;
Flesh and the fiend entice thereto.

Another handling there should be,
From sin by shrift to make thee free
Handle thy sin in fear and dread,
Or nought but pain will be thy meed ;
Handle thy sins, and well them weigh,
How they foredo each godly way.
Handle thy sins in balance even,
Else they forebar the way to heaven.
Handle them straightway every one,
And not one by itself alone.
Handle them, so to rise from all,
That after none may make thee fall.¹

From the body of the book itself I take a first extract from the teaching on the First Commandment :—

If thou didst ever God forsake,—
Any time, or for need,
Or for folly, or for dread,
Or other chance that well thou know'st—
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost :
For this is e'en the greatest sin
That any man can fall within—
If thou hast sinnéd thus greatly,
With sorry heart go ask mercý,
For God is full of great pitý,
Ever at hand to give to thee.
Dread thou not ; if thou wilt crave,
His willing mercy shalt thou have.
And this may full well provéd be
With tale of good authority.

¹ *Handlyng Synne*, Prologue, 80-110 :

We handel synné eury day
In wurde and dedé al we may.

This tale is written—all and some—
In the book *Vite Patrum*.¹

Then the story is told of a monk who, under temptation, gave up Christ and Christendom, and how the Holy Spirit departed from him, but, after his long and deep contrition, returned again, and flew, as a dove, into his mouth.

The following is on the supreme obligation of the Sunday above all other holy days :

Of feasts that holy Church lays down
The holy Sunday is the crown ;
For Sunday hath authority
'Bove all that were, or yet shall be.
For though the Pope, by his powere,
Change all the feasts throughout the year
E'en as he will, at his own will,
Yet Sunday stands unchangéd still.
What holy days in harvest are,
In Yule he may at will set there,
And out of Yule take every feast,
Change them, and set in the harvest.
But yet he may for no reasoun
Put Sunday up or put it down ;
So Sunday above all the rest
Hallow thou must and honour best.²

Speaking then of the various ways in which the holy day is dishonoured, he specially warns his hearers against spending its sacred hours at the idle gossip of 'the ale:'—

The tavern is the devil's knife ;
It slayeth thee, or soul or life ;
Yea, one of these 'twill surely do
If commonly thou haunt thereto.
It shorteneth life, too much drinking,
And slays thy soul by backbiting.³

I next give extracts from two of the stories, premising that, if the reader objects to the marvels, he can at

¹ *Handlyng Synne*, 156-170: 'Gyf thou evere God forsoke.'

² *Id.* 805-20: 'Of alle the festys that yn holy chyryche are.'

³ *Id.* 1024-30: 'Taverne ys the devyls knyfe.'

least praise the good teaching they are meant to enforce :—

FROM 'THE BACKBITING MONK.'

There was a man of religi6n,
 Who in one thing was a fel6n,—
 In backbiting, as we have heard ;
 —As many a one is in this world—
 This monk was wont to say ill saws
 Behind the back of his felláws,
 For he would fain be held the best
 Of all his house, and wiliest.
 A sickness took this monk ; he died,
 As God who rules us did provide ;
 And then he went to pains full hard,
 As will be showed afterward.
 The time befell, as it is right,
 When monks must rise at full midnight.
 And when the prayers were said and done,
 The brethren all to bed had gone ;
 But one was left behind a throwe [moment],
 Who the dead man had used to know.
 Now when he came from the chancel,
 His head he bowéd a littél,
 And as he louted, turnéd pale,
 And saw one sit before the rail ;
 Never so grisly, foul a thing
 Saw he before in his knowing.

To pass over details of what had befallen the unhappy ghost in regard of that unruly member, his tongue—the monk conjured him to tell why he suffered. The figure answered :—

' I was a monk, thy own fellow,
 Who suffer all this pain and shame ;
 Hight am I '—here he told his name—
 ' I was an evil backbiter,
 Wont of my freres ill words to bear,
 And wickedly of them to say
 All that I ever might betray,
 And unbelieving was I ay
 Of all my brethren night and day.
 The wicked words that I have said
 All woefully are on me laid.
 I must atone for them full dear
 With fell hard pains as ye see here.'

He went, nor more again was seen,
Sharp were his pains, full well I ween.¹

FROM 'THE TALE OF THE MERCIFUL KNIGHT.'

Two knights were in mortal feud. The son of the one, whose father had been slain, besieged the other in his castle so straitly, that for twelve months he never dared to come out of it.

Now it was in the Lententide,
When men should leave their wrath and pride.
Then fell it on a Good Friday,
The knight that in the castle lay
Looked out and saw the people go
To church, and from it, to and fro ;
Barefoot the church they went within
To ask for mercy for their sin.
'Ah !' thought the knight, 'long time has gone,
And mass at church have I heard none ;
Whate'er God's will for me shall werche [work],
I will arise, and go to church.'

On his way to church, his foeman met him, and was about to slay him in vengeance for his father's death. But the knight asked mercy 'for His sake

Who suffered death on the rood-tree
This day, to save both me and thee,
Forgiving them for His blood spilt.
E'en so, forgive thou me this guilt.'

His enemy listened, and stayed his hand,

And said, 'Since thou hast me besought
For Jesus' love that dear us bought—
Yea, for His love so true and dear,
For this I grant thee my peace here.'
This said, then down he doth alight,
And in good love he kissed the knight :
'Now are we friends that erst were wroth ;
So go we now to the church both,
In love and perfect charity,
For His sake that bade peace to be.'

Amid the joy of all the company, they went in :

Before the cross, they kneeled down
In worship of the Lord's passion.

¹ *Handlyng Synne*, 3556-3617 : 'Ther was a man of relygyun.'

And lo! a marvel; for

The crucifix that there was laid
His arms up from the cross uprai'd,
And caught that knight his arms betwixt,
And kissed him—did that crucifix.

The miracle was told of everywhere :

So every man in that country
Lived all the more in charity,
And all the sooner men forgave
What wrath to others they might have.¹

I add a few lines from the story of *Pers the Usurer*. He had been hard and extortionate; but his heart (the story relates how) became softened, and one day he gave the kirtle he was wearing to a poor man who came to him naked. The man went and sold the garment, and Pers was troubled. But he slept, and in a dream he thought he saw

God sitting in that kirtle clad,
Which the poor man of him had had;
Who spake unto him full mildly:
'Why weepest thou and art sorry?
Lo! Pers (he said), this is thy clothe!
For that he sold it thou was wroth:
But know this well, if that ye can,
For me ye gave it the poor man.
In what ye gave as charity,
Every whit ye gave it me.'²

He writes of the slothful and indifferent, the rich sluggards who lie abed when the bell is calling to church, and of all who live for self-indulgence and ease:—

They think not of what men may spell [read]
Of the Lord's word in the Góspel.
'Be waking!' thus he saith to all,
'What time your Lord who comes will call'
For then may hap when least ye ween
He will call you: look ye be clean;
For if ye sleep at His calling,
Ye come not in at the wedding.

¹ *Handlyng Synne*, 3800-3903: 'And hyt was yn the lentyn tyde.'

² *Id.* 5728-38: 'Syttyng yn hys kyrtyl clade.'

Thus the Lord calls us every day,
 With preacher's voice all that He may.
 But ye are slow, and lie asleep,
 When in your ears the preachers threpe [chide].¹

My last quotation from De Brunne shall be of good
 Bishop Grosseteste's love of music:—

Next his chambér 'by his study,'
 His harper's chamber was thereby,
 And many times by nights and days
 He had soláce of notes and lays.
 One asked him once the reason why
 He had delight in minstrelsy.
 He answered him in this mannére—
 Wherefore he held the harp so dear.
 'The harp,' he said, 'by thought and right
 Hath power to quench the devil's might.
 So he who thinks of it with wit
 Unto the cross will liken it.
 Another point comfórteth me,
 That God hath sent unto a tree
 Such joy to list to with the ear.
 How much more joy then must be there,
 Where God doth in His glory dwell,
 Oft doth my harp unto me tell.
 Yea, all the joy and all the bliss
 Where God Himself, my Maker, is.'²

The next two extracts are from poems which were
 attributed by Warton and Ritson to Adam Davy, the
 marshal, writer of some *Dreams about King Edward the
 Second* (1307-27), copied in the same manuscript.
 Mr. Furnivall, their editor, differs from this opinion. In
 any case they belong to the fourteenth century. One
 of these poems is *A Book of Moral Precepts* taken
 from Ecclesiasticus. I give a short extract:—

If that thou lovest wisdom, let the right have thy love ;
 Be not thou disobedient to them that are above ;
 Help thou the needy ; set thyself 'gainst him that is unmild ;
 Be merciful to widows, and to the fatherless child ;

¹ *Handlyng Synne*, 4342 : 'They thoghté nat of that men spelle.'

² *Id.* 4748-67 : 'Next hys chaumbre besyde hys study.'

Keep not thy wisdom hidden ; never withstand the right ;
 Against strong men and ireful contend not thou nor fight ;
 Answer the poor with mildness ; heed and tarry not
 To turn again to God, if thou in sin be brought.¹

In *A Song of Joy for Christ's Coming*, referring to the verse 'Many prophets and kings,' etc., he says :—

But they that such grace had not, they that before us died,
 Often in prophecies of old, after our Lord they cried,—
 After our Lord they cried with earnest will and long ;
 No 'mendment did they see, but troubles great and strong,
 So long that they were weary, and so their voice grew still,
 And they forbore their cry, and yielded to God's will.²

William de Shoreham, Vicar of Chart-Sutton in Kent, in the time of Edward II. (1307-27), wrote a poem on the Sacraments, the Commandments, the deadly sins, and other religious and moral subjects. The following are a few verses from it :—

Methinks the rightful dwelling-place
 In heaven it is to men.
 But we are heavy ; heaven high up—
 How shall we thither then ?
 By ladder ?
 How may that be ? How climb up there,
 In fear the foot should bladder [blister] ?
 Ay, but the ladder's not of wood
 That may to heaven leste [reach] ;
 But by the one that Jacob saw,
 Lying asleep at rest.
 Now see ye this :—
 That ladder it is charity ;
 Its rail clean living is.
 Jesus hath climbéd there before,
 To teach us climb thereby.
 Now hie thee, man ! and follow well,
 Lest down a-ground ye sigh,
 Beweyled [beguiled] ;

¹ *Poems from the Laud* ms. 622 (Bod.), ed. by F. J. Furnivall for E.T.S. 69. *A Book of Precepts*, etc. 15 :

Gif thou lovest wisdom, look thou righth loue ;
 Unbuxum ne be thou nough to them that ben above.

² *Id. A Story of Joy*, etc. 146 :

Ac thai that suich grace ne hadden, that to fore us come,
 After our Lorde thai gradden in the prophecie ylome.

For if thou wilt not upward thus
Of heaven thou hast failed.¹

Richard Rolle, the Yorkshire hermit, retired from the world in the middle of Edward the Third's reign. In the seclusion of the priory at Hampole, four miles from Doncaster, he wrote some works in prose and verse which were for some time very popular. He died in 1369. *The Pricke of Conscience*, written, as he says, for a spur to make the conscience tender, and to drive it to dread and meekness, is a long poem of nearly 10,000 lines. It is not a book from which much can be gathered that commends itself to the religious feeling of our time. It is true to its name as 'a goad,' composed in an age in which incentives of fear were applied in a manner which now seems wholly repugnant both to the conscience and to the understanding. Yet here and there are some lines worth quoting. Thus, he says, of the hideousness of sin, if it could be truly realised :—

Sin is so foul, and such a grisly thing,
That if a man might truly see his sin
In the own very likeness it is in,
He should for fear more quickly from it flee
Than from the fellest devil he might see.²

The following extract is taken from a passage in which he puts a spiritual construction on the jewels and gold of the heavenly city :—

Such gold of heaven, lustrous, bright, and clean,
Here in this world of ours was never seen.
Nor such rich jewels, and so passing price,
As in blest mansions of that Paradise.
Yet, rightly judged, I deem these stones may be
Good works, and that the gold is charity,
Which among saints in heaven shall shine as clear
In those whose works of love did shine forth here.

¹ *Religious Poems of William de Shoreham*, edited by T. Wright, Percy Society, 3 :

Me seithe the rigte woneyngne
Ine hevene hyt is to manne.

² Rolle de Hampole's *Pricke of Conscience*, edited by Morris for the Philological Society; l. 2353: 'That syn es swa foule and swa grisly thing.'

The turrets bright of heaven, great and small,
 I liken unto towers of clear crystal ;
 But ne'er did crystal in this world below
 Shine with such clearness, with such splendour glow ;
 And, to the spirit's ken, those towers may be
 Such meed as there the good shall feel and see.¹

In 1340, about the time when Richard Rolle wrote the work just referred to, another book with very much the same title was published by Dan Michel of Northgate, in the Kentish form of the language. It was called *The Ayenbite of Inwyt*, that is to say, 'The Again-biting of the Inner-wit,' or 'The Remorse of Conscience,' and was the translation of the French *La Somme des Vices et des Vertues*, written in 1279 for Philip II. The translation is written in prose, and is only mentioned here because of its preface and envoi which Dan Michel wrote in rhyme of the homeliest sort. The former begins :

Lord Jesús, Almighty King,
 That mad'st and keapest every thing,
 Me that am thy own making
 To Thy bliss do Thou me bring.²

And the latter thus concludes :

To him who made this book God give the bread
 Of heavenly angels, and thereto His rede,
 And take to Him his soul when he is dead. Amen.³

William Langland's *Vision concerning Piers Plowman*, A.D. 1362, is in many respects a very interesting one. But I have not here to speak of it in its historical, social, and ecclesiastical aspects, but simply as a religious poem. This it thoroughly is. It is a vision 'of the origin, progress, and perfection of the Christian life,' and in many places may remind the reader of nothing

¹ *Religious Poems of William de Shoreham*, 9072-88 : 'And swa bryght gold, ne swa clene.'

² *The Ayenbite of Inwyt* (Morris), E. E. T. S. 23 : 'Lhord Jhesu, almygty kyng.'

³ *Id.* :

That this boc made God him yeve that bread
 Of angles of hevене.

so much as of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The times were thoroughly out of joint when he wrote. There was much suffering, discontent and trouble, great and crying corruption in the Church, and throughout the commonwealth vices and abuses which greatly vexed the soul of a man of austere uprightness, whose sympathies were strong and deep, who loved from his heart truth and freedom, and who kept his eyes steadily fixed on the Gospel model of life. He was keenly alive not only to the flagrant offences which he saw committed around him against Christian morality, but also to the departures in the prevalent Church system from the purity and simplicity of the Gospel. He was no follower of Wycliffe; but he constantly turned his eyes from the Church around him to contemplate what the Universal Church of Christ should be. And thus, often with fervour of imagination, sometimes with real sublimity, always with vehement earnestness, not unfrequently with biting humour, he vented his indignation against wrong, both among high and low, and pointed up to a higher ideal, and to the pure 'Mansion of Truth.' He is sorely cumbered by the trammels of a tedious and perplexed allegory. It should be remembered, however, as one of its modern editors truly observes, that 'the necessity of avoiding anything of a personal nature obliged the satirist to shelter himself in allegory and generalities.'¹ The following is from a description of the home where Truth dwells:—

So com'st thou to a court clear as the sun ;²
 The moat of mercy ; in the midst the manor ;
 The walling of sound wit, lest wile should win it.
 The kernels [battlements] be of Christendom, mankind to save,
 All buttressed by belief, whereby is safety.

¹ T. A. Whitaker, in his Preface to the fourth edition.

² Langland's metre lends itself to blank verse with very slight altering ; but in itself it is the old English alliterative verse, the full line having four accents, and its first half two alliterations, the latter one :

So shalt thou c^ome to a c^ourt : as cle^ar as the sun.
 The mo^at is of me^rcy : in the mi^dst the maⁿor.

The houses are all heled [covered] both halles and chambers,
 The bars of buxomness [obedience], in one bond brethren.
 The bridge is Bid well [pray well], so the better speed.
 The pillars penance are, and prayers to saints,
 The hooks are almsdeeds, which the gates hang on.
 Grace hath the gate-ward,—a good man for sooth.
 His man hath name 'Amend you.'

Ride to 'Amend you;' meekly pray his Master
 To open and undo the high gates of heaven,
 That Adam erst and Eve against us shut.

And if Grace grant thee in this wise to go,
 Thou shalt thyself in thy own heart see Truth,
 And soothe thy soul, and save thyself from pain.
 Also charge Charity a Church to make
 In thy whole heart, all truth therein to harbour.

There seven sisters be that serve Truth ever,
 Porters at posternes that to th' place belong,
 One 'Abstinence,' and one 'Humility,'
 And 'Charity,' and 'Chastity,' are maidens chief;
 'Patience,' and 'Peace,' are there, to help much people;
 'Largeness,' [generosity] a lady that lets in full many;
 Yea, none indeed of all may help him better.

Hard is it, by my head, for any of all
 To get in-coming unless Grace abound.¹

Then Piers Plowman goes on to bid even the repro-
 bates not to despair of grace:—

'By Christ,' a cutpurse quoth, 'I've no kin there!'
 'Nor I,' an ape-ward² saith, 'for ought I know!'
 'God wot,' a waferer³ quoth, 'wist I this truth,
 I would no further afoot, for no friar's preaching!'
 'Yes,' quoth Piers Plowman, 'pushing all to good,
 Mercy is maid here, she hath might o'er all:
 She and her Son are sib [kin] to sinful men,
 And in their help hope thou no other thing
 Than to get grace, an but thou go betimes.'⁴

¹ *Visio W. de Piers Plouhman*, passus viii. 232 :

So shalt thou come to a court as cleer as the soune ;
 The mot ys of mercy, in myddes the manere.

² A wandering minstrel, who carried a monkey with him.

³ A seller of thin cakes.

⁴ Passus viii. 283: 'By Cryst, quath a kitte-pors, ich haue no kyn there.'

I will quote a few lines only of what is said of Charity:—

Childlike is Charity, as saith holy Church,
 ('Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, et cætera.')

Proud of a penny, as of a pound of gold,
 And all as glad of gown of poor grey russet
 As of a coat of cammok, or clear scarlet.

Glad with the glad, as gurlles [young people] when all are
 blithe,
 And sorry with the sorry; e'en so children
 Laugh where men laugh, and lower where men lower.

He thinks the best of men; he believes in truth,
 and in doing to others as he would be done by. There
 is no pride in him. He takes sorrow and sickness as
 ministrations from heaven. He is kind and helpful, free
 from anxieties, trusting in providence, full of good
 deeds, earnest in repentance:

Of death and eke of dearth dread was he never;
 'Fiat voluntas tua' feasteth him.

Were I with him, never would I away
 Albeit I beg at every buttery hatch!

By clothing nor by carping knowst thou him,
 But through his works ye wot which way he goeth.
 Merry is he of mouth, sitting at meat,
 In company companionable, as Christ was.
 'Nolite tristes fieri, sicut hypocritæ.'

And I myself have seen him, sometimes in russet
 Or grey, sometimes in gries (rich fur) and gilt array.
 Edmund and Edward kings were each and saints,
 And chose them Charity and Chastity.
 I've seen him sing and read, as clerk also,
 And ride and run in poorest ragged clothes,
 But begging as a beggar ne'er beheld him.
 And in a friar's frock he was found once.

To kings' courts comes he, if counsel be true;
 If coveties be counsel, he comes not.¹

Of Truth:

Truth is the throne where sits the Trinity.

¹ *Visio W. de Dowel*, pass. xviii. 310: 'Of deth ne of derthe drad was he neuere.'

Of Love :

Love is most sovereign salve for soul and body,
The plant of peace, of all virtues most precious.

It is the lock of love that unlooseth grace,
That comforteth all creatures cumbered with sin ;
Love is the leech of life, looser of pain.¹

Sometimes he makes Piers Plowman a sort of personification of the poor on earth, to whom Christ brought a special message of peace. For instance, he tells how he dreamt of the hosannas of the children, and how then in his vision he saw one riding on an ass, like unto the Samaritan, and somewhat to Piers Plowman :—

For Love hath undertaken
That Jesus, being gentle, joust in Piers' arms,
His helm and his habergeon.

And he shall joust with the fiend and with the doom
of death, and Lucifer shall fall. He will

Forbite [charge] him down and bring death bale for ever,
'O mors, tua ero mors.'

The following is from an account of our Lord's descent into hell :—

'What lord art thou?' quoth Lucifer. A voice aloud
Quoth thus, 'The Lord of might and men, that made
All things, the duke of this dim place ; undo
Anon the gate, that Christ the King come in !'
And with that breath hell brake, all Belial's bars,
For any wight or ward. The gates oped wide.
Patriarchs and prophets, people in darkness sitting,
Sing with Saint John, 'See ye the Lamb of God !'
'Lo !' quoth the Lord, behold me, life and soul
For sinful souls.'²

The poems of Lawrence Minot were written, as appears by internal evidence, in 1352. They are patriotic verses written to celebrate the conquests of Edward III.

¹ *Visio W. de Piers Plouhman*, pass. ii. :

Love is the plonte of pees, and most precieuse of vertues.

² *Id.* pass. xxi. 362 :

'What lord art thu?' quath Lucifer ; a voyes aloud seyde.

in Scotland and France, and would hardly be mentioned here, were it not for the interest that belongs to English poems of this early date. I quote briefly from some lines which tell how Edward the king came to Brabant and took homage of all the land :—

God, that shaped both sea and sand
Save Edward, King of England,—
Save him, both body, soul and life,
And grant him joy withouten strife.

For he defendeth fast his right,
And thereto Jesu grant him might,
And so to do both night and day
That it may be to Goddes pay (good pleasure).¹

In Chaucer's poems, written in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, we do not look for much poetry of a distinctively religious sort. But wherever his song, in its bright course, does touch upon any such topic, we are sure to find it pure and genuine. Such is his picture, in the *Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*, of the poor Parson 'rich of holy thought and work.' So also at the end of his *Troilus and Cressida*, where he closes his story of tender love by imploring his younger readers never to let earthly love so fill their minds as to lose sight of that supreme example of divine and heavenly love :—

O young and freshé folkés, he or she,
In whom that love upgroweth with your age,
Repair ye home from worldly vanity,
And of your hearts upcast ye the viságe
To the great God, that after His imáge
Made you, and think ye all is but a fair,
This world that passeth soon, as flowers fair.

And love ye Him, the which that right for love
Upon a cross, our soulés for to bey [buy],
First died and rose, and sits in heaven above.
For He will falsen no man, dare I say
That will his heart all wholly on Him lay ;
And since He best to love is, and most meek,
What needeth feigned lovés for to seek ?

¹ L. *Minot's Poems*, ed. by Ritson, 1825 :

God that schope both se and sand
Save Edward, King of Ingland.

And to the soothfast Christ, that died on rood
 With all my heart for mercy do I pray,
 And to the Lord right thus I speak and say :—
 ‘Thou One and Two and Three, eterne in life,
 That reignest aye in Two and Three and One,
 Uncircumscribed, and all must circumscribe,
 From visible and invisible foe’n
 Defend us in Thy mercy every one.¹

From the *Romaunt of the Rose*, though it is not quite certain that it is by Chaucer, I give the following extract :—

With muckle pain they win richesse,
 And dread them holdeth in distress
 To keepen that they gather fast :
 With sorrow they leave it at last :
 With sorrow they both die and live
 That unto riches their hearts give.
 And in default of love it is ;—
 As showeth it full well, I wis—
 For if these greedy, sooth to say,
 Both lovéd and were loved again,
 And good love reignéd over all,
 Such wickedness should ne’er befall ;
 But he should give that most good had
 To him that were in need bestad,
 And live withouten false usure
 In charity full clean and pure.²

John Gower, Chaucer’s learned friend, published his *Confessio Amantis* about 1393. King Richard the Second is said to have suggested the subject of it, when one day he met him accidentally on the Thames. It is a vast collection of stories taken indifferently from sacred and secular history, and arranged so as to illustrate the evil affections which stand in the way of a true and pure love. He meant to amuse, but he meant also to edify. In his own words, he

‘Undertook
 In English for to make a book
 To stand between earnest and game.’

¹ Chaucer, *Troilus and Creseide*, end of book v. : ‘O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she.’

² *Romaunt of the Rose* : ‘With mochil pain thei winne richesse.’

Thus it is a work that lies near the borderland of religious poetry, and must not be entirely passed over in this review. Gower was a man not without decided opinions on religious and ecclesiastical matters, and, though he detested the Lollards, he was keenly alive to many of the corruptions prevalent in the Church in his time. He did not spare to censure these, as he passes under survey the various forms of human sin. When he touches directly upon religion, it is mainly to insist upon good works resting on a true faith:—

And this belief is so certain,—
So full of grace and of virtúe
That he who calleth to Jesú
In clean life furthered with good deed,
He may not fail of heaven's meed.

First did Christ work, and after taught,
So that His deeds the word araught [explained];
He gave examples in persón.
But they that have the words alone
Are like the tree with leavés green,
Upon the which no fruit is seen.¹

Gower was strongly impressed with the unchristian nature of war, and frequently reverts to it. The continual warfare he saw around him seemed to him wholly inconsistent with the rule of the Gospel and with the law of Christ:

And now to look on every side,
A man may see the world divide,
And war become so general
Among the Christians over-all [everywhere],
That every man now seeketh wreche [vengeance];
And yet these clerks for ever preach
And say that good deeds may not be
Which stand not upon charity.
I nōt [know not] how charity should stand
Where deadly wars are taken in hand.²

And so again:

When that the Son of God was bore,
He sent His angel down therefore;

¹ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, bk. v., § de Fide: 'And this beleve is so certayne.'

² *Id.* Prologue: 'And now to loke on every side.'

That night the shepherds heard him sing
Peace to the men of well-willing
In earth among us here.

And eke nature war hath defended [prohibited]
And in her law hath peace commended,
Which is the chief of all man's wealth,
And of man's life, and of man's health.
But deadly war hath his covine [hatching]
Of pestilence and of famine,
Of poverty and of all woe
Whereof this world we blamen so.
Till God Himself thereof do boot, { [receive the
For everything which God hath wrought { fruits thereof]
In earth, war bringeth it to nought.'¹

The collection of poems on the Cross, edited by Mr. Morris, are for the most part mere legends. But I may quote the following from *The Symbols of the Passion*, dating from the latter half of the fourteenth century :

Lord, what may I for that yield Thee ?
Thou askest nought but love of me.
Lord, give Thou to me grace and might
With all my heart to love Thee right.
In life and death, in weal and woe
Let my heart never turn Thee fro [from].
Ere it so be for thing unwrest [wicked],
Lord, let my heart for Thy love brest [burst].²

From a dialogue between Mary and the Cross, of about the same date :

And many a prophet gan make moan
And said, ' Lord, send thy Lamb, in ruth,
Out of the wilderness'es stone,
And save me from the lion's tooth.'³

Some slight mention is due to some verses written at the end of the fourteenth century entitled an *A B C*

¹ *Confessio Amantis*, bk. iii., § Contra motores guerre : 'When Goddes sonne.'

² *The Symbols of the Cross in Legends of the Holy Rood*, etc., ed. by R. Morris for E. E. T. S. 46 :

Lord, what may i for that gyldde the ?
Thou desirdust nogt but loue of me.

³ *Dispute between Mary and the Cross in id.* :

And mony a prophete gan make mon.

Poem on the Passion of Christ. Each stanza begins with a fresh letter, and the red and blue colours of the capitals may serve, it is said, as reminders of the 'rede wondis and strokis blue' when the Lord was scourged. It was doubtless specially meant for the instruction of the young. The K stanza begins :

KING CHRIST was clad in poor weed.
All the sin of human deed
He hath bought full dear.

The L stanza continues :

LOVE made Christ from heaven to comyn ;
Love made Him with man to wonyn [dwell],
As clerks in gospel read,
Love made His heart to bleed,
With His blood our souls to feed
To bring us to our meed.¹

'*Quia amore languet*' is the refrain of a canticle of *Christ's Love for the Soul of Man* dating from about the end of the fourteenth century. The author is unknown. I quote some of the verses. The scanning is frequently much more by accent than by number of syllables.

In a valley of this restless mind
I sought in mountain and in mead,
Trusting a true love for to find.
Upon an hill then took I heed ;
A voice I heard—and near I yede [went]—
In great dolour complaining tho [then] :
See, dear soul, how my sidés bleed,
Quia amore languet.

Upon this hill I found a tree,
Under the tree a man sitting ;
From head to foot wounded was he,
His hearté blood I saw bleeding.
A seemly man to be a King,
A gracious face to look unto ;
I asked why he had painíng :
He said, '*Quia amore languet.*'

¹ An *A B C Poem*, E.E.T.S. 15-19. p. 245 : 'Kyng Crist was klad in pour wede.'

‘ I am true Love that false was never ;
 Mine own—man’s soul—I loved her thus.
 Because we would nowise dessever,
 I left my kingdom glorious.
 I purveyed her a palace full precious ;
 She fled, I followed, I loved her so,
 That I suffered this pain piteous
 Quia amore languéo.

‘ My fair love and my spouse bright !
 I saved her from beating, and she hath me bet ;
 I clothed her in grace and heavenly light ;
 This bloody shirt she hath on me set :
 For longing of love yet could I not let [hinder it] ;
 Sweeté strokes are thesé ; lo !
 I have loved her ever as I her het [promised]
 Quia amore languéo.

‘ I crowned her with bliss and she me with thorn ;
 I led her to chamber and she me to die :
 I brought her to worship, and she me to scorn ;
 I did her reverence and she me villany :
 To love that loveth is no maistry [over-mastering].
 Her hate made never my love her foe,
 Ask me then no questions why—
 Quia amore languéo.

‘ I sit on this hill for to see far,
 I look into the valley my spouse to see ;
 Now runneth she awayward, now cometh she narre [near],
 Yet out of my sight she may not be.
 Some wait their prey to make her to flee,
 I run to-fore [forward] and flemé [drive] her foe :
 Return, my soul, again to me,
 Quia amore languéo.

‘ If thou be foul, I shall make thee clean,
 If thou be sick, I shall thee heal,
 If thou mourn ought, I shall thee mene [care for] ;
 Spouse, why wilt thou not with me deal ?
 Foundest thou ever love so leal ?
 What will thou, soul, that I shall do ?
 I may not unkindly thee appeal,
 Quia amore languéo.

Long and love thou never so high,
 My love is more than thine may be.
 Thou gladdest, thou weapest, I sit thee by :
 Yet wouldst thou once, love, look at me !
 Should I always feedé thee
 With children's meat ? my love, not so
 I will prove thy love with adversity,
 Quia amore languéo.

' Wax not weary, mine own wife !
 What meed is aye to live in comfórt.
 In tribulation I reign more rife
 Ofer times than in disport.
 In weal and in woe I am aye to support ;
 My own wife, go not me fro !
 Thy meed is marked, when thou art mort,
 Quia amore languéo.'

The following lines are from a piece entitled *How the Goode Wif thought hir Doughter*, written, says the edition of 1597, nine years before the death of Chaucer, *i.e.* in 1391. Hazlitt does not think it quite so early. Similar religious and moral admonitions frequently recur in the subsequent age.

Daughter, if thou wilt be a wife, and wisely werche [work],
 Look that thou love well God and holy Church.
 Go to church when thou may'st, let [stop] for no rain ;
 Better thou fare'st each day thou hast seen God ;
 Well thriveth he that loveth God, dear child.

Blithely give thou thy tithes and offerings both :
 To poor men at the door be not thou loth,
 But give them blithely of thy good, be not too hard ;
 Seldom is that house poor, where God's toward ;
 Treasure he hath that feeds the poor, dear child.

The while thou sit'st in church, prayers shalt thou daily bid,
 Nor jangling shalt thou make with stranger nor with sibbe.
 [neighbour ; *cf.* gossip]

And laugh thou none to scorn, nor old nor young ;
 But be thou of good bearing and good tongue ;
 Worship begins in thy good bearing, my dear child.

Sweet of speech shalt thou be, glad, of mild mood ;
 True, word and deed ; in life and in soul, good ;
 Keep thee from sin, from villainy [low conduct], and shame ;
 Look that thou bear thee so, that no man say thee blame,
 For a good name fore-winneth, my dear child.

And if thy neighbour's wife have rich attire,
 Make thou therefore no strife, and burn thou not as fire,
 But thank thou God for all that good that He hath given,
 So shalt thou, my good child, in great ease liv-en ;
 Who seldom thinketh [is disquieted] is at ease, dear child.

Housewifely shalt thou go on every working-day ;
 But pride and rest and idleness will do it all away.
 And when the holiday shall come, wise shalt thou be,
 That holiday, to worship, so shall God love thee.
 Be more for worship than for pride, dear child.

Now have I taught thee, daughter, as did my mother me ;
 Think thereon night and day, forget not these things three—
 Have measure, lowliness, and forethought, as I thee have taught,
 So whoso weddeth thee in nothing is by-caught.
 Better were child unborn than one untaught, dear child.

Now thrift and the dam [prosperity] mayst thou have, my
 dear sweet bairn ;
 Of all our former fathers, that e'er were, or are-n,
 Of prophets and of patriarchs that ever were alive,
 A blessing may'st thou have, and well may'st ever thrive,
 Well is the child that well may thrive, dear child.¹

John Barbour was Archdeacon of Aberdeen in 1357, and died in 1395. He knew England well, having often travelled in this country. His *Bruce*, a long poem in fourteen books, was completed in 1378. It is wholly historical, written to celebrate the deeds of the patriot king. But there was throughout it a tone of reverence ; and a few lines may be quoted here, relating a well-known incident of the battle of Bannockburn :—

When this was said, that now said I,
 The men of Scotland commonly
 Knelt them all down, to God to pray.
 And a short prayer there made they
 To God, to help them in that fight.
 And when the English king had sight
 Of them a-kneeling, quick said he,
 ' They kneel, yon folk, to ask mercy.'

¹ Hazlitt's *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*, 1861, vol. ii. 190-2 :

Doughter, gif thou wilt ben a wif, and wiseliche werche,
 Loke that thou loue welle God and holy Cherche.'

Sir Ingrahame said : 'Ye say sooth now ;
Mercy they ask, but not of you ;
For their trespass to God they cry.
A thing I tell you sickerly [for certain],
That yonder men will win or die.
For fear of death they will not fly.'

¹ Barbour's *Bruce*, ed. by J. Jamieson, 1720, bk. ix. 69-82 :

Quhen this wes said, that er said I,
The Scottis men comounaly
Knelyt all downe, to God to pray.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

ENGLISH sacred poetry in the fifteenth century is almost always in the minor key, plaintive and penitential. A deep feeling of religious fear on the one hand, and an earnest but trembling confidence in the greatness of Divine love on the other hand, are struggling, as it were, which is to have the mastery. It is often pathetic and beautiful ; but on the whole there is a shade of sadness upon it, which is doubtless in some degree borrowed from the external troubles of the period.

The poetry of this century, religious as well as secular, commences with the composition of Dan John Lydgate, a monk of Bury St. Edmunds. He lived to advanced years, and died about 1446, nearly half a century later than his friend Chaucer. He is best known by his *Story of Thebes*. But he was a prolific writer, and, in addition to the many compositions which are undoubtedly his, appears by internal evidence to have been the author of various anonymous poems, remaining to us from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Others followed in his steps, and caught his tone of thought. I quote some verses from his *Testament*. It was written in his old age, and contains far more words taken from the French than most of his earlier poems :—

No song so sweet unto the audience [hearing]
As Jesu is, that name full of pleasánce ;
Against all foes shield, buckler, and defence,
To heavy hearts chief comfort in substánce,

Of ghostly gladness sovereign suffisáncé,
 Chief heavenward guide unto the blest citý,
 Gladdest resort of spiritual remembráncé
 To whom all things created bow the knee.

The prince was slain, the servant went at large ;
 And to redeem his subject from prisoun
 The Lord took on Him for to bear the charge,
 To quit mankind by obligatioun.
 Sealed with five wounds He payéd our ransom
 Man to restore to Paradise his citý.
 Is not man bound,—I ask this questioun—
 To blessed Jesus for to bow the knee?

Within my closet, on my little couch,
 O blessed Jesu, and by my bedside,
 That me no foe, nor hurtful fiend may touch,
 Ever shall Jesu's name with me abide !
 My precious lodestar, and my sovereign guide !
 In this world here, alike on land and sea,
 O Jesu, Jesu, for all folk provide
 Which to thy name devoutly bow the knee.

There is no love that perfectly is groundéd,
 But it in Jesus took original ;
 For upon Jesus perfectness is founded,
 Our tower, our fort 'gainst power infernál,
 Our portcullis, our bulwark, and our wall,
 Our shield and buckler 'gainst adversity,
 Our heritage, our guerdon eternál
 To whom all things that are shall bow the knee.

Do mercy, Jesus, ere that we hence pace
 Out of this perilous, dreadful pilgrimage,
 Beset with brigand foes in every place
 With fierce assault to hinder our passáge !
 Among the rest, I, that be fallen in age,
 Feeble and week with old infirmity,
 I cry to Jesus for my sin's outráge,
 Right with whole heart thus kneeling on my knee.

Let not be lost that thou hast bought so dear,
 With gold nor silver, but with thy precious blood.
 Our flesh is frail and short abiding here ;
 Malicious is the old serpent, fell and wood [raging] ;
 The world unstable, now in ebb, now flood ;
 All things I see in mutability.
 Against all these I hold this cõnsel good
 Mercy to ask of Jesus on my knee.

Let me not rest, O Lord, nor have quiet,
 But fill my soul with spiritual travail,
 To sing and say, O mercy, Jesu sweet ;
 Thou my protection art in the battail.
 Set Thou aside all other apparail ;
 Let me in Thee feel all my affiance.
 Treasure of treasures, Thou dost most avail.
 Grant ere I die shrift, pardon, repentance.

I feel my heart broken and ruinous,
 Not pure for Thee, Jesu, therein to rest ;
 But as a wright comes to a broken house,
 Or artificer mends a riven chest ;
 So, Jesu, Thou of all wise men the best,
 Repair my thought broke with misgovernance,
 Visit my soul, unlock my steely breast,
 Grant, ere I die, shrift, pardon, repentance.¹

The latter part of the poem represents the encouraging answer of our Saviour, and ends with the following verse :—

Tarry no longer toward thine heritage ;
 Hasten on thy way, and be of right good cheer ;
 Go each day onward in thy pilgrimage ;
 Think that thou dost abide but short time here.
 Thy place is made above the starry sphere,
 No earthly palace wrought in such fair wise.
 Come on, my friend, my brother most enter [wholly] ;
 For thee I gave my blood in sacrifice.²

In William Billyngs' poem on the *Five Wounds of Christ*, dating about 1400-30, occur those quaint lines, which may be familiar to the reader, upon 'Earth' :—

Earth out of earth is wondrously wrought ;
 For earth hath gotten of earth a noble thing of nought ;
 Earth upon earth hath set all his thought,
 How earth upon earth may be high brought.

¹ *Dan John Lydgate's Minor Poems: Testament*, ed. by J. O. Halliwell for Percy Society :

Ne song so swete unto the audience
 As is Jhesu, now so ful of plesaunce.

² *Id.*

Terye no lenger toward thyn heritage
 Hast on thy weye and be of rihte good cheere.

Earth upon earth yet would be a king ;
 But how earth shall to earth thinketh he nothing ;
 When that earth biddeth earth his rents home bring,
 Then shall earth out of earth have a piteous parting.

Earth winneth upon earth both castles and towers ;
 Then saith earth to earth, 'This is all ours.'
 But when earth upon earth hath builded all his bowers,
 Then shall earth to earth suffer sharp showers.

Earth buildeth upon earth, as mould upon mould ;
 And earth goeth upon earth glittering like gold,
 Like as earth unto earth never go sholde [should] ;
 And justly then shall earth go to earth sooner than he wolde.

O Thou Lord, that madest this earth for this earth and
 sufferedst pains ill,
 Let never earth from this earth bear mischief and spill ;
 But let earth on this earth be ever working Thy will,
 So that earth from this earth may climb up to Thine high
 hill.¹

Some meditations from the seven Penitential Psalms are supposed to have been written in 1414 by Thomas Brampton, a Franciscan monk, professor of theology. He introduces them with a preface about the circumstances which led him to write these verses :—

In winter time, when it was cold,
 I rose at midnight from my rest,
 And prayed to Jesus that He wold
 Be help to me, for He might best ;
 And in my heart anon I kest [cast]
 How I had sinned, and what degree ;
 I cried, knocking upon my breast,
 'Ne reminiscaris, Domine !'¹

He repeated some verses from his book of prayers, and then went, with sorrowful heart, to his confessor, who instructed him to repeat the seven penitential psalms. The subsequent lines consist of a short meditation upon

¹ Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, ii. 284 ; and E.E.T.S. 4 (Furnivall), 24 :

Erth owt of erth is wondyrly wrought,
 For erth hath goten of erth a nobul thyng of noght.

² *T. Brampton's Paraphrases*, ed. by W. H. Black for Percy Society :
 'In wynter whan the wedir was cold.'

each verse in these psalms, with the refrain in each case, 'Ne reminiscaris, Domine.' I quote four of them:—

On Psalm xxxii. 4¹—

The hand of vengeance, more and more
Is hard upon me, day and night ;
The prick of conscience grieveth sore
As often as I do unright.
But mercy, Lord, as thou hast hight [promised]
To all that turn them unto thee !
I know no succour in this plight
But ' Ne reminiscaris, Domine !'

On Psalm xxxviii. 4²—

My guilt is grown above my head ;
All wickedness in me is found ;
My sins be heavy as heavy lead,
They draw me down unto the ground.
The fiend with craft hath me so bound,
Both hand and foot, I may not flee.
Nothing can make me safe and sound
But ' Ne reminiscaris, Domine !'

From Psalm li. 10³—

My heart hath been defiled with sin ;
My spirit was to thee untrue.
O, cleanse me, therefore, Lord, within !
A rightful spirit, O, renew,
That I may ever sin eschew,
And if my heart shall froward be,
Thy mercy still will I pursue
With ' Ne reminiscaris, Domine.'

From Psalm cxxx. 6⁴—

Fully I trust that thou wilt keep
My soul from mischief day and night ;
For wheresoe'er I wake or sleep,
With me is still an angel bright,

¹ *Brampton's Paraphrases.* The Latin verse is : ' Quoniam die ac nocte gravata est super me manus tua : conversus sum in ærumna mea, dum configitur spina.'

The hand of vengeance, more and more.

² ' Quoniam iniquitates meæ supergressæ sunt caput meum : et sicut onus grave gravatæ sunt super me.'

My gylt is growyn over myn heed.

³ ' Cor mundum crea in me, Deus : et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.'

Myn herte hath be dyffoyled with synne.

⁴ ' A custodia matutina usque ad noctem : speret Israel in Domino.'

I truste fully Thou wylt me kepe.

Though He appear not to my sight
 Full tenderly he keepeth me ;
 He stirs my heart with all His might
 To ' Ne reminiscaris, Domine !'¹

John Audelay, or Awdlay, was a devout monk who lived at the beginning of the fifteenth century in the monastery of Haghmon, in Shropshire, the ruins of which are still existing. In a short note inserted above the colophon of the manuscript, we are told that he was living in that religious house in the year 1426, and that he was blind and deaf. He tells in his poems that he had lived sinfully in earlier life. He detested the opinions of Wickliffe, and thought them perilous in the extreme ; but he was very earnestly desirous of a great reformation in religious life and discipline. This is all that is known of him. His writings, with the exception of some lines on Henry VI., are all of a religious character. He says of his book :

As I lay sick in my langúre,
 In an abbey here by west,
 This book I made with great doloúr,
 When I might not sleep nor rest.
 Oft with my prayers my soul I blest,
 And said aloud to heaven's King :
 ' I know, O Lord, it is the best
 Meekly to take Thy visiting ;
 Else well I wot that I were lorne [lost].
 High above all lords be He blest,
 All that Thou dost is for the best ;
 By fault of thee was no man lost
 That is here of woman born.'²

He assures his readers that what he wrote was not his own, for his own speech were but folly ; it was put into his heart by the Holy Spirit. Then he concludes his preface with the words :

¹ *The Seven Penitential Psalms*. Supposed to have been written by Thomas Brampton in the year 1414, ed. by W. H. Black for the Percy Society, 1841.

² *Poems of John Audelay*, ed. by J. O. Halliwell for the Percy Society :

As I lay seke in my langure,
 In an abbay here be west.

O look ye, sirs, I ask and pray,
 Since this I made with good intent,
 Revering God Omnipotent,
 Pray for me, ye that be présent ;
 My name is John the blind Awdlay.

In his principal work he discusses in verse a number of religious and moral subjects, such as the various sins, the Commandments, works of mercy, the five senses, faith, hope, and charity, the baptismal covenant, true wisdom, obedience as the test of love. Then, in the second part, he takes one after another some Latin text or moral proverb, and draws some lesson from it adapted to his times, in very simple but not unforcible verses. He is very much in earnest, ever kindly and charitable, but somewhat despondent about the evils around him. In dwelling upon one of his principal topics—the duties of good monks and good priests—he laments that these are not they who win the favour of the people. A priest who is spiritual and sedulous in his devotion is called among men a hypocrite, a nought, and a niggard :

A holy priest men set not by ;
 They keep not of their company ;
 To them men be unkind.

The popular favour is given to the ‘meré (merry) mon’ and ‘jolye araid,’ the man who can harp and sing—

Thus is the wicked world pleaséd with vanity,
 And wittingly men anger God unwisely evermore.
 God of His grace grant them that be guilty,
 That here in life their deeds they mend therefore ;
 And never let them for their lust, Lord, be forelore [lost],
 But send them sorrow in their heart their sins to slake,
 And so into Thy court and kingdom them restore ;
 And us, O Trinity, from all temptation take,
 That we thy hests fulfil.¹

Especially he entreats his ‘blessid broder Salomon’ to ‘spare not to say the sooth’ and ‘move the matter

¹ *Poems of John Audelay*, 16: ‘Thus this wyckyd world is plesid with vanité.

masterfully to priest and to frere,' without fear or flattery :

Who spareth for to speak, he spareth for to speed ;
And he that speaks and speedeth not, spells out but wind ;

Better to speak and speed, than hold it in the mind.¹

He finishes these admonitions by saying that he doubts not he shall have hard words for saying the sooth without fair words and flattery :

I will not preach the people for to pay [please],
Nor will I, by my knowledge, wrath my God,
As God have mercy on me, John Audlay,
At my most need.

I reck not who it hear,
Be it priest, or be it frere ;
For men of fools may lere
If they take heed.²

There is a good deal of fervour in some of his devotional poems, as in this :

O Jesu, grant me grace to thirst
For springs of life that aye shall last—
The well ever flowing,—
With all the longing of my heart
To leave my sin with tears that smart,
Here, Lord, in my living.

O Jesu, Thou saidst specially,
' In manus tuas, Domine,
Commendo spiritum meum.'
Out of this world when I shall wend,
My soul to Thee I recommend ;
Father, to Thee I come !

And make me worthy, Father dear,
That Thy sweet calling I may hear,
In th' hour of my parting :
' Come unto me, chosen and blest
And have the bliss that aye shall last
For worlds without ending.'³

¹ *Poems of John Audelay*, 28 : ' Whosoever sparys fore to speke, sparys for to spede.'

² *Id.* 51 :

. . . wyl preche the pepul apert hem for to pay.
I nel not wrath my God at my wetyng.

³ *Id.* 64 : ' O Jhesu, graunt me grace to thorst.'

The following are some pleasing lines from a poem on *The Service of the Church*:—

When in the church ye kneel adown,
 With good heart and devotioún,
 Hold ye your hand up then ;
 And for yourselves ye first shall pray,
 Father and mother next, I say,
 And then for all thy kin ;
 And for thy friend, and for thy foe,
 For those that did thee good also,
 Many as thou canst myn [mind],
 And for the priest that singeth mass,
 That God forgive him his trespass,
 And for all that be therein.
 If that the priest who mass doth sing
 Shall not be after thy liking,
 Let not this hinder aught ;
 For thee his mass is good to hear
 As any monk's, or any frere ;
 Take thou this in thy thought.
 Yea, and although his prayer and boon
 Should not be hearkened half so soon
 As though he well had wrought ;
 Yet put away from you despair ;
 The Sacrament none may impair,
 If that wise men say ought.¹

Some touching verses remain to us from the fifteenth century expressive of the Saviour's pleading against the sin and ingratitude of men. I quote a part of one of the earliest and best of them. It is entitled *The Complaint of Christ*, and dates from about 1430 :

O man, I love thee, whom lov'st thou ?
 I am thy friend ; why wilt thou feyne [hate] ?
 I forgave thee, and thou me slough [slew] ;
 O who hath rent our love in twain ?
 Turn to Me ! O bethink thee, how,
 Thou hast gone amiss ; come home again,
 And thou shalt be as welcome now
 As he that sin did never stain.
 Think what I said to Mawdelaine,
 And what to Thomas, he of Ind.
 I grant thee bliss ; why lov'st thou pain ?
 Why art thou to thy friend unkind ?

¹ *J. Audelay's Poems*, 72 : ' Then in the cherche ye knele adowne.'

For of a friend the foremost prief [proof]
 Is love, and dread, and nought-displeas ;
 Never was thing to me so lief [dear]
 As man, whom nothing can appease.
 For thee I suffered great reproof,
 Of heaven's bliss thy soul to seize [get possession of] :
 I was y-hangéd as a thief :
 Thou didst the deed, I had th' uneas ;
 Thou canst me never thank nor please,
 Nor do good deed, nor have me in mind.
 I am thy leech in thy disease :
 Why art thou to thy friend unkind ?

Ah, I have bought thy love full dear ;
 Unkind ! why goest thou from mine ?
 I gave thee heart and blood in fere [alike] ;
 Unkind ! O why not give me thine ?
 Thou art an unkind homagere,
 For with my foe thou mak'st thy fyn [peace] ;
 Thou servest me with feeble cheer,
 To him thy heart will all incline ;
 And I am Lord of bliss and pyne [pain],
 And everything may loose and bind ;
 Against thee I my gates will tyne [bar]
 While thou art to thy friend unkind !

O man, bethink thee what thou art,
 Whence come, and whether thou art boun [bound],
 Whole thou mayst be to-day and quart [in ease],
 To-morrow I may put thee down.
 Let meekness melt into thine heart,
 And think with grief on my passioún,
 Of my wide wounds, both deep and smerte [painful],
 The cross, the nails, the spear, the crown.
 Let dread and good discretioún
 Thy will towards me wholly bind ;
 Thou hast good wit, thou hast reasoún,
 And if thou wilt, thou may'st be kind.

O Lord ! 'gainst Thee we will not plete [plead],
 For as Thou wilt it is and was.
 We have deserved Thy anger hete [hot],
 And now we yield us to Thy grace.
 Yea, we will bow, and Thou shalt beat
 And chasten us for our trespass,
 And let mercy for us entreat
 That never fiend our souls may chase !

Ah, blessed Lady, fair of face,
 Help us, for far we be behind,
 And well may cry with tears, 'Alas,
 That we were to our Friend unkind !' Amen.¹

From another collection of fifteenth century poems I quote the following, entitled *Richard de Castro's Prayer to Jesus* (c. 1430) :—

Jesu, Lord, that madest me,
 And with Thy blessed blood hast bought,
 Forgive that I have grievéd Thee
 With words, with will, and eke with thought.

Jesu, in whom is all my trust,
 Thou that didst die on the rood tree,
 Withdraw my heart from fleshly lust,
 And from all worldly vanity.

Jesu, for Thy woundés smart,
 On feet and on Thy handés two,
 Make me meek and low of heart,
 And Thee to love as I should do.

Jesu, for Thy bitter wound,
 That pierced e'en to Thy heart's root,
 For sin that hath my heart y-bound,
 Thy blessed blood must be my boot.

And Jesu Christ, to Thee I call,
 Thou that art God and full of might,
 O keep me clean that I ne'er fall
 In deadly sin by day nor night.

Jesu, for them I Thee beseech
 That anger Thee in any wise ;
 Withhold from them Thy hand of weak,
 And let them live in Thy servíce.

Jesu, most comfort for to see,
 Of all Thy saintés every one,
 O comfort them that careworn be
 And help them that be woe-begone.

Jesu, O keep them that be good,
 And them amend that have grievéd Thee,
 And send us fruits of earthly food
 As each man needs in his degree.

¹ *Hymns Political and Religious*, E.E.T.S. 15 : 'This is Goddis own complaynt.'

Jesu, Thou Lord that hatest lies,
 Almighty God in Trinity,
 Stay Thou these wars, and send us peace,
 With lasting love and charity.

Jesu, that art the Corner Stone
 Of all the holy Church on earth,
 Bring Thou Thy fold and flock in one,
 And call them rightly with one hirde (shepherd).¹

The following two stanzas are from a poem of about the same date, entitled *The Love of Jesus* :—

Love is a thought with great desire,
 And also of a fair loving ;
 I liken love unto a fire
 That slacken may for ne'er a thing.
 Love cleanseth us of all our sin,
 Love unto us our bliss shall bring ;
 Love the King's heart to us will win ;
 Love can of joy for ever sing.

A longing in my heart is lent
 For love, such as I cannot let [restrain] ;
 His love he hath unto me sent
 That every bale and grief may fleet ;
 And since my heart was fired and brent [burned]
 With my Lord's love so dear and sweet,
 Away from me all sorrow went,
 And it and I no more will meet.²

In a poem of this collection, entitled by its editor *The Mirror of the Periods of a Man's Life*, the writer pictures to himself, as in a dream, the earthly history of a human soul from the time when the babe was born into the world, and

All alone as God him maked,
 Into a wild that child did go ;
 Till two in governance it taked—
 An angel friend, an angel foe.

The story traces in its course the varied temptations and sins which beset the several periods of life from the time when the infant becomes conscious of good and

¹ *Hymns to Christ*, etc., ed. by T. J. Furnivall, E.E.T.S. 24 : 'Jhesu, Lord, that madist me.'

² *Id.* 84 : 'Love is a thought with gret desyr.'

evil, until the old man of a hundred years sinks into his grave. Towards its close, Wanhope (Despair) is represented as seeking to persuade the aged man that his sins have been too great for mercy, and that it is useless even to ask for it. But he returns answer that he will ask on unwearied—

For if perchance a man be wounded sore
 And ask no medicines, 'tis his will to die ;
 But God hath mercies still enough in store
 For worlds in thousands that for mercy cry.¹

I must refer to only one more poem in this collection—that named *Revertere*. It begins:—

In a noontide of a summer's day
 (The sun full merry shone that tide)—
 I took my hawk all for to play,
 My spaniel running by my side.
 A pheasant hen soon gan I see
 My hound put up all fair to flight
 I sent my falcon, let him fly,
 It was to me a dainty sight.

He ran on fast, but tumbled over a briar, and every leaf of it seemed to say 'Revertere!'—('Turn again!')

O turn again, Man, I thee pray,
 And think in heart what thou hast been.

It led him to study sore his life. He found that he had not well used the hot summer of his life. His heart had fled away, like the hawk, but not to God—only, alas, after the pheasant, Pleasure :

Then found I me far fled away
 From God in all His majesty.
 But now no thing my heart shall stay,
 But that I sing, 'Revertere.'²

My next quotation, from another collection of fifteenth century verse, is from a poem which most likely dates from Edward the Fourth's reign:—

¹ *Hymns to Christ*, etc. From the poem beginning 'In wyntir nygt or y waked.'

² *Id.* 'In a noon-tijd of a somers day.'

Now is well, and all things right,
 And Christ is come as a true knight,
 To be our brother, King of Might,
 The fiend to fend and all his ;
 Thus the fiend is put to flight,
 And all his boast abated is.

Since it is so, let us well do,
 For there is none but one of two—
 Heaven to get, or heaven forego ;
 Means beside none other is ;
 I counsel you, since it is so,
 Ye do well,—to win ye bliss.

Now is well, and all is well,
 And right well, so we have bliss ;
 And since, so, all is so well,
 I rede, we do no more amiss.¹

The following are some verses from another poem in the same manuscript :—

Though thou be'st king and wear the crown,
 Though thou be'st lord of tower and town,
 I set not by thy great renown,
 But an thou wilt amend-es make,
 Sinful man, for Christés sake.

Man, thou art both stiff and strong,
 Many a man thou hast done wrong ;
 'Well away !' shall be thy song,
 But an thou wilt amend-es make
 Sinful man, for Christés sake.

Than, beware ! the way is scheder [sharply parted],
 Thou must scleder [slide down], thou wottest weder [whether],
 Body and soul, and all togeder,
 But an thou wilt amend-es make,
 Sinful man, for Christés sake.²

Among the poems of the age of Edward the Fourth, in the Parkington manuscript is one entitled *The Vision*

¹ *Songs and Carols of Fifteenth Century*, ed. by T. Wright for the Percy Society, 1847 : 'Now ys wele and all thyng arygt.'

² *Id.* 44 : 'Thow thou byst kyng and were the crowne.'

of *Philibert respecting the Body and Soul*. The Latin of which this is a metrical version is supposed to have been by Walter de Mapes. Such mutual recriminations of soul and body after death were, as I have before had occasion to remark, a subject that frequently occurs in in very early English poetry. The one now under notice is rather a long piece, out of which I quote two verses. The soul stands by the body weeping, and reproaches it:—

‘ I am a soul after the similitude
Of God, a creature of right noble wise,
Ordned to be of that great multitude,
That to God’s glory shall ascend and rise ;
But thou, alas ! madest me to despise
My God ; so well away the while !
For to eternal death he will us both exile.’

At last the body, long upbraided, starts from its coffin, and retorts the charge:—

‘ Reason God gave to thee, and will, and mind,
With divers goods he well endowed thee ;
He gave thee all, and me he left behind,
Thy subject made, in full simple degree.
But thou wert negligent and ruled by me,
Thou should’st in greater measure have the pain,
In reason, as me-thinketh, of us twain.’¹

The English verses interspersed amid the Latin homiletic teaching of John Wotton’s *Speculum Christiana* (1418) have a certain interest, because this is said to have been the first printed volume in which English verse appeared. It will be seen from the extracts given that not much can be said for the intrinsic merit of the rhyme. The following is from a discourse on the Book of Wisdom:—

He calleth every man a king
That here hath care or governing ;
He bids them love God in His law,
And teach it others to keep and know,

¹ *Early English Miscellanies*, selected by J. O. Halliwell from the Porkington MS. (Warton Society), pp. 12-39 :

I am a sole after thi simlytude
Of God, a creatur in a rygt nobul wyse.

And ever therein be most holy,
 And then in heaven they crown'd shall be,
 And have more worship and honour
 Than ever had king or emperour.

And later on in the book :—

And some there be that give them mickle
 To the world that is both false and fickle ;
 On it their love the most they set,
 And it the love of God will let.¹

The following are some lines from a poem written at the end of fifteenth century on the fly-leaf of a treatise of St. Bonaventura, printed at that date. It is a poem of ten stanzas, representing Christ pleading against man's mistrust.

I bade thee ask, for hear I wold ;
 I bade thee seek, and I would save ;
 I bade thee trust and make thee bold :
 Ask of thy Brother—thou shalt have.

It grieved me more, the sin of Cain,
 Than Abel dying who was good ;
 And Judas' loss gave greater pain,
 Than that he sold me to the rood.
 Pilate and Herod were so wode [mad],
 Yet ne'er would I my ruth forbid,
 Though never men as they withstood.
 Mistrust thee never, man, for thy misdeed !

¹ John Wotton, *Speculum Christiana*, 1480. The following are the words as they stand. I quote them for the reason above mentioned :—

He calles euery man a kyng
 That here has cure or governyng,
 He biddes thaim loue god in hys lawe
 And teche it other to kepe and knawe.

And ther aboute euer to be most helye
 And than schall they in hevene crowned bee
 And hae more worschip and honoure
 Than euer hadde kynge here or emperour.

And somme they be that yeve them mekyll
 To the world that ys bothe fals and fekyll
 On hit their loue most they sette
 And hit the loue of God most wille let.

Full rather would I die again
 Than one drop of my mercy be found dry
 Full lief were I to suffer pain,
 To save a soul e'erlastingly.
 Great power have I, and mastery :
 And a King's word shall stand in stead.
 O man, why fly in thy folly ?
 Mistrust thou never, man, for thy misdeed !
 Look upward to the cross, and see a thief :
 He asked for mercy, and that boon he got ;
 And also Paul, that did me great reproof [reproof],
 Worthy apostle was anon, I wot.
 The Magd'len mercy asked for her trespass ;
 And Peter thrice forsook me in his dread ;
 Yet who more worthy now in my paláce ?
 Mistrust thee never, man, for thy misdeed !¹

A great number of carols, and verses of a kindred character, have been preserved in two manuscripts of the fifteenth century, both of which have been edited by Dr. T. Wright in two separate volumes. One of these poems is shown by internal evidence to have been composed about 1362, and many of them may have been preserved in memory a number of years before they were copied out in the collections referred to. It is well known how very ancient some of the carols are which are even to this day traditionally repeated in country places. A great number of those in this collection pass from the Nativity to the Crucifixion ; and some, although headed by the Christmas greeting 'Nowel,' are entirely of the Passion. For example :—

'Mary mother, come and see !
 Thy Son is nailéd on a tree ;
 Hand and feet He may not go,
 His body's wounden all in woe.
 'Thy sweet Son that thou hast bor'n,
 To save mankind that was forlorn,
 His head is wreathen in a thorn,
 His bliss-ful body all-to torn.'

¹ *Pieces of Ancient Poetry from Unpublished Manuscripts and Scarce Books*, Bristol, 1814, p. 41 :

I bade the aske for * I wolde
 I bade the seche and I walde save.

The MS. is in parts imperfect and illegible.

When he this tale began to tell,
 Mary would no longer dwell,
 But fast she hied her to that hill
 Where Jesus 'gan His blood to spill.

'Ah, my sweet Son, that art so dear,
 Say wherefore have men hang'd Thee here?
 Thy head is wreathen in a brere [briar]:
 My lovely Son, how is Thy cheer?'

'Sweet limbs to which I gave their rest,
 That comely mouth that I have kissed—
 Now on the rood is made thy nest:
 Dear Son of mine, say what is best?'

'Woman, to John I thee betake;
 John, keep this woman for my sake;
 For sinful souls my death I take.
 On rood I hang for many's sake.

'This part alone I needs must play;
 For sinful souls I die to-day.
 There is no wight that go'th his way,
 Who of my pains the tale can say.'¹

Among the carols of Henry the Sixth's time at latest, is the following curious legend for St. Stephen's Day:—

Saint Stephen was a clerk in King Herod's hall,
 And served him of bread and cloth, as every king befall.

Stephen out of kitchen came, with boar's head in hand:
 He saw a star was fair and bright over Bethlehem stand.

He cast adown the boar's head, and went into the hall:
 'I forsake thee, King Herod, and thy works all.

'I forsake thee, King Herod, and thy works all,
 There is a child in Bethlehem born is better than we all.'

'What aileth thee, Stephen? what is thee befall?
 Lacketh thee either meat or drink in King Herod's hall?'

¹ *Songs and Carols from a MS. in the British Museum of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by T. Wright, No. xlv.:

Mary moder, cum and se,
 Thi sone is naylyd on a tre.

'Lacketh me neither meat nor drink in King Herod's hall ;
There is a child in Bethlehen born is better than we all.'

'What aileth thee, Stephen? art thou wode [mad], or 'ginnest
to brede [brood]?'
Lacketh thee either gold or fee, or any rich weed?'

'Lacketh me neither gold nor fee, or any rich weed ;
There is a child in Bethlehen born, shall help us at our need.'

'That is all so sooth, Stephen, all so sooth, I wis,
As this capon crow shall, that lieth here in my dish.'

That word was not so soon said, that word in that hall,
The capon crew 'Christus natus est' among the lords all.

'Rise up, my tormentors, by two, and all by one,
And lead ye Stephen out of town, and stone him with stone.'

Tooken they Stephen, and stoned him in the way ;
And therefore is his even on Christés own day.¹

Of other carols of this century, I can only find room
for a few extracts :—

As they came forth with their offering,
They met with Herod, that moody king.
He asked them of their coming

That tide,

And thus to them he seyde :

'From whence came ye, kingés three?'

'Out of the East, as thou mayést see,

To seeken Him that ever shall be

Through right,

Lord and King of might.'

'When ye have at that king y-be,

Come ye again this way by me,

And tell me the sights that ye have see ;

I pray,

Ye go not another way.'

Of Herodys that moody king,

They took their leave, both old and ying,

And forth they went with their offering,

In sight,

And their way came by night.

¹ *Songs and Carols*, ed. by T. Wright, xliv. : 'Seynt Stevene was a clerk in kyng Herowdes halle.'

Welcome be thou, Heavenly King,
 Welcome, born in one morning ;
 Welcome, for whom we shall sing,
 Welcome Yule.¹

Sweet Jesus is come to us,
 This good time of Christmas ;
 Wherefore with praise sing we always,
 Welcome our Messias !
 Hey now, now, now.

The God almight and King of light,
 Whose power is over all,
 Give us of grace for to purchase
 His realm celestial.
 Hey, *etc.*

Where His angels and archangels
 Do sing incessantly,
 His principates and potentates
 Do make great harmony.
 Hey, *etc.*

With one accord serve we that Lord,
 With lauds and orison,
 The which hath sent by good assent,
 To us His only Son.
 Hey, *etc.*

Lo, what kindness in our distress
 The Lord did show us then,
 The death to take all for our sake,
 And bring us from Satan.
 Hey, *etc.*²

One of the most distinguished men among the many who were proud to call Chaucer 'Master,' was James I. of Scotland, 'the greatest of the ill-starred Stewart line—the best king who was ever a poet, and the best poet who was ever a king. . . . He was by nature a soldier and statesman, and equally by nature a man of letters.

¹ *Songs and Carols*, ed. by T. Wright, lxvii :

Wolcum be thou, hevenc kyng,
 Wolcum, born in on morwenyng,
 Wolcum, for hom we xal syng,
 Wolcum, yol.

² *Id.* lx. : 'Swet Jhesus is cum to us.'

While still a prisoner of Henry in the Round Tower of Windsor, he had converted the castle-yard into a court of martial exercise, and his chamber into a study. Out of doors, he became a horseman and a runner; indoors, a musician, a lawyer, and, studying "his maisters dear," himself a poet.¹ It was during his captivity (1405-24), during which he grew up from a young boy into the prime of manhood, that he wrote *The King's Quair*, ('The King's Book'), a sort of allegorical poem descriptive of his feelings, and mainly inspired by his love for Lady Jane Somerset, first cousin of Henry V., whom he afterwards married. Like many other writers of that age, he has mixed together very incongruously Scripture and mythology—Christian images and pagan ones. I quote two stanzas from his poem, not by any means as being the best samples of his style, but as verses which express some of his graver and more devotional thoughts:—

Take Him before in all thy governance,
That in His hand holdeth the helm of all ;
And pray unto His ruling Providence
Thy love to guide, and on Him trust and call,
That cornerstone and ground is of the wall,
That faileth not ; and trust, withouten dread,
Unto His purpose soon He shall thee lead.

For lo ! the work that first is founded sure,
May better bear apace and higher be
Than otherwise, and longer shall endure
By manifold—this may thy reason see—
And stronger to foreward adversity ;
Ground therefore all thy work upon the stone,
And thy desire shall forthward with thee go'en.²

Robert Henryson was a schoolmaster of Dunfermline, probably in the Benedictine convent there, and lived

¹ J. Nichols' *Sketch of Scottish Poetry*, E.E.T.S. 47, xviii.

² *The Quair, maid be King James of Scotland*, in Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, vol. i. :

Tak him before in all thy governance,
That in his hand the stere has of you all,
And pray unto his hye purveyance,
Thy lufe to gye, and on him traist and call.'

Stanzas, cvi.-cvii.

during the latter half of the fifteenth century. The following is from *The Abbey Walk* :—

Alone as I walked up and down
 In an abbey was fair to see,
 Thinking what consolatioun
 Was best in all adversity,
 By chance I cast aside mine eye,
 And saw this written on a wall,
 In what estate man that thou be,
 Obey, and thank thy God for all.
 Thy kingdom and thy great empire,
 Thy royalty and rich array,
 Shall not endure at thy desire,
 But as the wind shall wend away,
 Thy goods and all thy goods so gay,
 When fortune list, shall from thee fall ;
 Since thou such samples seest each day,
 Obey, and thank thy God for all.

Blame not thy Lord ; so is his will ;
 Spurn not thy foot against the wall ;
 But with meek heart and prayer, still
 Obey, and thank thy God for all.

This changing, and great variance,
 Of earthly states or up or down,
 Comes neither through fortune nor chance,
 As some men say without reason ;
 But by the great provision
 Of God above that rule thee shall :
 Therefore, man, ever make thee bound [bound]
 To obey, and thank thy God for all.

In wealth be meek, vaunt not thyself ;
 Be glad in woful poverty ;
 Thy power and thy wordly pelf
 Is naught but very vanity.
 Remember Him that died on tree,
 For thy sake tasted bitter gall ;
 What His laws bid and set on hé [high]
 Obey, and thank thy God for all.

¹ Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, vol. i. p. 183; Henryson's *Abbey Walk* :

Allone as I went up and doun,
 In ane abbay was fair to sé,
 Thinkand quhat consolatioun
 Was best in all adversitie.

Some time in the fifteenth century an unknown writer, who says he was neither monk nor friar, wrote a poem in Lowland Scotch of over 2000 lines under the outlandish title of *Ratis Raving*, i.e. 'Raving or Mad Counsels.' He explains why he gave it this name.

For now is endyt this matere
The quhilk is ratis raving call'd
But for no raving I it hald,
But for richt wis and gud teching.

It is an elaborate religious and moral essay in verse. First, of the temptations through the five senses. Then of fortitude, honesty, prudence, and temperance. Then of faith, hope, and charity. Then of the seven deadly sins. Then precepts in morals and manner. Then of the seven ages. Then of the virtues of good women, and so forth. I quote a few lines:—

The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost
Are things which God hath blessed most,
For they reach up right to the heaven ;
And all that cometh of the seven
Love, loyalty, and chastity,
And all goodness, and all bounty,
Spring up from them and from their place,
As the divisions are of grace :
That place stands true in all blitheness,
And full of grace and all goodness.¹

He had a very ill opinion of the moral state of his country at that time:—

For wit is turned to ill ingene [disposition],
And falsehood comes in floods, I ween,
And godliness is all foryet [forgotten],
And malice porter at the gate ;
And great lordship and seigniory
Is all o'erta'en with tyranny,
That aye with justice is a fed [at feud],
And fosters felony in its stead.

And kingship, that should have no peer,
And kings of lands right broad and fair,

¹ Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, 649: 'The sevyne giftis of the haly gaist.'

Gavin Douglas, third son of Archibald, fifth Earl of Angus, 'the most learned and amiable of his illustrious race,' was born in 1474, educated at St. Andrews and Paris, became Bishop of Dunkeld in 1515, and, getting involved in the civil war, retired to England, where he died in 1522. He is best known by his translation of Virgil; but he also wrote, after the fashion of the poets of that age, a long allegory entitled *The Palace of Honour*, finished in 1501, which is so far a religious poem that it has been in some respects compared to, or rather contrasted with, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In either case the pilgrim is conducted under supernatural guidance to a glorious celestial city where bliss and goodness dwell, and many fail to reach it. But the resemblance does not go much further. In Douglas's poem there is the most extraordinary mixture of Christian ideas and personages, and of others taken from the old classical mythology. It is enough to say that the Muse Calliope, by the appointment of Venus, is represented as setting forth the Christian doctrines of faith, baptism, and redemption. I may quote the lines in which the nymph describes how virtue alone abides in lasting honour:—

To popes and bishops, prelates and primates,
 To emperors, kings, princes and potentates,
 Death sets the term and end of all their height;
 They go, and then see ye what on them waits!
 Nought else on earth but fame of their estates,
 And nought besides but virtuous works and right
 Shall with them wend, neither their pomp nor might.
 Virtue lives aye in lasting honour clear:
 Remember then that virtue hath no peer.

For virtue is a thing so precious,
 Whereof the end is so delicious,
 The world can not consider what it is.
 It maketh folk perfect and glorious;
 It maketh saints of people vicious;
 It causeth folk live aye in lasting bliss;
 It is the way to honour high, I wis;
 It daunteth death and every vice with might;
 Without virtue, woe to each worldly wight.

Virtue is eke the sure and perfect way,
 And nothing else, to honour lasting aye.

Many have seen bad men a while abide,
 And then anon their glory fade away
 (Whereof we see examples every day).
 His earthly pomp is gone when that he died :
 Then is he with no earthly friend supplied
 Save virtue ; well for him who hath this feir [companion].¹

Bishop Douglas also wrote another semi-religious allegory in verse. It is entitled *King Hart*, meaning the heart of man in its progress through life.

It is well known what delight was taken throughout the middle ages in the Miracle Plays or Mysteries, in which most of the leading events recorded in the Old and New Testaments, as well as many of a more apocryphal kind, were represented before the people in dramatic verse with all such show and pageantry as the resources of the age and place would permit. Some writers have thought that their origin dates back to quite the first centuries of the Christian era. The *Χρίστος Πάσχων*, or *Christ's Passion*, is generally attributed to Gregory Nazianzen in the fourth century. It seems, however, most probable that religious drama had its beginning in mediæval times with the excitement of the early Crusades, about which time they suddenly became common both in England and the Continent.² The first mention of them in this country is by Matthew of Paris, who, writing about 1240, says that Geoffrey, afterwards Abbot of St. Albans, brought out the miracle-play of St. Catherine while he was yet a secular person. This must have been at the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century, for he was made Abbot in 1119, and had probably assumed the religious habit a long time previously. In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries they were very frequent and popular. The series of Chester Mysteries,

¹ Gavin Douglas's *Palice of Honour*. *Works*, ed. by J. Small, i. 75 :
 To papis, bishoppis, prelatiis and primaitis,
 Empreouris, kingis, princes, potestatis.

² Marriott's Preface, ix. *Quarterly Review*, vol. xlvi. p. 481.

of which twenty-four are extant, begins in 1268, and continues to 1577. The Towneley collection, thirty in number, acted at Widkirk Abbey in Yorkshire, date back (judging from internal evidence) almost as far. The York Mysteries began at the end of the thirteenth century. There is extant a very elaborate programme of the sacred pageant in that city for 1415, in which special parts are assigned to no less than a hundred trade guilds.¹ There are forty-two of the famous Coventry Mysteries still existing. In many places the clergy took part in them; in others, especially in the later dates, they appear to have been almost entirely under the management of the laity. They were pressed, to a certain extent, into the service of the Reformation. Edward the Sixth is said by Bale to have written one, *De Meretrice Babylonica*; and Queen Mary thought them so pernicious, from their connection with the new teaching, that she issued a proclamation against them. The last miracle-play represented in England is supposed to have been that of *Christ's Passion*, acted in the time of James the First at Eli House, Holborn, on a Good Friday, in the presence of thousands of people. Fragments, however, of the miracle-play of St. George are still common enough in country parts in the Christmas mummeries.

The earliest miracle-plays were probably either in Latin or Norman-French. Even when English had become the prevailing tongue, they were sometimes much interlarded with Latin. But the spectacle was at all times eloquent to the eyes of the populace, and doubtless often left a deep impression on those who witnessed it. And when the scenes thus acted before them were worded in homely vernacular English, the better kind of religious dramas must have conveyed a great deal of very effective teaching. Even to the modern reader some of them are full of graphic, picturesque force; and the rude, unlettered style, the

¹ A full list is given in the preface to Marriott's *Collection of Miracle Plays*, xviii.

rustic humour, the quaint touches of popular English life, however incongruous in themselves, all tended to inspire the spectators with a sense of vividness and reality. They differ indeed greatly in religious value. There are some of them in which the Scripture element seems little more than a cloak and pretence for the introduction of what would otherwise be undisguised farce. In some, on the other hand, there is only enough admixture of humour and common life to clothe the personages of the sacred history with a familiar colouring, such as would serve to bring them thoroughly home to the imaginations of the common people. As for irreverence, where none was intended or thought of, it can scarcely be spoken of as such. The Creator Himself, was, for instance, constantly introduced without the slightest sense of anything unfitting. In one of the later mysteries, written by John Bale, Bishop of Ossory, in 1535, entitled *God's Promises*—a drama in which the distinctively religious element is everywhere made prominent—the Divine Being is represented in each of the seven acts in interlocution successively with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and John the Baptist. Occasionally, especially in the later periods, the mysteries almost merged into moralities, the Scripture personages being blended with allegorical ones, and the serious element being the inculcation of certain virtues rather than the teaching of some Scripture fact or the illustration of some religious doctrine.

I will quote a few passages, and first one which, without containing anything objectionable to modern feeling, will illustrate the broad humour which is continually found in these dramas. It is from *The Deluge*, one of the Chester Mysteries. Noah and his wife and sons have just been represented as busily employed in getting tools and timber for building the ark :—

Noah.—Now in the name of God I will begin
 To make the ship that we shall in,
 That we be ready for to swim
 At the coming of the flood.

These boards I join together,
To keep us safe from the weather
That we may roam both hither and thither
And safe be from this flood.

After a few more lines, he declares that—

I hold all meet
To sail forth at the next weete [tide].
This ship is at an end.
Wife, in this castle we shall be kepted ;
My children and thou, I would ye inleaped.

Noah's wife.—In faith, Noah, I had as lief thou hadst slept
For all thy frankishfare,
For I will not do after thy rede.

Noah.—Good wife, do as I thee bid.

Noah's wife.—By Christ not, or I see more need,
Though thou stand all the day and rave.

Noah.—Lord, that women be crabbed aye !
And never are meek, that dare I say.
This is well seen by me to-day,
In witness of you each one.

Good wife, let be all this beere [noise]
That thou makest in this place here,
For they all ween that thou art master,
And so thou art, by St. John.

(Then the animals are supposed to come in, the actors mentioning aloud their names, and bearing figures of them on parchment.)

Japhet.—Mother, we pray you altogether
For we are here, your childer,
Come into the ship for fear of the weather,
For His love that you bought.

Noah's wife.—That will I not for your call,
But if I have my gossips all.

Shem.—In faith, mother, yet you shall,
Whether you will or not !

(She goes in.)

Noah.—Welcome, wife, into this boat !

Noah's wife.—And have that for thy note !
(She gives him a box on the ear.)

Noah.—Aha ! marry, this is hot !
It is good to be still,
Ah, childer, methinks this boat removes,
Our tarrying here hugely me grieves !

Over the land the water spreads.
God do as He will!¹

From *The Nativity*, one of the Coventry Mysteries:—

Shepherd 1.—Now God that art in Trinity,
Thou saw my fellowés and me ;
For I know not where my sheep or they be,
The night it is so cold !
Now it is nigh the middle of the night,
These clouds are dark and dim of light,
That for them I can have no sight,
Standing here on this wold.
But now, to make their heartés light,
Now will I full right stand upon this looe [knoll],
And to them cry with all my might :
Full well my voice they know :
What, ho ! fellows ! ho ! ho ! ho !

Shepherd 2.—Hark, Sim, hark ! I hear our brother on the looe,
That is his voice, right well I know.
Therefore toward him let us go,
And follow his voice aright.
See, Sim, see where he doth stond :
I am right glad we have him fond.
Brother, where hast thou been so long,
And this night it is so cold ?

1st Shepherd.—Eh, friends, there came a gust of wind with a
mist suddenly,
That forth of my way went I,
And great heaviness made I,
And was full sore afraid.
Then for to go wist I not whither,
But travelled on this down hither and thither.
I was so put out with this cold weather,
That near past was my night.

3d Shepherd.—Brother, now we be past that fright,
And it is far within the night,
Full soon will spring the day light,
It draweth full near the tide.
Here awhile let us rest,
And repast ourselves of the best,
Till that the sun rise in the East
Let us all here abide.

(*Then the Shepherds draw forth their meat, and do eat and drink,
and as they drink, they find the star, and say thus*)—

¹ *The Deluge*, a Chester miracle-play, ed. by Marriott, 6.

Brother, look up and behold,
 What thing is yonder that shineth so bright?
 As long as ever I have watch'd my fold,
 Yet saw I never such a sight in field.
 Aha! now is come the time that old fathers have
 told,
 That in the winter's night so cold,
 A child of maiden born be He wold,
 In whom all prophecies shall be fulfilled.

Shepherd 1.—Truth it is, without nay,
 So said the prophet Esay,
 That a child should be born of a maiden so
 bright,
 In winter nigh the shortest day,
 Or else in the middle of the night.

Shepherd 2.—Loved be God, most of might,
 That our grace is to see that sight,
 Pray we to Him, as it is right,
 If that His will it be,
 That we may have knowledge of this signification,
 And why it appeareth in this fashion;
 And ever to Him let us give laudation,
 In earth while that we be.

(Then the angels sing 'Gloria in Excelsis.')

Later on, when Herod hears that he has missed the
 Wise Men:—

Herod.—Another way! out! out! out!
 Have those false traitors done me this deed?
 I stamp, I stare, I looke all about!
 Might I them take, I should them burn at a
 glede [flame].
 I rant, I roar, and now run I wode [mad]!
 Ah, that these villain traitors should have marred
 my mode [temper]!
 They shall be hanged, if I come them to!

(Here Herod rages in this pageant, and in the street also.)²

¹ *The Nativity*, a Coventry play, ed. by Marriott, p. 66:

Now God that art in trenete,
 Thow sawe my fellois and me.

² *Id.* 83:

A nothur wey! owt! owt! owt!
 Hath those fawls traytors done me this ded?

From *The Crucifixion*, one of the Towneley Mysteries :—

Christus.—My mother mild, thou change thy cheer,
Cease of thy sorrow and sighing sere [several,
manifold] ;
It sits upon my heart full sore.
The sorrow is sharp I suffer here ;
But the dole thou durest, my mother dear,
Marters [tortures] me mickle more.
Thus willeth my Father that I fare,
To loose mankind of bands ;
His only Son will He not spare,
To loosen that which bound was ere
Full fast in fiendes' hands.
The first cause, mother, of my coming
Was for mankind's miscarrying :
To salve their sore I sought.
Therefore, mother, make none mourning,
Seeing that man through my dying
May thus to bliss be brought.¹

From *The Descent into Hell* (Towneley series) :—

Christus.—Ye princes of hell, open your gate,
And let my folk forth go'n ;
A prince of peace shall enter thereat,
Whether ye will or no'n.

Rybald.—What art thou that speakest so ?

Christus.—A king of bliss that hights Jesus.

Rybald.—Yea, hence fast I rede thee go,
And meddle thee not with us.

Belzabub.—Our gates I trow will last,
They are so strong I wean.
But if our barés brast [burst],
For thee they shall not twyn [break a-twain].

Christus.—This stede [place] shall stand no longer stoken
[barred].
Open up, and let my people pass !

Rybald.—Out, haro ! [the Norman war-cry] our bale is
broken,
And bursten are all our bands of brass !

¹ *The Crucifixion* : a Towneley miracle-play, ed. by Marriott, 153 :
' My moder mylde, thou change thi chere.'

Belzabub.—Haro ! our gates begin to crak,
 In sunder, I trow, they go ;
 And hell, I trow, will all-to shak,
 Alas ! now I am woe !¹

From *Mary Magdalene* (Digby Manuscripts), an early and lengthened pageant of nearly 2300 lines :—

Mary Magd.—When I saw you first, Lord, verily
 I ween'd ye had been Symond the gardenere.

Christus.—So I am for sooth, Mary ;
 Man's heart is my garden here.
 Therein I sow seeds of virtue all the year ;
 The foul weeds and vices I rend up by the rote ;
 When the garden is watered with tears clear,
 Then spring virtues, and smell full sote [sweet].²

From *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, a Chester play :—

Peter and Philip have just announced to the keeper of the gate that Christ is coming into the city.)

Keeper of Gate.—Tidings, good men every one !
 The prophet Jesus comes anon.
 Of His disciples yonder go'n
 Twain that were now here.
 For His marvels leeve [believe] aye upon,
 That he is very God's Son,
 Or else wonder were.

1st Citizen.—Ah ! Lord, blessed must thou be !
 Him will I go now and see ;
 And so I rede that all may
 Thitherward take the way.

2d Citizen.—Fellows, I leeve [believe] that Christ is He,
 Comen from God in majesty ;
 Else such marvels, as thinks me,
 He ne'er did day by day.

3d Citizen.—Lazarus He saved, so God me save,
 That four days had been in grave ;
 Therefore devotion now I have
 To welcome Him to this town.

¹ *The Descent into Hell* : a Towneley miracle-play, ed. by Marriott. 'Extractio Animarum,' 167 : 'Ye prynces of helle, open youre gate.'

² *Ancient Mysteries*, from the Digby Manuscripts (Abbotsford Club) ; *Mary Magdalene*, ll. 1078-86 :

Whan I sye yow fyrst, Lord, verely
 I wentt ye had byn Symond the gardenere.

- 4th Citizen.—Branches of the palm tree
Each one in hand take we,
And welcome Him to this city
With fair processioun.
- 5th Citizen.—With all the worship that I may,
I welcome Him will to-day,
And spread my clothes in the way
As soon as I Him see.
- 6th Citizen.—These miracles approuen apertly [evidently]
That from the Father Almighty
He is comen, mankind to buy :
It may no other be.
- 1st Boy.—Fellows, I heard my father say
That Jesus the Prophet will come to-day,
Thither I rede we take the way,
With branches in our hands.
- 2d Boy.—Make we mirth all that we may
Pleasant to that Lord's paie [satisfaction].
'Hosanna!' I rede by my faye
To sing that we founde [begin].

(Then the boys shall go towards Jerusalem, singing 'Hosanna!' with palm branches in their hands, and the citizens shall strew their clothes in the way and sing, etc.; and then the Saviour enters, riding on an ass's colt.)

From *The Purification*, one of the York Mysteries :—

Scene v. SIMEON'S HOUSE.

- Angel.—Old Simeon, I say to thee
Dress thyself forth in thine array.
Come to the temple, there to see
Jesus, the babe that Mary bore.
Fear not, be bold.
- Sim.—Ah, Lord, I thank Thee e'er and aye.
Now am I light as bird on tree ;
My age is gone, I feel no fray ;
Methinks for this that is told me
I am not old.
Now will I to yon temple go
To see the Babe that Mary bore.
He is my health in weal and woe
And helps me ever from great care.

¹ *The Chester Plays*, ed. by T. Wright, ii. 8: 'Tydings, good men everye one.'

Scene VI. THE TEMPLE.

(*Simeon takes the babe in his arms.*)

Now come to me, Lord of all lands ;
Come, Mightiest by sea and sands ;
Come, Joy by street and eke by strands,
On mould [earth].

Come, halse [embrace] me, Babe that art best born !
Come, halse me, Gladness of our morn !
Come, halse me, else I had been lorn
Of old.

Lord God, I thank Thee of Thy grace
That Thou hast sparéd me a space,
This Babe within my arms t' embrace,
As prophecy doth tell.

I thank Thee who my life hath lent,
I thank Thee who this bliss hath sent,
That this sweet Babe, in my arms hent [held]
With mirth my might doth mell [mingle].

Ah, Babe ! blessed be Thou for aye,
For Thou my Saviour art, I say,
And here Thou rulest me, in fay,
Through all my life.

Now, blessed be Thy holy name,
Thou that dost save us from all shame,
Thou that dost guard us from all blame,
And from all strife.¹

Although the general spirit of the Reformation was unfavourable to the production of the scriptural plays which had been the delight of earlier generations, a few were written by the reforming party. John Bale (1495-1563), the learned Bishop of Ossory, wrote at least eleven, of which four survive. One was *The Laws of Nature, Man, and Christ*, a second *The Promises of God*. A third was *The Breffe Comedy or Enterlude of Johan Baptystes Preachynge in the Wyldernesse*; another of *The Temptation of our Lord*. John Bale was a Suffolk man, educated in a Carmelite monastery, and afterwards at Jesus College, Cambridge. He

¹ *The York Mystery Plays*, ed. by L. Toulmin Smith, p. 444: 'Olde Symeon, I say to thee.'

became a Protestant, and at the death of Lord Cromwell, who had been a protector to him, was obliged to take refuge for six years in Holland. He was recalled by Edward VI., was first presented to the living of Bishopstoke, and afterwards made Bishop of Ossory, when he proved himself a zealous and strenuous administrator. Under Queen Mary, he narrowly escaped death by flight to the Continent. At Queen Elizabeth's accession he returned, and died at Canterbury, where he was a prebend. His principal work, a Latin account, in two folio volumes, of illustrious British writers, was published at Basle in 1549. The scriptural play on *The Temptation* was written in 1538. As a poem it is of no particular value, but it is very interesting in its quaint simplicity. The author himself, as 'Baleus Prolocutor,' is introduced as reciting the Prologue, which concludes with these lines:—

For assaults of Satan, learn here the remedy ;
 Take the word of God, let that be your defence ;
 So will Christ teach you, in our next comedy :
 Earnestly print it in your quick intelligence :
 Resist not the world, but with meek patience,
 If ye be of Christ. Of this hereafter ye shall
 Perceive more at large by the story as it fall.¹

The personages in the play are our Lord, Satan, and two angels. I quote the passage where Satan enters:—

Satan (tentator)—

Nowhere I further, but everywhere I noye [hurt] ;
 For I am Satan, the common adversary,
 An enemy to man, him seeking to destroy
 And to bring to nought, by my assaults most crafty.
 I watch everywhere, wanting no policy,
 To trap him in snare, and make him the child of hell.
 What number I win, it were very long to tell.
 I heard a great noise, in Jordan now of late,
 Upon one Jesus, sounding from heaven above :
 'This is mine own Son, which hath withdrawn all hate,
 And He that doth stand most highly in my love.'
 My wits this same sound doth not a little move :

¹ *A Breve Comedy or Interlude concernynge the Temptacyon of our Lord and Saver by Sathan in the Desert.* Compiled by Johan Bale (Miscellanies, ed. by Grosart, i.)

He cometh to redeem the kin of man I fear :
High time is it then for me the coals to stir.

I will not leave Him till I know what He is,
And what He intendeth in this same border here
Subtily must help, else all will be amiss.

A godly pretence outwardly must I bear,
Seeming religious, devout and sad in my gear.

If He be come now for the redemption of man,
As I fear He is, I will stop Him if I can.

(*Hic, simulata religione, Christum aggredditor.*)

It is a great joy, by my holydom, to see
So virtuous a life in a young man as you be,
As here thus to wander in godly contemplation,
And to live alone in the desert solitary.

Christus.—Your pleasure is it to utter your phantasy.

Satan.—A brother am I, of the desert wilderness,
And full glad would be to talk with you of goodness,
If ye would accept my simple company.¹

The Miracle Plays shaded into the later Moralities by very imperceptible gradations. Thus in *Godlie Queene Hester*² published in 1561, there are brought upon the stage not only the historical personages connected with Esther's history, but also such allegorical characters as Pride, Adulation, and Ambition. In one of the more unblended moralities, Anima (the Soul of Man) enters as a maid, in white cloth of gold purpled with miniver, a mantle of black thereupon, and a rich chaplet with knots of gold. Divine Wisdom, arrayed in royal apparel, had been instructing her. When she enters, she speaks the praises of the Saviour who, when she was nought, had made her glorious, when she was in peril had guarded her, when she was ignorant had taught her, when she had sinned had corrected her, when she was

¹ *A Breve Comedy or Interlude concernynge the Temptacyon of our Lord and Saver by Sathan in the Desert :*

No where I fourther, but euery where I noye,
For I am Sathan, the commen aduersarye.

The drama is given by Mr. Marriott as an example of one of the later miracle-plays, in his *Collection of English Miracle Plays and Mysteries*, 1838, p. 220.

² *Fuller's Worthies (Miscellanies)*, ed. by Grosart, vol. iv.

heavy had comforted her, when she had fallen had raised her :

When I come, thou receivest me most lovingly,
Thou hast anointed me with the oil of mercy.
Thy benefits, Lord, be innumerable.¹

¹ *Ancient Mysteries, from the Digby Manuscript* (Abbotsford Club):
A Morality, ll. 311-325.

CHAPTER V

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

STEPHEN HAWES was a disciple of Lydgate, whom he speaks of as his master with much respect and admiration. He was a native of Suffolk, spent some time in France, and was made a Groom of the Chamber to Henry VII. His *Pastime of Pleasure*, 1506, is an allegorical poem of some length. Towards the end it takes a more distinctly religious colour than in its previous course. The following is from the chapter entitled 'How Remembraunce made his epitaph on the Grave of the Knight (of La Grande Amour).'

O earth on earth ! It is a wonder's case
That thou art blind, and wilt not thyself know ;
Though upon earth thou hast thy dwelling place,
Yet earth at last must needs thee overthrow.
Thou thinkest earth do be no earth I trow,
For if thou didst thou wouldest then apply
To forsake pleasure and to learn to die.

Pride, Wrath, Envy, and other allegorical personages, continue in much the same strain, and then comes a verse concluded by two very familiar lines. I do not know whether Hawes was the originator of them, or whether he simply made use of a sort of proverbial saying. But it is rather a disappointment to find that he is speaking not so much of peace and rest following after care, as of darkness following upon light.

O mortal folk, ye may behold and see
How I lie here, sometime a mortal knight.
The end of joy and all prosperity
Is death at last, in his sure course and might :
After the day cometh the darksome night ;
For though the day be never so long,
At last the bells ring unto evensong.

Then in your spirit inwardly despise
 The brittle world so full of doubleness,
 With the dull flesh, and O, right soon arise
 Out of your sleep of mortal heaviness.¹

I am glad to introduce even a passing mention of Sir Thomas More (1480-1535). He may, in some sort, be entitled a writer of sacred poetry by virtue of his translation in English verse of the *Rules of John Pious, Earl of Mirandula*. I quote four of the stanzas:—

Serve God for love then, not for hope of meed.
 What service may so désirable be
 As where all turneth to thine owné speed?
 Who is so good, so lovely eke as He?
 Who hath already done so much for thee:
 As He that first thee made, and on the rood
 Eft [after] thee redeemed with His precious blood?

Wherefore, good Lord, that full of mercy art,
 Unto Thy grace and sovran dignity
 We sely [poor] wretches cry with humble heart,
 Our sins forget, and our malignity!
 With piteous eye of Thy benignity
 Friendly look on us once. Thine own we be;
 Servants or sinners, whether it liketh thee:—
 Sinners,—if Thou our crime behold certáin,
 Our crime, the work of our uncourteous mind:
 But if Thy giftés Thou behold again—
 Thy giftés, noble, wonderful, and kind—
 Thou shalt us then the same personés find,
 Which are to Thee and havé been long space
 Servants by nature, children by Thy grace.

Grant, I Thee pray, such heat into mine heart,
 That to this love of Thine may be egál [correspondent];
 Grant me henceforth from Satan's bonds to start,
 With whom me rueth long to have been thrall.
 Grant me, good Lord, and Créatour of all,
 The flame to quench of all shameful desire,
 And in Thy love set all mine heart afire!²

¹ Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of Pleasure* (Percy Society).

² *The Workes of Sir Thomas More, Knyght, sometyme Lord Chauncellour of England, wrytten by him in the Englysh tonge*, ed. by W. Rastell, 1557, pp. 32-3:

Serve God for loue, then, not for hope of meede,
 What seruiçe maie so desirable bee.

Anne Askewe (1520-46), daughter of Sir William Askewe, who accepted the Reformed doctrines, and suffered death for her opinions in the truest spirit of a martyr, wrote some lines after her last examination at Newgate, from which I take the following verses :—

Like as the arméd knight
 Appointed to the field,
 With this world will I fight,
 And faith shall be my shield.

Faith is that weapon strong
 Which will not fail at need ;
 My foes, therefore, among
 Therewith will I proceed.

As it is had in strength
 And force of Christian way,
 It will prevail at length,
 Though all the devils say nay.

Faith in the fathers old
 Obtained righteousness,
 Which makes me very bold
 To fear no world's distress.

I now rejoice in heart,
 And hope bids me do so,
 For Christ will take my part,
 And cure me of my woe.

And, finally, she concludes that for no passing gale should her ship drop timidly its anchor :

I am not she that list
 My anchor to let fall,
 For every drizzling mist,
 My ship substantiall.¹

John Croke was a serjeant-at-law in the reign of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., and died in 1554. He was a very rich man, a Master in Chancery, the owner of estates in Buckinghamshire, and in 1547 member of Parliament for Chippenham. His translations into

¹ From *The Female Poets of Great Britain*, by Frederic Rowton, 1848, p. 8.

verse of thirteen Psalms and of part of Ecclesiastes have been published by the Percy Society. It will be enough to quote three verses from Psalm li. :—

With hyssop—bitter tears, I mean—
 Sprinkle me oft, my faults to know :
 Then, if that Thou wilt wash me clean,
 I shall be whiter than the snow.

Unto mine ears, within short space,
 Of joy or bliss shall come the choice.
 The bones that bowed to Thee for grace—
 Shall in Thy mercy then rejoice.

Offer we must for sacrifice
 A troubled mind, with sorrow's smart.
 Canst Thou refuse? Nay, nor despise
 The humble and the contrite heart.¹

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569), translator of the Bible, was brought up in the monastery of the Augustines at Cambridge, under the care of Dr. Barnes, who afterwards perished at the stake for his adherence to the Reformed doctrines. He received priest's orders in 1515, and quickly became prominent among the leaders of the Reformation. His Bible, from which comes the Prayer-Book version of the Psalms, was published in 1535; a later edition—the 'Great Bible'—in 1539, and his second 'Great Bible,' or 'Cranmer's Bible,' in 1540. After the execution of his constant patron, Thomas Cromwell, he went abroad. At Edward the Sixth's accession he returned to England, and was consecrated Bishop of Exeter in 1551. When Mary succeeded he was deprived and placed under arrest, but was suffered to leave the country at the earnest intercession of the King of Denmark. He took refuge at Geneva, and became so much influenced by the opinions prevalent there that, on his return to England in 1559, although he continued to preach, and subscribed himself to the last Bishop of Exeter, he declined holding any definite

¹ *John Croke's 'Thirteen Psalms,'* ed. by Dr. Bliss; Percy Soc. vol. xi. The Psalm begins: 'All myghty God, Lord Eternal.'

office in the English Church. Among his other works is a collection of *Goostly Psalmes and Spirituall Songs*. His metrical psalms are very rude and unadorned. The simplicity of his paraphrases of the *Credo* and *Pater-Noster* compensates for many defects. I quote, retaining the original spelling, his version of the *Pater-Noster*:—

O oure Father celestiall,
 Now are we come to praye to The.
 We are Thy chyl dren, therefore we call ;
 Hear us, Father, mercifully.
 Now blessed be Thy godly name,
 And ever among us sanctified :
 There is none other but this same
 Wherby mankynde must be saved.

Kirieleyson.

Thy kyngdome come : reigne Thou in us,
 For to expell all synne awaye ;
 Let not Sathan dwell in thy house,
 To put The forth by nyght nor day.
 Fulfilled be Thy godly wyll
 Among us all, for it is ryght ;
 As they in heaven do it fulfyll,
 So let us do both daye and nyght.

Kirieleyson.

Our dayly bred geve us this daye ;
 And let us never perysh for nede.
 The litle byrdes Thou fedest alwaye ;
 Thyne own chyl dren than must Thou fede.
 Our dettes are great ; forgeve us, Lorde,
 As we our detters all forgeve,
 And let us alwaye be restored
 To Thy mercy, that we may live.

Kirieleyson.

Tentacyon is sore in use
 And strongly now are we proved ;
 Good Lorde, Thou mayst us not refuse,
 We praye The with us to abyde :
 Not that alone, but helpe us out
 From pears all and ioperdy ;
 Let not evell sprete put us in doute
 Of Thy favour and great mercy.

Kirieleyson.¹

¹ *Remains of Myles Coverdale*, ed. for Parker Soc. by G. Pearson, p. 549.

The following are a few lines from an *Easter Song*:—

It was a marvelous great thyng
 To se how death with death dyd fyght :
 For the one death gat the wynnynge,
 And the other death lost his myght.
 Alleluya.¹

Sir Thomas Wyat, the Elder, and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, are names which are frequently coupled together. They were intimate friends. Both were great personages in court; both held high office; both were talented, witty, and accomplished; both wrote verses full of love and sentiment, in a style formed in great measure upon the model of the Italian poets. Wyat was the elder by several years. He was born in 1503, and died in 1541. Surrey was charged with high treason, and beheaded a few days before the death of Henry VIII., in 1547. The general resemblance between the two friends is remarkably and pathetically carried out in their religious verses. For in either case these compositions touchingly illustrate the emptiness, as compared with the deeper needs of human nature, of all that the world most values. Men said, admiringly, of Wyat, that in him were combined the wit of Sir Thomas More and the wisdom of Sir Thomas Cromwell. He gave splendid entertainments, and his acquaintance was everywhere courted. He was ambassador to the Emperor—an office for which he was well fitted by his intimate knowledge of the political relations of the country. He was accounted also a discerning and generous patron of learned men. Surrey had held the jousts at Westminster against all comers, had been Field-Marshal in France, and had distinguished himself at Flodden Field. Meanwhile, in their religious meditations, we find Surrey dwelling on those passages in Ecclesiastes which tell of the vanity of all human pomps, and both Wyat and him humbling themselves before their Maker in the contrite outpourings of the Peni-

¹ *Remains of Myles Coverdale*, p. 564.

tential Psalms. The following is a part of Sir Thomas Wyat's version of the Sixth Psalm :—

O Lord, I dread ; and that I did not dread
 I me repent, and evermore desire
 Thee, Thee to dread. I open here and spread
 My faults to Thee ; but Thou, for Thy goodness,
 Measure it not in largeness nor in breadth.
 Punish it not, as asketh the greatness
 Of thy furor, provoked by mine offence :
 Temper, O Lord, the harm of my excess
 With mending will, which I for recompense
 Prepare again ; and rather pity me,
 For I am weak, and clean without defence :
 More is the need I have of remedy.
 For of the whole the leech taketh no cure [care] ;
 The sheep that strayed the shepherd seeks to see :
 I, Lord, am strayed, and sick without recure [recovery].¹

The Earl of Surrey has left some verses in praise of these Psalms of Sir Thomas Wyat :

Where he doth paint the lively faith and pure,
 The steadfast hope, the sweet return to grace,
 Of just David, by perfect penitence.

They were quite in harmony with his own thoughts during his later days ; as also were the words of the Preacher :

The world is false, man he is frail, and all his pleasures pain.
 Alas ! what stable fruit may Adam's children find,
 In that they seek by sweat of brow, and travail of their mind ?
 We that live on the earth, drawn toward our decay—
 Our children fill our place awhile, and then they fade away.²

The following is from his paraphrase of the fourth chapter of Ecclesiastes :—

In humble spirit is set the temple of the Lord ;
 Where entering, look thy mouth and conscience may accord ;
 Whose Church is built of love, and decked with hot desire
 And simple faith.

¹ *Wyat's Poems* ; Chalmers' English Poets :

O Lord, I dreade, and that I did not dreade
 I me repente, and euermore desyre.

² *Surrey's Poems* ; Chalmers' English Poets :

The world is false, man he is frayle, and all his pleasures payne.
 Alas ! what stable frute may Adam's children fynde.

For aye He in His work doth rest,
 With gentle care to hear thy suit, and grant thee thy request.
 In boast of outward works He taketh no delight,
 Nor waste of words ; such sacrifice unsavourereth in His sight.¹

Surrey also paraphrased several of the Psalms.

Thomas, Lord Vaux (1511-62), descendant of an ancestor who had been Lord of Vaux in Normandy before he accompanied William I. to England, wrote some poems of which one or two are of a religious character. The following are the two concluding stanzas of some verses on *The Instabilitie of Youth* :—

Thou that by power to life didst raise the dead ;
 Thou that of grace restor'dst the blind to sight ;
 Thou that for love Thy life and love out-bleed ;
 Thou that of favour mad'st the lame go right ;
 Thou that canst heed and help in all assays,
 Forgive the guilt that grew in youth's vain ways !
 And now since I, with faith and doubtless mind
 Do fly to Thee by prayer to appease Thy ire ;
 And since that Thee I only seek to find,
 And hope by faith to attain my just desire ;
 Lord, mind no more youth's error and unskill,
 And able age to do Thy holy will.²

The following is from his lines *Of a Contented Spirit*. I should like to have matched it with the very pleasing verses of Sir Edward Dyer—*My mynde to me a kyngdome is*, and so to have included that writer among authors of sacred verse ; but whereas this by Lord Vaux may be considered as coming just within the verge of religious poetry, the other I am obliged to consider as standing just without. The arrangement of stanzas is that of Dr. Hannah in his interesting compilation from the 'Courtly Poets' of 1540-1650.³

¹ *Surrey's Poems* ; Chalmers' English Poets :

In humble sprite is set the temple of the Lorde,
 Wher yf thow enter, loke thy mouth and conscyence may accorde.

² *Poems of Lord Vaux*, ed. by Grosart. There is some little doubt whether part of this poem was not by J. Haryngton. But Mr. Grosart judges it far most probable that Haryngton merely wrote out the poem with some variations upon it.

³ J. Hannah's *Poems of Raleigh, Wotton, and other Courtly Poets* (1540-1650), p. 132.

When all is done and said,
 In the end thus shall you find
 He most of all doth bathe in bliss
 That hath a quiet mind.
 And clear from worldly cares,
 To deem can be content
 The sweetest time in all his life
 In thinking to be spent.
 The body subject is
 To fickle fortune's power,
 And to a million of mishaps
 Is casual every hour ;
 And death in time doth change
 It to a clod of clay,
 When as the mind, which is divine,
 Runs never to decay.

Our wealth leaves us at death,
 Our kinsmen at the grave :
 But virtues of the mind unto
 The heavens with us we have.
 Wherefore, for virtue's sake,
 I can be well content
 The sweetest time in all my life
 To deem in thinking spent.¹

In a note to the verses quoted in the preceding page, John Haryngton was mentioned as the possible author of the verses more probably ascribed to Lord Vaux. Haryngton did not write much, but was quite able to hold his own among the minor poets of Queen Elizabeth's Court. He stood high in the Queen's favour, and in Mary's reign had been confined in the Tower at the same time that she was, for correspondence with her. The following is the last verse of an *Elegy* written by him during his imprisonment :—

Death is a port whereby we pass to joy :
 Life is a lake that drowneth all in pain ;
 Death is so dear it killeth all annoy ;
 Life is so lewd [poor], that all it yields is vain ;
 For as by life to bondage man was brought,
 Even so by death all freedom too was wrought.²

¹ *Poems of Lord Vaux*, ed. by Grosart, vol. iv. : 'When all is doen and saied.'

² Sir J. Harrington's *Nugæ Antiquæ*, ii. 332.

A hymn by Walter, Earl of Essex, who died in 1576, was written during intervals of great pain, and was sung by him very shortly before his death. 'The night following' (runs a contemporary account), 'which was the night before he died, he called William Hewes, which was his musician, to play upon the virginal and to sing. "Play," said he, "My song, Will Hewes, and I will sing it myself."' It was the following *Hymn of Penitence* :—

O heavenly God, O Father dear, cast down Thy heavenly eye
Upon a wretch that prostrate here before Thy throne doth lie ;
O pour Thy wretched oil of grace into my wounded heart !
O let the drops of mercy swage the rigour of my smart.

My sinful soul, oppressed sore with care-full clog of sin,
In humble wise submits itself, Thy mercy for to win.
Grant mercy then, O Saviour sweet, to me most woefull thrall,
Whose mournful eye to Thee, O Lord, doth still for mercy call.

Thy blessed word I have despised upon a stubborn mind,
And to the sway of worldly things myself I have inclined ;
Forgetting heaven and heavenly powers, where God and saints
do dwell,

My life had like to tread the steps that leads the way to hell.

But O my Lord, and loadstar bright, I will no more do so.
To think upon my former life my heart doth bleed for woe :
Alas, I sigh ; alas, I sob ; alas, I do repent,
That ever my licentious life so wickedly was bent.

Since thus therefore with doleful plaints I do Thy mercy crave,
O Lord, for Thy great mercy's sake, let me Thy mercy have !
Restore to life the wretched soul that else is like to die !
So shall my voice unto Thy name sing praise eternally.

Now blessed be the Father first, and blessed be the Son,
And blessed be the Holy Ghost by whom all things were done.
Bless me, O blessed Trinity, with Thy eternal grace,
That after death my soul may have in heaven a dwelling place.¹

There is also a hymn which has been ascribed to Robert, Earl of Essex, the powerful favourite of Elizabeth, which, in that case, would have been written just

¹ *A Godly and virtuous Song made by the Honorable the Earle of Essex, late deceased*, in Grosart, vol. iv. In the *Paradyse of Daynty Devises*, 1576, it has the initials of Francis Kynwelmerh ; but it appears from Mr. Grosart's investigations that there is no question about the real authorship, and that F. K. are simply the initials of the copyist.

before his execution. But its interest is lost, if, as appears far more probable, it is simply a sort of elegy, written soon after his death by an anonymous author. It begins :—

Welcome, sweet Death, the kindest friend I have.¹

☞ In the *Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1575), there are two hymns by Francis Kynwelmersh, of whom little is known, except that he was a gentleman of Essex, that he was a member of Gray's Inn, and that in 1566 he joined with George Gascoigne in translating the *Jocasta* of Euripides. The following are two verses from his hymn for Christmas Day :—

This day to man came pledge of perfect peace,
 This day to man came love and unity,
 This day man's grief began for to surcease,
 This day did man receive a remedy
 For each offence and every deadly sin,
 With guilty heart that erst he wandered in.

In Christes flock let love be surely placed ;
 From Christes flock let concord hate expel :
 Of Christes flock let love be so embraced,
 As we in Christ, and Christ in us may dwell.
 Christ is the author of all unity,
 From whence proceedeth all felicity.²

His *Hymn for Whitsunday* I quote in full :—

Come Holy Ghost, eternal God, and ease the woful grief,
 That through the heaps of heavy sin can nowhere find relief.
 Do Thou, O God, redress
 The great distress
 Of sinful heaviness.

Come, comfort the afflicted thoughts of my consumed heart ;
 O rid the piercing, pricking pains of my tormenting smart.
 O Holy Ghost, grant me,
 That I by thee
 From sin may purged be.

¹ *Essex Laste Voyage to the Haven of Happiness*, Grosart, vol. iv. ; and Hannah's *Courtly Poets*, note 248.

² *The Paradyse of Daynty Devises* ; M. Edwards, 1576 ; ed. by Sir Egerton Brydges, in *British Bibliographer*, 1812, p. 11.

Thou art my God : to Thee alone
 I will commend my cause ;
 Not glittering gold nor precious stone
 Shall make me leave Thy laws.
 O teach me then the way,
 Whereby I may
 Make Thee my only stay.

My lips, my tongue, my heart and all
 Shall spread Thy mighty name :
 My voice shall never cease to sound
 The praises of the same.

 Yea, every living thing
 Shall sweetly sing
 To Thee, O heavenly King.¹

An *Easter Hymn* in the same collection is by Jasper Heywood (1535-98). He was a Greek and Hebrew scholar of some note, and a Fellow first of Merton and then of All Souls. In 1562 he joined the Jesuits, and was placed in 1581 at the head of that body in England. The hymn in question is of no particular merit, but I quote the last verse, which is also the best :—

O man, arise with Christ therefore,
 Since he from sin hath made thee free.
 Beware thou fall in sin no more,
 But rise as Christ did rise for thee.
 So may'st thou Him in glory see,
 When He at day of doom shall say :
 Come thou, my child, and dwell with me.
 God grant us all to see that glorious day.²

Robert Crowley (1518-88) was a demy of Magdalen College ; then, after occupying himself for a few years as a printer, he took orders, and became a noted preacher. He was a strong Puritan, and, at Mary's accession, fled to Frankfort. After his return he was made Prebend and Archdeacon of Hereford. Afterwards he was Prebend of St. Paul's, and Vicar of St. Giles', Cripple-gate. But his strict and narrow opinions, and the zeal with which he propagated them, soon brought him into

¹ *The Paradise of Daynty Devises*, p. 6 : 'Come, holy ghost, eternall God, and ease the wofull greefe.'

² *Id.* p. 5 : 'O man, aryse with Christe therefore.'

collision with the Archbishop, and he was deprived and suspended. He was, at a later date, Vicar of St. Lawrence Jewry, but soon resigned. He was an unwearied preacher of sermons and writer of pamphlets, and ever ready for public disputation with his opponents. But he was also full of sympathy for the troubles of the poor—keen also and bold in rebuking the abuses and the vices of his age. In 1550 he wrote a series of one and thirty vigorous remonstrances in rhyme against the varied evils he saw around him—the State plundering the Church, the rich plundering the poor, the Puritan taxing the Papist with idleness, ignorance, and immorality, and anon letting in seven other spirits worse than those which had been driven out, brawlers and drunkards, usurers and forestallers, flatterers and backbiters, and swearers and dicers, and idle vagabonds, pluralities in the Church, discomoning of open lands, bribery in public offices, and so forth. In the same year he issued another book, also in verse, in which he sounded his trumpet of warning in lessons addressed severally to magistrates, gentlemen, women, merchants, lawyers, physicians, learned men, scholars, lewd priests, yeomen, servants, and beggars. His appeals are vigorous and very earnest, but by no means wanting in kindness. I give an extract from *The Gentleman's Lesson*. As regards form, it has no pretence to being more than the merest rhyme:—

Thou that art born to land and rent,
 And art cleped a gentleman,
 Give ear to me, for mine intent
 Is to do the good I can.

Thou art a man that God hath set
 To rule the rout in thy country :
 Wherefore thou hadst need for to get
 Good knowledge rather than money.

First I advertise thee therefore,
 And require thee in Christ's name,
 That of knowledge thou get thee store
 And frame thy living to the same.

Get thee knowledge, I say, and then
 Thou shalt perceive thine own degree
 To be such that, among all men,
 Thou hast most need learned to be.

Thou shalt perceive thou hast no time
 To spare and spend in banqueting ;
 For though thou watch till it be prime
 Thou shalt have enough to doing.

Thou shalt not find any leisure
 To dice, to card, or to revel,
 If thou do once take a pleasure
 In using thine own calling well.

Thy mind shall be still ravished
 With the desire to walk upright,
 And to see all vice punished,
 So much as shall lie in thy might.

Thou shalt delight for to defend
 The poor man that is innocent,
 And cause the wicked to amend
 And the oppressor to repent.

Thou shalt have delight in nothing
 Saving in doing thy duty ;
 Which is, under God and the king,
 To rule them that thou dost dwell by.

Thou shalt not think that thou mayest take
 Thy rent to spend it at thy will,
 As one that should no reckoning make
 For ought that he doth well or ill.¹

And so he continues through 160 lines, concluding with the admonition to live night and day in God's fear.

Crowley also wrote a poem on *The Last Judgment*, and a version of the Psalms of David.

I must just mention Thomas Tusser's *Hundred Good Points of Husbandry*, published in 1557. It was well that a little handbook in verse, so popular that it 'was once probably in the hands or committed to the memories of almost all the country gentlemen, and others con-

¹ *Select Works of Robert Crowley*, ed. by J. M. Cowper for E.E.T.S. p. 90: 'Thou that arte borne to lande and rent.'

nected with husbandry, in the kingdom,'¹ should, even in the most simple and unassuming way, recognise, amid all the routine of the farmer's life, the ruling hand of God, and the duty of thankfulness to Him.

Now think upon God ; let thy tongue never cease
From thanking of Him for His mighty increase.²

The following lines are from his poetical autobiography, first added to the edition of 1573 of his *Points of Husbandry* :—

When all is done, learn this, my son,
Not friend nor skill, nor wit nor will,
Nor ship nor clod, but only God
Doth all in all.
Man taketh the pain, God giveth gain ;
Man doth his best, God doth the rest ;
Man well intends, God foizon [plenty] sends,
Else want he shall.³

He was also the author of a Christmas carol which appears in collections.

The two next extracts are from six poems, in which each verse ends with a refrain, given to J. Jegon, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, by Richard Cox, Bishop of Ely, who was born in 1499, and died in 1581. It is not known who they were written by.

SAY-WELL AND DO-WELL.

Say-well, and do-well, they are things twain ;
Thrice happy is he in whom both reign.

Say-well is truly a worthy thing ;
Of say-well great goodness doth not forth spring :
Say-well from do-well differeth a letter ;
Say-well is good, but do-well is better.
Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well is ruled by man some deal ;
Do-well doth wholly to God appeal.

¹ Sir E. Brydges' advertisement to his edition of *A Hundreth Good Poyntes of Husbandry*.

² *Id.* : 'Nowe thinke upon God, let thy tonge neuer cease.'

³ *Thomas Tusser's Will and Poetical Autobiography*, 1846.

Say-well saith goodly, and doth many please ;
 Do-well liveth godly, and doth the world ease.
 Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well makes many to God's word cleave ;
 But for lack of do-well they quickly leave.
 If say-well and do-well were joined in a frame,
 All were won, all were done, got were the game.
 Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well in danger of death is cold ;
 Do-well is earnest and wondrous bold,
 When say-well for fear doth tremble and quake,
 Do-well shall be jocund and jolly there make.
 Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well is slipp'ry, and winketh whiles ;
 Do-well is simple, and without guiles.
 Where say-well for shame shall hide his face,
 Do-well shall triumph in every place.
 Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well to silence is oftentimes bound ;
 Do-well is free in every stound [hour].
 Say-well hath friends but here and there ;
 Do-well is welcome everywhere.
 Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well in hand doth many things take
 Do-well an end of them doth make.
 Where say-well with many is quite down-cast,
 Do-well is trusty, and will stand fast.
 Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well himself will oft advance ;
 Do-well doth neither jet [strut] nor prance,
 Yet do-well the world doth profit more
 Than say-well and his hundred store.
 Say-well, *etc.*

Say-well in wordes is proper and trick [set-off],
 Do-well in deeds is nimble and quick :
 Lord, trick and quick together knit,
 So shall they pipe a merry fit.
 Say-well, *etc.*¹

Richard Edwards (1523-66), Editor of the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*, and the chief contributor to it, wrote

¹ *Six Ballads with Burdens*, from MS. in C. C. Coll., Cambridge, ed. by Jas. Goodwin, Percy Society, 1844, vol. xiii. :

'Say-well ys truly a worthy thyng,
 Off say-well greate goodnes noth furth spryng.'

some sacred poetry of a didactic strain, not very noteworthy, but with some dignity of tone, as in the verses which begin—

Whoso will be accounted wise, and truly claim the name,
By joining virtue to his deeds he must achieve the same.¹

Edwards was a senior student of Christ Church, and in 1561 was appointed by Elizabeth a gentleman of the Royal Chapel and a Master of the Children of the Chapel.

Archbishop Parker (1504-75) may just be mentioned as one of that great company of unsuccessful translators of the Psalms (1560). His version of the hundredth is a singular one, for which cause alone I quote it :—

O joy, all men terrestriall !
Rejoyce in God celestiaall !
I byd not Jewes especiall,
But Jewes and Greekes in generall ;—
Serve ye thy Lord heroicall,
With joy of hart effectuall ;
Seke ye hys sight potentiall
With hymnes of myrth most musicall.
His gates and courtes tread usuall
With laudes and hymnes poeticall ;
Geve thanks to hym continuall,
And bless his name most liberall.
For why ? this Lord so principall
Is sweete, His grace perpetuall :
Hys truth of word stand ever shall
With hundreth thanks : thus ende we all.²

Francis Thynne's *Debate between Pride and Lowliness*—a humorous tale with a religious moral to it—was printed about 1568. It concludes with the epithyme—

Who purposeth to liven virtuose
In favour of our God, let him take keep
That Pride none office bears within his house ;
For where he doth, Virtue is laid to sleep.³

¹ *Paradyse of Daynty Devises*, p. 27 : ' Whoso will be accompted wise.'

² Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, vol. ix. p. 109.

³ Francis Thynne's *Debate, etc.*, reprinted for the Shakespeare Society, 1841, p. 81.

I extract the following few lines on Prayer from *The Shippe of Safegarde*,—an allegorical poem on the Life of Man by G. B., letters which are supposed by Hazlewood to stand, with initials reversed, for Barnaby Googe. Its date is 1569:—

A thousand happy hands may here be seen,
Held up with heart unfeigned unto the skies,
Washed in the waters of repentance clean,
And purged pure with tears of weeping eyes ;
A thousand tongues, from minds that well do mean,
Yield up to God their fervent suits and cries
At morning, noon, and night, continually.¹

The following is from *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions*, edited by Thomas Proctor in 1578. He himself largely contributed to that collection:—

Wherefore I wish that each degree
With lotted chance contented be.
Let not thy treasure make thee proud
Nor poverty be disallowed.
Remember who doth give and take :
One God both rich and poor doth make.
We nothing had, or ought shall have
To bear with us unto our grave,
But virtuous life, which here we lead
On our behalf for grace to plead.
Therefore, I say, thy lust refrain,
And seek not after brittle gain ;
But seek that wealth, the which will last
When that this mortal life is past.
In heaven is joy and pleasure still ;
The world is vain and full of ill.
Use not so ill thy worldly pelf,
So that thou dost forget thyself.
Live in this world as dead to sin
And die in Christ, true life to win.²

Nicholas Breton, a somewhat prolific writer of verse, was an Oriel College man, a Roman Catholic in creed. He travelled much, and served as a captain under the

¹ Sir Egerton Brydges' *British Bibliography*, ii. 630: 'A thousand happie hands.'

² From *A Gallery, etc.*, Heliconia, ed. T. Park: 'Wherefore I wishe that eche degree.'

Earl of Leicester in the Low Countries. From a hymn in his *Small Handfull of Fragrant Flowers* (1575), comes this aspiration of a Christian soldier:—

Arm us with faith to bear the shield
And sword of heavenly purity :
Crown us with helmet in the field
Of Thy surpassing verity.¹

In his *Pilgrimage to Paradise* (1592), occur the lines:—

And on they walk, until anon they come
Unto a church not built of lime or stone,
But that true church of that immortal fame
That is world's wonder, and heaven's love alone,—
Whose head is Christ, whose martyrs are His pillars ;
All of whose members are His word's well-willers.²

In the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign religious verses were printed broadside, as sacred ballads, to be sung to bright tunes. This is from one headed *Songe of the Lambe's Feast*, printed 1576:

I heard one say,
'Come now away,
Make no delay ;
Alack ! why stand ye than ? [then
All is doubtless
In readiness ;
There wants but gesse [guests]
To the Supper of the Lamb.
For He's now blest
In very deed,
That's found a guest
In marriage weed.'³

Thomas Becon (1511-70) was among the most popular of the Reformers. He was chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer. During the reign of Mary he took refuge in the Continent. After her death he returned and was rector of Bucklands, in Herefordshire, and prebend of

¹ *A Small Handfull*, etc. ; *Heliconia*, i. 20.

² Corser's *Collectanea Anglo Poetica*, iii. 2.

³ *Id.* ii. 130 :

I hearde one say
Come now away.

Canterbury. I quote a few verses from *A Newe Dialoge betwene the Angel of God and ye Shepherds of ye Felde* :—

This Child alone,
Sent from God's throne
All kind of moan
Shall put away.
Whoso embrace
His loving face
Shall want no grace,
Nor yet decay.

He is the King,
To whose bidding
Every thing
Obeyeth humbly.
He is the Lord,
By whose concord
All things restored
Shall be plainly.

He is the Peace,
Which shall release
All our disease
And grievous pain.
He is the Stay,
He is the Way,
By whom we may
Glory attain.

He is the Light,
That is so bright
In all men's sight
To show the way.
He is the Rock.
If that we knock
He will unlock,
And help us aye.¹

George Gascoigne, son of Sir G. Gascoigne, served with distinction under the command of the Prince of Orange in 1572. The year after, he accompanied Queen Elizabeth on one of her state progresses, and wrote one of the masques celebrated in her honour.

¹ Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, ii. 239 : 'This chylde alone.'

He died in 1577. Among his religious poems his *Good-Morrow* and *Good-Night* are both pretty. In the former there is a fresh brightness like the air of a summer morning. I quote a few verses :—

You that have spent the silent night
 In sleep and quiet rest,
 And joy to see the cheerful light
 That riseth in the east :
 Now clear your voice ; now cheer your heart ;
 Come, help me now to sing :
 Each willing wight come bear a part
 To praise the heavenly King.

Then, after, comparing the night to the night of death :

Yet as this deadly night did last
 But for a little space,
 And heavenly day, now night is past,
 Doth show her pleasant face :
 So must we hope to see God's face
 At last in heaven on high,
 When we have changed this mortal place
 For immortality.

And of such hope and heavenly joys
 As then we hope to hold,
 All earthly sights and worldly toys
 Be tokens to behold.
 The day is like the day of doom,
 The sun, the Son of man,
 The sky's the heavens, the earth the tomb
 Wherein we rest till then.

The rainbow bending in the sky,
 Bedecked with sundry hues,
 Is like the seal of God on high
 And seems to tell these news :
 That as thereby He promised
 To drown the world no more,
 So by the blood which Christ hath shed
 He will our health restore.

The misty clouds that fall sometime
 And overcast the skies,
 Are like to troubles of our time
 Which do but dim our eyes.

But as such dews are dried up quite
 When Phœbus shows his face,
 So are such fancies put to flight
 Where God doth guide by grace

The little birds which sing so sweet
 Are like the angels' voice
 Which render God His praises meet,
 And teach us to rejoice.

His *Good-Night* begins thus:—

When thou hast spent the lingering day in pleasure and delight
 Or after tost and weary way, dost seek to rest at night ;
 Unto thy pains and pleasures past add this one labour yet—
 Ere sleep close up thine eyes to rest, do not thy God forget,
 But search within thy secret thoughts what deeds did thee befall
 And if thou find amiss in aught, to God for mercy call.

Sir Philip Sydney (1554-86) contributed to the sacred verse of the Elizabethan age. In an age when religious and poetical feeling were alike full of movement, his ardent, sensitive genius, ever eager to take an active part, intellectual, emotional, and physical, in the stir of life around him, could scarcely fail to give vent in song to the spiritual impulses of his nature. If he had not died so young, it is very likely that he might in later years have taken a more leading place among Christian poets. The following is the concluding sonnet of the passionate struggle between love and duty which finds expression in his *Astrophel and Stella*:—

CX.—ASPIRE TO HIGHER THINGS.

Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust ;
 And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things ;
 Grow rich in that which never taketh rust ;
 Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings.
 Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
 To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be ;
 Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light
 That doth both shine and give us sight to see.
 O take fast hold ; let that light be thy guide
 In this small course which birth draws out to death,
 And think how ill becometh him to slide,
 Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath.

Then farewell, world ! thy uttermost I see
Eternal Love, maintain Thy life in me.

*Splendidis longum valedico nugis.*¹

Sydney's *Translation of the Psalms* was finished by his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. It was thought, until recently, impossible to distinguish her portion of them, but there is now evidence of some weight that it begins with the forty-fourth Psalm. I quote from the part which is reasonably ascribed to Sydney.

From Psalm xvi. :—

Save me, Lord, for why? Thou art
All the hope of all my heart :
Witness thou, my soul with me,
That to God, my God, I say,—
Thou, my Lord, Thou art my stay,
Though my works reach not to Thee.

God my only portion is,
And of my child's-part the bliss :
He then shall maintain my lot.
Say then, is not my lot found
In a goodly pleasant ground?
Have not I fair partage got?

Ever, Lord, I will bless Thee,
Who dost ever counsel me ;
E'en when night with his black wing
Sleepy darkness does o'er cast,
In my inward reins I taste
Of my faults a chastening.

My eyes still my God regard,
And He my right hand doth guard ;
So can I not be opprest,
So my heart is fully glad,
So my joy in glory clad,
Yea, my flesh in hope shall rest.

For I know the deadly grave
On my soul no power shall have ;
For I know Thou wilt defend
Even the body of Thine own
Dear, beloved, holy one
From a foul corrupting end.

¹ *Sir Philip Sydney's Works*, vol. i. 147, ed. by Grosart.

Thou life's path wilt make me know
 In whose view with plenty grow
 All delights that souls can crave ;
 And whose bodies placéd stand
 On Thy blessed-making hand ;
 They all pleasures endless have.¹

From Psalm xliii. :—

Send Thy truth and light,
 Let them guide me right
 From the paths of folly,
 Bringing me to Thy
 Tabernacles high
 In Thy hill most holy.

To God's altars tho (then)
 I will boldly go,
 Shaking off all sadness ;
 To that God that is
 God of all my bliss,
 God of all my gladness.

Then lo, then I will
 With sweet music's skill
 Grateful meaning show Thee.
 Then God, yea, my God,
 I will sing abroad
 What great thanks I owe Thee.

Why art thou, my soul,
 Cast down in such dole ?
 What ails thy discomfort ?
 Wait on God, for still
 Thank my God I will,
 My only aid and comfort.²

From the Countess of Pembroke's Psalms I may
 quote a part of the ninety-fifth :—

Come, come let us with joyful voice
 Record and raise
 Jehovah's praise :
 Come, let us in our safety's rock rejoice.
 Into His presence let us go,
 And there with psalms our gladness show,

¹ *Sir Philip Sydney's Works*, iii. 113 :

Save me, Lord, for why, Thou art
 All the hope of all my heart.

² *Id.* iii. 198.

For He is God, a God most great
Above all gods, a King in kingly seat.

What lowest lies in earthy mass,
What highest stands,
Stands in His hand :

The sea is His, and He the sea-wright was.
He made the sea, He made the shore :
Come let us fall, let us adore :
Come let us kneel with awful grace
Before the Lord, the Lord our Maker's face.

He is our God, He doth us keep :
We by Him led,
And by Him fed,
His people are ; we are his pasture sheep.
To-day if He some speech will use,
Do not, O do not you refuse
With hardened hearts His voice to hear,
As Massa now, or Meribah it were.¹

Speaking generally of this version of the Psalms by Sir Philip Sydney and his sister, it seems to me nearly, if not quite, the best and most readable of any complete rendering in English verse.

Humphrey Gifford's *Posie of Gilloflowers* was published about 1580. Very little is known of him except that he was connected by marriage with the ancient family of the Copes, that in some manner he 'served' Edward Cope of Eydon, and that he had convenient leisure among his books, 'with which exercise,' says he, 'of all earthly recreations I am most delighted.' From his poems, I select one of much merit, *In Praise of the Contented Minde* :—

If all the joys that worldly wights possess,
Were thoroughly scann'd, and ponder'd in their kinds,
No man of wit, but justly must confess
That they joy most that have contented minds ;
And other joys which bear the name of joys
Are not right joys, but sunshines of annoys.

¹ *The Psalms of David*, etc., by Sir Philip Sydney, and finished by the Countess of Pembroke, his sister, 1823 : 'Come, come lett us with joyfull voice.'

In outward view we see a number glad,
 Which make a show, as if mirth did abound,
 When pinching grief within doth make them sad;
 And many a one in these days may be had,
 Which faintly smile, to shroud their sorrows so,
 When oftentimes they pine in secret woe.

But every man that holds himself content,
 And yields God thanks, as duty doth require,
 For all the goods that He to us hath sent,
 And is not vexed with over great desire;
 All such, I say, most quietly do sleep,
 When fretting cares do others waking keep.

What doth avail huge heaps of shining gold,
 Or gay attire, or stately buildings brave,
 If worldly pomp thy heart in bondage hold?
 Not thou thy goods, thy goods make thee their slave;
 For greedy men like Tantalus do fare;
 In midst of wealth they needy are and bare.

A wary heed that things go not to loss,
 Doth not amiss, so that it keeps the mean;
 But still to toil and moil for worldly dross,
 And taste no joy nor pleasure for our pains—
 In cark and care both day and night to dwell,
 Is nothing else but even a very hell.

Wherefore I say, as erst I did begin,
 Contented men enjoy the greatest bliss;
 Let us content ourselves to fly from sin,
 And still abide what God's good pleasure is.
 If joy or pain, if wealth or want befall,
 Let us be pleased, and give God thanks for all.¹

I must add a few lines, from his *Complaynt of a Sinner*, on the world-long struggle between the spirit and the flesh:—

Ah me ! when that some good desire
 Would move me to do well,
 Affection fond makes me retire,
 And cause me to rebel.
 I wake, yet am asleep,
 I see, yet still am blind;
 In ill I run with headlong race,
 In good I come behind,

¹ H. Gifford's *Poësie of Gilloftwers* in Al. Grosart's *Miscellanies*, vol. i.:
 'If all the joyes that worldly wightes possesse.'

Lo, thus in life I daily die,
 And dying shall not live,
 Unless Thy mercy speedily
 Some succour to me give.

The following is from William Byrd's *Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs* (1588)—

Care for thy soul as thing of greatest price,
 Made to the end to taste of power divine,
 Devoid of guilt, abhorring sin and vice,
 Apt by God's grace to virtue to incline :
 Care for it so that by thy reckless train
 It be not brought to taste eternal pain.

Care for thy soul as for thy chiefest stay ;
 Care for thy body for the soul's avail ;
 Care for the world for body's help away ;
 Care yet but so as virtue may prevail :
 Care in such sort as thou beware of this—
 Care keep thee not from heaven and heavenly bliss.¹

Thomas Churchyard (c. 1520-1604) was author of a number of poems of no very superlative character. The following stanza from *Churchyard's Chippes* rises above his ordinary level :—

Here is no home nor harbouring house,
 But cabins built on sand,
 That every pirrie [gust] puffeth down,
 Or still on props do stand.
 Our fathers' spirits pass in peace
 The country that we crave,
 But we are strangers far from home
 That nothing certain have.²

Spenser's *Faery Queen* (1590) is a religious poem in a very noble sense, as representing a pure and beautiful ideal of the Christian character. 'I labour,' he says, in his preface to Sir Walter Raleigh, to portray the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve moral virtues,

¹ *More Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-Books*, edited by A. H. Bullen, 1888, p. 16.

² *Churchyard's Chippes*, by Thomas Churchyard, Gentilman, 1573 ; edited by J. P. Collier, p. 74 :

Here is no home nor harboring house,
 But cabbens built on sande.

. . . 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline,' . . . clad in 'the armour of a Christian man specified by St. Paul.' He has carried out his aim in no narrow sense, and is always careful never to dwell so far disproportionately upon any one moral virtue as in any way to overcloud the high conception of truth and holiness, which is the general principle of all. There is throughout a very pure and delicate sense of earnest religion, in union with beauty, honour, and chivalry. A modern can scarcely fail to regret that the poem is cast in an allegorical form. He himself speaks in his preface of allegory as a 'dark conceit,' and acknowledges 'how doubtfully all allegories may be construed.' But whereas his age delighted in allegory, ours shrinks from it. However much a modern reader may admire and appreciate the great beauties of Spenser's chief poem, there are few who can persist without real weariness in a continuous perusal of it.

The very first stanzas of the *Faery Queene* give the key-note of the lofty religious idea which pervades the whole. They tell of the knight, bound on great adventure, and clad in mighty arms which bore the old dints of many a hard-fought field :

And on his breast a bloody cross he bore,
 The dear remembrance of his dying Lord,
 For whose sweet sake that glorious badge he bore,
 And dead, as living, ever Him adored ;
 Upon his shield the like was also scored,
 For sovereign hope which in His help he had.
 Right, faithful, true He was in deed and word.

Nor was the lady who rode by his side less worthy of men's honour. By her was a milk-white lamb, and

So pure and innocent as that same lamb
 She was in life and every virtuous lore.

But my limits preclude any attempt to follow out the religious and moral purpose of the poem, and I must merely give a few short extracts in specific points.

Of the interconnection of all Christian virtues :—

O goodly golden chain, wherewith y-fere [together],
 The virtues linkéd are in lovely wise,
 And noble minds of yore allied were
 In brave pursuit of chivalrous emprise !

Of the vanity of trusting on mere human strength in
 our spiritual warfare :—

What man is he that boasts of fleshly might,
 And vain assurance of mortality ?
 Which all so soon as it doth come to fight
 Against spiritual foes yields by and bye,
 Or from the field most cowardly doth fly.
 Nor let the man ascribe it to his skill,
 That thorough grace hath gained the victory :
 If any strength we have, it is to ill ;
 But all the good is God's, both power and eke will.

Of ministering angels :—

How oft do they their silver bowers leave
 To come to succour us that succour want !
 How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
 The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
 Against foul fiends to help us militant !
 They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant ;
 And all for love and nothing for reward :
 O why should heavenly God to men have such regard ?

From his *Hymn of Love* :—

For Love is lord of Truth and Loyalty,
 Lifting himself out of the lowly dust,
 On golden plumes up to the purest sky,

Ah me, dear Lord ! that ever I might hope,
 For all the pains and woes that I endure,
 To come at length unto the wished-for scope
 Of my desire, or might myself assure
 That happy port for ever to recure.
 Then would I think these pains no pains at all,
 And all my woes to be but penance small.

Then would I sing of Thine immortal praise
 An heavenly hymn, such as the angels sing,
 And Thy triumphant name then would I raise
 Bove all the gods, Thee only honouring,
 My Guide, my God, my Victor, and my King ;
 Till then, dread Lord, vouchsafe to take of me
 This simple song, thus framed in praise of Thee.

Spenser's noble *Hymn of Heavenly Love* is beautiful from beginning to end. But it is nearly three hundred lines in length, and I must be content to quote three stanzas near the end. He has just recited the story of our Saviour's life and death:—

Then let thy flinty heart, that feels no pain,
Empiercé be with pitiful remorse,
And let thy bowels bleed in every vein
At sight of His most sacred heavenly corse
So torn and mangled with malicious force ;
And let thy soul, whose sins His sorrows wrought
Melt into tears, and groan in grievéd thought.
With sense thereof whilst so thy softened spirit
Is inly touched, and humbled with meek zeal
Through meditation of His endless merit,
Lift up thy mind to th' author of thy weal,
And to His sovereign mercy do appeal ;
Learn Him to love, that lovéd thee so dear,
And in thy breast His blessed image bear.

Then shall thy ravished soul inspiréd be
With heavenly thoughts, far above human skill,
And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see
The idea of His pure glory present still
Before thy face, that all thy spirit shall fill
With sweet enagement of celestial love
Kindled through sight of those fair things above.

A SONNET FOR EASTER DAY OR SUNDAY.

Most glorious Lord of Life ! that on this day
Didst make Thy triumph over death and sin,
And, having harrowed hell, didst bring away
Captivity thence captive, us to win :
This joyous day, dear Lord, with joy begin ;
And grant that we, for whom Thou diddest die,
Being with Thy dear blood clean washed from sin,
May live for ever in felicity !
And that Thy love we weighing worthily
May likewise love Thee for the same again ;
And for Thy sake, that all like dear didst buy,
With love may one another entertain.
So let us love, dear Love, like as we ought :
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

Although the plays of Shakespeare (1566-1616) abound in passages rich in pure and lofty sentiment,

it can scarcely be said that they contain anything which could be ranked as sacred poetry in the more limited sense of the term. Under such a restriction his 166th Sonnet might still be quoted :

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
 Fooled by those rebel powers that thee array,
 Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,
 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay ?
 Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
 Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend ?
 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
 Eat up thy charge ? is this thy body's end ?
 Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss
 And let that pine, to aggravate thy store ;
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross ;
 Within be fed, without be rich no more :
 So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
 And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

Characters of all kinds were naturally and truly conceived by the multitudinous genius of the great dramatist. But he has held aloof from the deeper springs of Christian feelings, as if in a spirit of reserve and reverence for mysteries which he would in no account profane or dishonour, but which he could only faintly appreciate. Therefore he does but touch slightly upon truths of religion, and passes on,—for example :

Alas ! alas !

Why all the souls that were, were forfeiture ;
 And He that might the vantage best have took
 Found out the remedy. How would you be,
 If He, which is the top of judgment, should
 But judge you as you are ?

The finest passages of a semi-religious character to be found in Shakespeare are such as have to do either with Christian practice or with a very general and undefined religious emotion. Both might be illustrated from the *Merchant of Venice* ; the one those noble words on mercy put into the mouth of Portia ; the other where Lorenzo says :

Look how the floor of heaven
 Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold ;
 There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest,

But in his motion like an angel sings,
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims :
 Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
 But while this mouldy vesture of decay
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

A brief mention may here be made,—but more for the sake of the form than of the matter,—of the Psalms in English hexameters, published in 1591 by Abraham Fraunce, a barrister, who enjoyed the high esteem and friendship of Sir Philip Sydney. Although these early efforts to naturalise in our tongue the Latin metre are rather uncouth, they are not void of a certain graphic force. We are told that Spenser was interested in these experiments of Fraunce and Gabriel Harvey, and was at one time inclined himself to try them. The reader may be interested in an example of some lines from this curious version. I take a passage from the middle of the 104th Psalm :—

Night-enlightening moon for certain times is appointed,
 And all-seeing sun knows his due time to be setting.
 Sun once so setting, dark night wraps all in a mantle,
 All in a black mantle : then beasts creep out fro' the dungeons ;
 Roaring hungry lions their prey, with greedy devouring,
 Claws and jaws, attend, but by God's only appointment :
 When Sun riseth again, their dens they quickly recover,
 And there couch all day : that man may safely the day-time
 His day's work apply, till day give way to the darkness.

O good God, wise Lord, good Lord, and only the wise God,
 Earth sets forth Thy works, earth-dwellers all be Thy wonders.
 So be seas also, great seas, full fraught with abundant
 Swarms of creeping things, great, small : there ships be a-
 sailing,
 And there lies tumbling that monstrous huge leviathan.
 All these beg their food, and all these on Thee be waiting.¹

Fraunce also wrote in hexameters the story of Christ's life and death, in a poem called *Emmanuel*.

Henry Lok (Loke or Locke) has left some three or four hundred *Sonnets of Christian Passions*, etc., published in 1593-7. Although, from a poetical point of

¹ *Certaine Psalmes*, etc., by Abraham Fraunce, in Grosart's *Miscellanies*, vol. iii. : 'Night enlightning moone for certaine tymes is apoynted.'

view, they are not of a very high order, there are some which are much above the level of the rest, and the varied and deep religious feeling which throbs in them is sufficient of itself to give them an honourable place in the religious poetry of their age. Henry Lok was the son of a London merchant, and was employed in the service of the State in various secret and perilous missions on the European continent and in the East. He appears to have passed through a good deal of trouble, and, in his later years, to have fallen into embarrassment and poverty. I quote three of the *Sonnets* :

SONNET XIV. P. 1.

Behold, O Lord, a tree by highway side
 Unfruitful yet of any good for Thee.
 In highway side as yet I do abide,
 Where passers to Jerusalem I see :
 Though Summer grow, I cannot fruitful be,
 Unplanted by Thy grace in garden Thine :
 I do confess I am a wild fig-tree
 For want of moisture which am like to pine.
 Unto my prayers, Lord, do Thou incline ;
 Remove me home into Thy garden fair.
 Let me behold the face of Thy sunshine,
 Which may my withered leaves with life repair :
 So may'st Thou taste a fruit of wholesome kind,
 And leave a mark of mercy great behind.¹

SONNET XXXV. P. 2.

O heavenly Love, with God thou dwell'st for aye.
 Thou passest faith and hope in dignity ;
 Thou keep'st the law, thy feet step not awry,
 In all men's danger thou the surest stay ;
 To our request thou never sayest nay.
 Ne wrath, ne envy, move thee e'er a whit,
 Thou multitude of sins in man dost quit,
 Thou Law and Gospel both doth over-sway.

¹ *Sundrie Sonnets of Christian Passions*, by Henry Lok, in Grosart's ed. of *Fuller's Miscellanies* :

Behold, O Lord, a tree by high way side,
 Unfrutefull yet of any good for Thee.

Thou dost with God aloft in honour sit :
 With God in counsel thou art always by ;
 Thou causest Christ man's weakness to supply,
 And makest us receive the fruit of it.
 And every whit of goodness that we have
 Love made Him send, who love therefore doth crave.¹

SONNET LXIX. P. II.

Why should he faint, or think his burden great,
 That hath a partner to support the same ?
 Why coward-like should he his honour shame,
 That hath a champion ready at intreat,
 Who can and doth death and confusion threat
 To all impediments which stop our way ?
 On whom repose our trust we boldly may,
 He being judge, and placed in mercy's seat ?
 He sees our thoughts, and knows what we would say
 He doth our mouth to fit petition frame ;
 He hides our errors if our faith be lame,
 And He Himself doth also for us pray.
 We need but stay, and trust to His good will,
 And we are sure He will our wants fulfil.²

Robert Southwell (1561-95) is well known by name as one of the Jesuit Fathers who were cruelly executed in the reign of Elizabeth. His long imprisonment, his tortures, and ultimate death were justified to the Protestants of that age on political grounds. But, at all events, he endured all his sufferings in the true spirit of a Christian martyr. He was the son of an honourable Nottinghamshire family. He seems to have been a thoroughly good man, and is spoken in a letter of 1588 as 'at once prudent, pious, meek, and exceedingly winning.' The example of Ignatius Loyola, who had died only four or five years before his birth, had filled him with a passionate fervour of religion. It was at his own earnest request that he was sent on a religious mission to England, at just the time when English feeling was exasperated to its utmost pitch against Roman Catholics, and when a detected Jesuit was almost certain to incur the penalties of high treason.

¹ *Sundrie Sonnets*, etc., by Henry Lok : O heavenly love, with God
 Thou dwelst for aye.

² *Id.* : 'Why should he faint or thinke his burden great ?'

Some of his poems were written in prison, but most of them at an earlier date. The longest of them, *St. Peter's Complaint*,—a soliloquy expressive of the Apostle's deep contrition at having denied his Lord—cannot exactly be said to be either morbid or unnatural, but is infinitely less touching and suggestive than the three words which in Scripture tell of the repentance. Yet there are some fine verses in the poem, this especially :

Love, where I loved, was due, and best deserved ;
 No love could aim at more love-worthy mark ;
 No love more loved than mine of Him I served ;
 Large use He gave, a flame for every spark.
 This love I lost, this loss a life must rue ;
 Yea, life is short to pay the ruth I owe.¹

The following is from a hymn to Christ ;

I praise Him most, I love Him best, all praise and love is
 His ;
 While Him I love, in Him I live, and cannot live amiss.
 Love's sweetest mark, laud's highest theme, man's most de-
 sirèd light,
 To love Him life, to leave Him death, to live in Him delight.
 He mine by gift, I His by debt, thus each to other due,
 First friend He was, best friend He is, all times will try Him
 true.
 His knowledge rules, His strength defends, His love doth
 cherish all ;
 His birth our joy, His life our light, His death our end of
 thrall.²

From CONTENT AND RICH.

I dwell in Grace's Court,
 Enrich'd with Virtue's rights ;
 Faith guides my wit ; love leads my will,
 Hope all my mind delights.

My conscience is my crown,
 Contented thoughts my rest ;
 My heart is happy in itself,
 My bliss is in my breast.

¹ *Robert Southwell's Complete Poems ; Saint Peter's Complaint*, ed. by Grosart, 1872 ; stanza lxxxiv. p. 32.

² *Id.* p. 70.

Enough, I reckon wealth :
 A mean, the surest lot,
 That lies too high for base contempt,
 Too low for envy's shot.
 My wishes are but few,
 All easy to fulfil ;
 I make the limits of my power
 The bounds unto my will.
 I feel no care of coin,
 Well-doing is my wealth ;
 My mind to me an empire is,
 While grace affordeth health.
 I clip high-climbing thoughts,
 The wings of swelling pride ;
 Their fall is worst, that from the height
 Of greatest honour slide.
 Since sails of largest size
 The storm doth soonest tear,
 I bear so low and small a sail
 As freeth me from fear.
 No change of fortune's calms
 Can cast my comforts down ;
 When fortune smiles, I smile to think
 How quickly she will frown.
 And when in froward mood
 She proves an angry foe,
 Small gain I found to let her come,
 Small loss to let her go.¹

From LIFE'S DEATH, LOVE'S LIFE.

Who lives in love, loves least to live,
 And long delays doth rue,
 If Him he love, by whom he lives,
 To whom all love is due ;
 Who for our sakes did choose to live,
 And was content to die ;
 Who loved our love more than His life,
 And love with life did buy.
 Let us in life, yea, with our life,
 Requite His living love ;
 For best we live when least we live
 If love our life remove.

¹ *Southwell's Complete Poems*, ed. by Grosart, p. 72.

Life out of earth hath no abode,
 In earth love hath no place ;
 Love settled hath her joys in heaven,
 In earth life all her grace.
 Mourn therefore no true lover's death ;
 Life only Him annoys.
 And when he taketh leave of life
 Then love begins his joys.¹

From LOSS OR DELAY.

Shun delays, they breed remorse ;
 Take thy time while time doth serve thee ;
 Creeping snails have weakest force,
 Fly their fault lest thou repent thee.
 Good is best when soonest wrought,
 Linger'd labours come to nought.
 Hoist up sail while gale doth last,
 Tide and wind stay no man's pleasure ;
 Seek not time when time is past,
 Sober speed is wisdom's leisure.
 After-wits are dearly bought,
 Let thy fore-wit guide thy thought.
 Time wears all his locks before,
 Take thy hold upon his forehead ;
 When he flies he turns no more,
 And behind his scalp is naked.
 Works adjourn'd have many stays,
 Long demurs breed new delays.
 Seek thy salve while sore is green,
 Fester'd wounds ask deeper lancing ;
 After-cures are seldom seen,
 Often sought, scarce ever chancing ;
 Time and place give best advice ;
 Out of season, out of price.²

A PREPARATIVE TO PRAYER.

When thou dost talk with God,—by prayer I mean,—
 Lift up pure hands, lay down all lust's desires :
 Fix thoughts on heaven, present a conscience clean :
 Such holy balm to mercy's throne aspires.
 Confess faults' guilt, crave pardon for thy sin ;
 Tread holy paths, call grace to guide therein.³

¹ *Southwell's Complete Poems*, ed. by Grosart, p. 86.

² *Id.* 75.

³ *Id.* 185.

Some pleasing verses, *In Praise of a Good Minde*, quite in the spirit of the best Elizabethan writers, were written about 1590, by Rychard Denys. I quote some lines from the beginning of the poem :

What thing of greater price
On earth may any find,
What gold or riches may compare
With virtue of the mind ?
The mind doth still possess
In man a kingly place,
And guides the steps of mortal wights,
And rules in every case.

Who that can rule his mind
And thinks all pleasures vain,
How great a Lord is he in thought,
How princely doth he reign !
No worldly wealth can move
His mind sin to obey,
Nor force compel him once to yield
Unto his own decay.¹

Barnaby Barnes, son of a Bishop of Durham, was a soldier of Queen Elizabeth. In 1591 he held command in France under the Earl of Essex. His *Divine Centurie of Spirituale Sonnets* was published in 1595, with a preface which breathes a very fervid spirit of devotion. The verses themselves are by no means wanting in power of expression and in exaltation of feeling. The following are two of the sonnets :—

SONNET XXXVII.

O my dear God ! how shall my voice prevail ?
How shall my tongue give utterance to my mind ?
Where shall my thankful heart free passage find ?
My slender voice, tongue feeble, and heart frail,
Before they can give condign praise, will fail.
I cannot celebrate in their due kind
Thy glories numberless, which angels find
E'en to surmount all angels' best traváil.

¹ *Pieces of Ancient Poetry from Unpublished Manuscripts and Scarce Books*, by N. G., Bristol (1814), p. 45.

O my dear God ! my comfort and soláce :
 My swift soul flies, with my divine thoughts' wings,
 E'en to Thy bosom. Oh ! let it embrace
 And triumph in my sweet salvation's springs :
 For I believe Thou wilt not me forsake,
 Who, for me, didst Thy Son a martyr make.

SONNET XXXVIII.

Gracious, Divine, and most Omnipotent !
 Receive Thy servant's talent in good part,
 Who hid it not, but willing did convert
 It to best use he could, when it was lent :
 The sum, though slender, yet not all mispent,
 Receive, dear God of grace ! from cheerful heart
 Of him, that knows how merciful Thou art,
 And with what grace to contrite sinners lent.
 I know my fault, I did not as I should ;
 My sinful flesh against my soul rebell'd ;
 But since I did endeavour what I could,
 Let not my little nothing be withheld
 From Thy rich treasures of endless grace,
 But, for Thy sake, let it procure a place.¹

Henry Constable, of St. John's College, Cambridge, was a Roman Catholic, who wrote in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The following are a few lines from one of the *Spirituell Sonnettes to the Honour of God and His Sayntes*, by H. C. The initials are almost certainly his :

No marvel though Thy birth made angels sing,
 And angels' ditties shepherds' pipes awake,
 And kings, like shepherds, humbled for Thy sake,
 Kneel at Thy feet, and gifts of homage bring :
 For heaven and earth, the high and low estate,
 As partners of Thy birth make equal claim.²

William Hunnis, 'one of the gentlemen of her Majestie's honourable Chappel, and Maister to the Children of the same,' published in 1597 *Seven Sobs of a Sorrowful Soule for Sinne, being David's Peenitentiall Psalmes*

¹ *Poems of Barnabe Barnes : A Divine Centurie*, etc. (Grosart), 1875, p. 179 : 'O my deare God ! how shall my voice prevaile ?'

² *Spiritual Sonnettes*, p. 4 ; *Heliconia*, ii. :

No mervayle, though thy byrth mayd angells synge,
 And angell's dyttyes shepheyrd's pypes awake.

framed into familiar Prayers. They are paraphrased very freely. Thus, part of the 38th Psalm is made a text for the following :—

Sin may well be compared
 Unto a serpent vile,
 Which with his body, head, and tail,
 Doth many one beguile.
 For where the serpent's head
 To enter doth begin,
 Thereat the body with the tail
 Apace comes sliding in.
 The motions first of sin
 Unto the head apply ;
 And when the heart consents thereto,
 Then is the body nigh ;
 The fact once being done,
 Then is the serpent's tail
 With head and body entered in,
 Where he must needs prevail.¹

The following is from his *Handful of Honisuckles—
 Short and Pithie Prayers Gathered by him* :—

O Jesu dear, do Thou with me
 Even as Thy will shall please ;
 Sweet Jesu, put me where Thou wilt
 To suffer pain or ease.

Jesus, behold, I am but Thine
 Be I or good or ill ;
 Yet by Thy grace I ready am
 Thy pleasure to fulfil.

Jesu, I am Thy workmanship !
 Most blessed mayst Thou be ;
 Sweet Jesu, for Thy mercy's sake
 Have mercy now on me.²

In *England's Helicon*, a delightful collection of pastoral verse, published in 1600, is a *Christmas Carol* by Edward Bolton, a Roman Catholic, a scholar and antiquary of repute, attached to the household of the Duke of Buckingham. It is very melodious, and its

¹ *Seven Penitential Sobs*, by W. Hunnis, etc., 1597 : 'Sinne may wel be comparde.'

² *A Handful of Honisuckles*, by William Hunnis, 1597.

Arcadian tone and delicate conceits of language were quite in accordance with the taste of that age :

Sweet music, sweeter far
 Than any song is sweet :
 Sweet music, heavenly rare,
 Mine ears (O peers) doth greet.
 Yon gentle flocks, whose fleeces, pearl'd with dew,
 Resemble heaven, whom golden drops make bright,—
 Listen, O listen, now ;—O not to you
 Our pipes make sport to shorten weary night :—
 But voices most divine
 Make blissful harmony ;
 Voices that seem to shine,
 For what else clears the sky ?
 Tunes can we hear, but not the singers see ;
 The tunes divine and so the singers be.
 Lo how the firmament
 Within an azure fold
 The flock of stars hath pent,
 That we them might behold !
 Yet from their beams proceedeth not this light,
 Nor can their crystals such reflection give.
 What then doth make the element so bright ?
 The heavens are come down upon earth to live.
 But hearken to the song :
 Glory to glory's King,
 And peace all men among,
 These choristers do sing—
 Angels they are, as also, shepherds, He,
 Whom, in our fear, we do admire to see.
 ' Let not amazement blind
 Your souls,' said he, ' annoy :
 To you and all mankind
 My message bringeth joy.'
 For, lo ! the world's great Shepherd now is born,
 A blessed Babe, an infant full of power ;
 After long night uprisen is the morn
 Renowing Bethlehem in the Saviour.
 Sprung is the perfect day,
 To prophets seen afar ;
 Sprung is the mirthful May
 Which winter cannot mar.
 In David's city doth this Sun appear,
 Clouded in flesh ;—yet, shepherds, sit we here !¹

¹ *England's Helicon ; The Shepheard's Song, a Caroll or Himne for Christmas*, p. 147 : ' Sweet musicke, sweeter farre.'

Samuel Rowlands published, in 1598, a series of poems on the Passion of our Lord. They are not in any way remarkable; but, for the sake of the thought expressed in them, I quote a stanza on the name 'friend,' as addressed to the traitor Judas:—

To call thee friend, it doth thus much betoken,
 No cause in me hath cancelled love's desire,
 But thy revolting hath our friendship broken;
 Unaltered I remain the same entire:
 If thou, with David, 'I have sinned,' couldst say,
 His answer thine—'Thy sin is done away.'¹

The following verses from his *Highway to Mount Calvarie* stand on a higher level of merit than most of his poems:—

Follow their steps in tears,
 And with those women mourn,
 But not for Christ; weep for thyself,
 And Christ will grace return.

Join thou unto the Cross;
 Bear it of love's desire!
 Do not as Cyrenæus did,
 That took it up for hire.

It is a grateful deed,
 If willing underta'en;
 But if temptation set awork,
 The labour's done in vain.

The voluntary death
 That Christ did die for thee,
 Gives life to none but such as joy
 Cross-bearing friends to be.

Up to Mount Calvary,
 If thou desire to go;
 Then take thy cross and follow Christ,
 Thou canst not miss it so.

When thou art there arrived,
 His glorious wounds to see,
 Say, but as faithful as the thief,
 'O Lord, remember me.'²

¹ *S. Rowlands' Betraying of Christ*, etc., 1598; Reprinted for the Hunterian Society, No. xxix.

² From Mrs. E. Charles' *Voice of Christian Life and Song*, 1873, p. 312.

Among Rowlands' numerous productions are a number of *Bell-man's Sounds and Cries, to put us in mind of our Mortality*. Here are two of them :—

Remember, man, thou art but dust ;
There is none alive but die he must.
To-day a man, to-morrow none,
So soon our life is past and gone.
Man's life is like a wither'd flower,
Alive and dead all in an hour.
Leave off thy sins, therefore, in time,
And Christ will rid thee of thy crime.

Arise from sin, awake from sleep ;
The earth doth mourn, the heavens weep ;
The winds and seas distempered bin,
And all by reason of man's sin ;
Wherefore arise, lay sleep aside,
And call on God to be your guide.
From raging sword and arrow's flight,
And from the terrors of the night ;
From fire's flame, from sin and sorrow,
God bless you all ; and so, Good-morrow !¹

The following stanza, on the *Soul of Man*, is by Gervase Markham (1566-1637), a soldier of fortune, a good linguist, and a writer of works of agriculture and arboriculture. His *Teares of the Beloved ; or The Lamentation of St. John*, was published in 1600.

Fly forth, my soul ; for sure this Word divine
Hath power on thee to call thee back again ;
Unseen thou art, my body doth thee shrine,
Bodiless and immortal, subject to joy or pain :
To none more like than to that hidden grace
The Godhead hath, which Satan would deface.²

Samuel Nicholson, of whom little is known, except that he was a Master of Arts, wrote *Acolastus his After-Witte*, at the end of the sixteenth century. The following are a few stanzas from it :—

¹ *S. Rowlands' Heaven's Glory, etc.*, 1628 ; Hunterian Society, No. xxxvii.

² *The Teares of the Beloved*, by Gervase Markham ; ed. by Grosart, 1871, p. 38.

Misguided heart, made alien from the form
 Of thy pure Maker's glorious creation ;
 Coward, why didst thou yield to Fancy's storm,
 And stoop to Lust, that foul abomination ?
 Had'st thou, with Reason's bit, checked raging Will,
 A small foresight might have forestalled this ill.

O where was Prayer, the Soul's Ambassador,
 To muster heavenly troops of powerful aid,
 When Sin and Hell first laboured to deflower
 Thy body's Temple, God's unspotted maid ?
 Christ bids thee knock for help, and thou shalt have it ;
 Then let him helpless die that will not crave it.

Thou should'st have summoned Hope and Charity,
 Mount-moving Faith, hot Zeal, and perfect Love,
 Free-given Grace, true Courage, Constancy,
 With such like gifts descending from above.
 The smallest handful of this holy band
 Had kept the dev'l from seizing on thy Soul.

Look, as the chaff dispersed before the wind,
 Or, as the dew exhaléd by the sun,
 Or, as a dream which, waking, none can find,
 Or, as a thought, ended ere well begun ;
 So fancies die, so soon we stifle evil,
 If we resist the motives of the devil.

O heartless heart, false slave to false delight,
 Why didst thou tremble ere the trumpet sounded,
 Yielding thyself to sin before the fight,
 And dastardly depart the field unwounded ?
 When guides misguide themselves, the simple sort,
 By their ill-sample, render up the fort.¹

The following lines I take from Professor Palgrave's
Treasury of Sacred Song. They occur as prefatory to
 a Bible of 1594 :—

Here is the Spring where waters flow
 To quench our heat of sin ;
 Here is the tree where truth doth grow
 To lead our lives therein ;
 Here is the Judge that stints [stays] the strife
 When men's devices fail :
 Here is the Bread that feeds the life
 Which death can not assail.

¹ *Sam. Nicholson, M.A. : Acolastus his After-Witte, 1600, ed. by Grosart, 1876 : ' Misguided heart, made alyen from the forme.'*

The tidings of salvation dear
Comes to our ears from hence ;
The fortress of our faith is here,
The shield of our defence.

Then be not like the hog that hath
A pearl at his desire,
And takes more pleasure in the trough
And wallowing in the mire.

Read not this book in any case
But with a single eye ;
Read not, but first desire God's grace,
To understand thereby.

Pray still in faith with this respect
To fructify therein ;
That knowledge may bring this effect,
To mortify thy sin.

Then happy thou in all thy life,
Whatso to thee befalls ;
Yea, doubly happy shalt thou be
When God by death thee calls.

Among the many men of mark who adorned Queen Elizabeth's Court, Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554-1628), was one of the most remarkable. Kinsman to Sir Philip Sydney, his school friend at Shrewsbury, his compeer in all chivalrous exercises, sharing with him his eager love for adventure, imbued like him with a deep vein of poetical thought, he was his bosom friend through life, and mourned his premature death with passionate and lasting grief. He was held in much honour by Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I., and, after holding several important posts of trust, and serving for Warwickshire in the House of Commons, he was made in 1614 Chancellor of the Exchequer and Privy Councillor. He received the title of Lord Brooke in 1620. His was a pure and noble life. His poems, written in the intervals of active employment, were not published till after his death, and their chronology is uncertain. It is certain that some of them were not written till after the death of Elizabeth. If it did not seem natural that mention of him should be not far removed from that of Sir Philip Sydney, his poems might be considered as belonging almost more properly to the first part of the

seventeenth than to the closing years of the sixteenth century.

His poetical writings are by no means of an ordinary kind. They are far from being easy reading. But they contain so much profound thought, that the careful reader of them, however baffled and puzzled he may often be, will not rashly pronounce that the difficulties he meets with do not often rise from intricacy of thought, rather than of language. Still, obscurity is no merit either in poets of our own day or in those of a preceding age. Language may have its limitations; but a tolerable master of it should not often find it impossible to express in lucid words the subtler workings of his mind. In Lord Brooke's poems the thought is generally better than the composition. Some of his verses, especially those in the series entitled *Cælica*, show that he was by no means without the power of writing melodiously, but his style is often cumbrous and perplexed; so much so, that a hasty reader will most certainly pass upon them a judgment far less favourable than they deserve.

In quoting a few of the verses, which are infused most definitely with the religious tone which more or less pervades them generally, I shall avoid the obscurer passages. I first give the concluding sonnet of the *Cælica*, a fervent, but almost despairing, aspiration for the purging of the world's wickedness and the coming of a purer Kingdom of God:

Sion lies waste, and Thy Jerusalem,
 O Lord, is fallen to utter desolation;
 Against Thy prophets and Thy holy men
 The sin hath wrought a fatal combination,
 Profaned Thy name, Thy worship overthrown
 And made Thee, Living Lord, a God unknown,
 Thy powerful laws, Thy wonders of creation,
 Thy word incarnate, glorious heaven, dark hell,
 Lie shadowed under man's degeneration;
 Thy Christ still crucified for doing well;
 Impiety, O Lord, sits on Thy throne,
 Which makes Thee, living Lord, a God unknown.

.

Yet unto Thee, Lord—mirror of transgression—

We, who for earthly idols have forsaken
Thy heavenly image, sinless, pure impression,

And so in nets of vanity lie taken,
All desolate, implore that to Thine own,
Lord, Thou no longer live a God unknown.

Yet, Lord, let Israel's plagues not be eternal,

Nor sin for ever cloud Thy sacred mountains,
Nor with false flames spiritual but eternal

Dry up Thy mercy's ever springing fountains ;
Rather, sweet Jesu, fill up time, and come
To yield the sin her everlasting doom.¹

Of the limitations of knowledge, and of the illimitable yearnings of the human mind which can only find satisfaction in the infinity of God :—

And as the mind, in her vast comprehension,
Contains more worlds than all the world can find ;
So knowledge doth itself far more extend
Than all the minds of men can comprehend.

A climbing height it is without a head,
Depth without bottom, way without an end,
A circle with no line environéd,

Not comprehended, all it comprehends ;
Worth infinite, yet satisfies no mind
Till it that infinite of the Godhead find.²

Of the Spirit of God in man :—

What is the chain which draws us back again,

And lifts mankind unto his first creation ?

—Nothing in him his own heart can restrain ;

His reason lives a captive to temptation ;

Example is corrupt, precepts are mixed ;

All fleshly knowledge frail and never fixed.—

It is a light, a gift, a grace inspired,

A spark of power, a goodness of the Good ;

Desire in him, that never is desired ;³

An unity where desolation stood ;

In us, not of us, a spirit not of earth,

Fashioning the mortal to immortal birth.⁴

¹ *Lord Brooke's Works : Caelica*, Sonnet cx., ed. by Grosart, iii. p. 142 :
'Syon lyes waste, and Thy Ierusalem.'

² *Id. : Of Humane Learning*, 1-2, vol. ii. 5.

³ Which, I suppose, means 'a longing desire in man which is never asked in vain,' 'desired' being used in the ancient sense of 'missed.'

⁴ *Id. : Of Religion*, 2-3, vol. i. 239.

Of Divine wisdom being hidden to a presumptuous intellect:—

Then by affecting power, we cannot know Him ;
 By knowing all things else, we know Him less ;
 Nature contains Him not ; art cannot show Him ;
 Opinions, idols, and not God express.
 Without, in power, we see Him everywhere ;
 Within, we rest not till we find Him there.

Then, man, rest on this feeling from above :
 Plant thou thy faith on this celestial way ;
 The world is made for use ; God is for love ;
 Sorrow for sin : knowledge but to obey ;
 Fear and temptation to refine and prove ;
 The heaven for joy. Desire thou that it may
 Find peace in endless, boundless, heavenly things ;
 Place it elsewhere, it desolation brings.²

In the last year of the sixteenth century, Sir John Davies (1570-1626) published his poem on the immortality of the soul, under the title *Nosce Teipsum*. It was the first philosophical poem which had hitherto been produced in England, and immediately attracted much attention. He had previously been rather under a cloud, having been expelled from the Middle Temple, whither he had passed from Queen's College, Oxford, on account of a violent quarrel at dinner-time in the common hall. He was now restored to his place as barrister, became a most active and useful member of the House of Commons, was sent as Solicitor-General to Ireland, and won a lasting name there both by his administration and by his valuable writings on the condition of that country. He was knighted, and was chosen Speaker of the First House of Commons in Ireland. He returned to England in 1620, and six years after, just before his sudden death by apoplexy, was appointed Lord Chief Justice of England.

It would ill become a writer of this age to find fault with a conjunction of poetry and philosophic reasonings. We owe a debt of gratitude to some of our best

¹ *Lord Brooke's Works : Of Religion*, ed. by Grosart, vol. i. 7.

² *Id.* 114.

poets for the deep and meditative thought which they have bestowed upon religious subjects, and upon the spiritual aspirations of the human soul. But it must be acknowledged that Sir John Davies's poem is rather too much of an argument trammelled by verse, and that consequently it is a little tedious. Some of its finest passages carry with them a reminiscence of Cicero, and in doing so are apt to remind the reader of them that their poetical form does not compare favourably with the noble prose of the Latin author. Still it is a poem of great merit, and inaugurated in a very worthy manner a fresh field for religious poetry in England. There is no consecutive passage in it better adapted for quotation than the concluding section of it:—

O ignorant poor man ! what dost thou bear
Lock'd up within the casket of thy breast ?
What jewels and what riches hast thou there !
What heavenly treasure in so weak a chest !

Think of her worth, and think that God did mean
This worthy mind should worthy things embrace ;
Blot not her beauties with thy thoughts unclean,
Nor her dishonour with thy passion base.

Kill not her quickening power with surfeitings ;
Nor mar her sense with sensuality ;
Cast not away her wit on idle things ;
Make not her free-will slave to vanity.

And when thou think'st of her eternity,
Think not that death against her nature is ;
Think it a birth, and when thou go'st to die,
Sing like a swan, as if thou went to bliss.

And if thou, like a child, didst fear before
Being in the dark, where thou didst nothing see,
Now I have brought thee torchlight, fear no more ;
Now, when thou diest, thou canst not hoodwink'd be.

And thou, my soul, which turn'd with curious eye
To view the beams of thine own form divine,
Know, that thou canst know nothing perfectly,
While thou art clouded with this flesh of mine.

Take heed of overweening, and compare
Thy peacock'd feet with thy gay peacock's train ;
Study the best and highest things that are,
But of thyself an humble thought retain.

Cast down thyself, and only strive to raise
 The glory of thy Maker's sacred name :
 Use all thy powers, that blessed Power to praise
 Which gave thee power to be, and use the same.¹

The following is from John Danyel's *Songs for the Lute and Viol* (1600):

If I could shut the gate against my thoughts,
 And keep out sorrow from this room within,
 Or memory could cancel all the notes
 Of my misdeeds, and I unthink my sin ;
 How free, how clear, how clean my soul should lie,
 Discharged of such a loathsome company !

But, O my Saviour, who my refuge art,
 Let Thy dear mercies stand 'twixt them and me,
 And be the wall to separate my heart,
 So that I may at length repose me free ;
 That peace, and joy and rest may be within,
 And I remain divided from my sin.²

The life of Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618) is so intimately associated with the memories of Queen Elizabeth's reign, that although his *Pilgrimage* was, in all likelihood, not written in the sixteenth century, it may be mentioned here. His long imprisonment began in 1603. It was most likely at this time, when he was in daily expectation of death, that he wrote these verses. He had long been accustomed to look death in the face bravely and fearlessly, yet with a tinge of sadness in his reflections upon it. And now, in the stillness of his dungeon, he could almost toy with the probability of execution on the morrow, and clothe a religious hope in gay hues of fancy through which runs a scarcely perceptible thread of melancholy:—

Give me my scallop shell of quiet,
 My staff of faith to walk upon,
 My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
 My bottle of salvation,
 My gown of glory, hope's true gage ;
 And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.

¹ *Sir John Davies's Nosce Teipsum*, sect. xxxiv, Anderson's B. Poets, ii.

² Bullen's *More Songs from Elizabethan Song-Books*, 1888, p. 52.

Blood must be my body's balmer ;
No other balm will there be given ;
Whilst my soul, like quiet palmer,
Travelleth toward the land of heaven ;
Over the silver mountains
Where spring the nectar fountains :
 There will I kiss
 The bowl of bliss,
And drink mine everlasting fill
Upon every milken hill.
My soul will be a-dry before ;
But after it will thirst no more.
Then by that happy blissful day
 More peaceful pilgrims I shall see
That have cast off their rags of clay,
And walk apparelled fresh like me.
 I'll take them first
 To quench their thirst
And taste of nectar suckets
 At those clear wells
 Where sweetness dwells
Drawn up by saints in crystal buckets.

And when our bottles and all we
Are filled with immortality,
Then the blessed paths we'll travel
Strew'd with rubies thick as gravel ;
Ceilings of diamonds, sapphire floors,
High walls of coral, and pearly bowers.
From thence to heaven's bribeless hall
Where no corrupted voices brawl ;
No conscience molten into gold,
No forged accuser bought or sold,
No cause deferred, no vain spent journey,
For there Christ is the King's Attorney,
Who pleads for all without degrees,
And He hath angels, but no fees.
And when the grand twelve million jury
Of our sins, with direful fury,
Against our souls black verdicts give,
Christ pleads His death and then we live.

Be thou my speaker, taintless pleader,
Unblotted lawyer, true proceeder !
Thou givest salvation even for alms,
Not with a bribed lawyer's palms.
And this is mine eternal plea
To Him that made heaven, earth, and sea,

That since my flesh must die so soon,
 And want a head to dine next noon,—
 Just at the stroke when my veins start and spread,
 Set on my soul an everlasting head !
 Then am I ready, like a palmer fit,
 To tread those blest paths which before I writ.

Sir Walter was released in 1614, and went, under a Royal Commission, to Guiana, but on his return, in 1618, was again thrown into the Tower, and capital sentence was quickly passed. The following verses, written, it is said, the night before his death, were found in his Bible :—

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.

To the latter part of the sixteenth century belongs a very familiar hymn, which in the next two centuries passed through many variations. The original of *Jerusalem, my Happy Home*, is in a quarto volume, dating probably from about 1616, and entitled *A Song by F. B. P.* The hymn itself is considered to be of Queen Elizabeth's time. Fourteen out of the twenty-six stanzas will be found in Lord Selborne's *Book of Praise*. I extract a few verses :—

Jerusalem, my happy home,
 When shall I come to thee ?
 When shall my sorrows have an end—
 Thy joys when shall I see ?

O happy harbour of the saints !
 O sweet and pleasant soil !
 In thee no sorrow may be found,
 No grief, no care, no toil.

There lust and lucre cannot dwell,
 There envy bears no sway ;
 There is no hunger, heat, nor cold,
 But pleasure every way.

Thy saints are crown'd with glory great ;
 They see God face to face ;
 They triumph still, they still rejoice,
 Most happy is their case.

Quite through the streets with silver sound
 The flood of Life doth flow ;
 Upon whose banks on every side
 The wood of Life doth grow.

Our sweet is mix'd with bitter gall,
 Our pleasure is but pain,
 Our joys scarce last the looking on,
 Our sorrows still remain.

Ah, my sweet home, Jerusalem,
 Would God I were in thee !
 Would God my woes were at an end,
 Thy joys that I might see !¹

Two very favourite old carols, the history of which is not known, may perhaps date from the sixteenth century. One is that beginning—'God rest you, merry gentlemen ;' the other, 'A virgin most pure, as the prophets do tell.'

The psalmody of the Reformed Church began in England in Henry the Eighth's time. About 1539 Miles Coverdale published versions of thirteen of the Psalms, together with *Certain Spiritual Songs*, many of which are borrowed from the German. He intended them not only 'for the comfort and consolation of such as love to rejoice in God and His Word,' but also with a hope of supplanting foolish songs among the young. On the title-page he addresses his book in rhyme, and after commending it first to the lover of God's Word, he continues—

Go, lytle Boke, amongé men's chyl dren,
 And get thé to theyr companye,
 Teach them to syngé the Commaundements ten
 And other Ballettes of God's glorye :
 Be not ashamed ; I warrande thé,
 Thogh thou be rude in songe and ryme,
 Thou shalt to youth some occasion be
 In godly sports to pass theyr tyme.

¹ Roundell Palmer's *Book of Praise*, p. 120, and his note, p. 492.

They do not, however, appear to have gained much circulation. They certainly did not deserve it. His versions of the Psalms¹ have no pretension to poetical expression, and not much to either rhyme or measure. It must have been very difficult to sing a verse like this :—

The waves of waters had wrapped us in ;
 Our soul had gone under the flood :
 The deep waters of these proud men
 Had run our souls over where they stood.
 The Lord be praised every hour,
 That would not suffer them us to devour,
 Nor in their teeth to suck our blood.

Thomas Sternhold, Groom of the King's Chamber, published nineteen psalms in 1549, and dedicated them to Edward the Sixth. In 1551 he increased them to thirty-seven. Others were added, after Sternhold's death, by John Hopkins, and the collection was further added to by the English exiles of Geneva.² It was finally completed, printed with the tunes, and 'allowed' in churches, in 1562. In Scotland it was very generally adopted, with some alterations, after 1564. Among other versions of the Psalms published in England for popular use in the sixteenth century may be mentioned one by John Daye, in 1563, one by John Bull in 1579, and another by Thomas Este in 1592. In England, as in Scotland and in Reformed Churches abroad, psalm-singing became, as the century advanced, a powerful religious agent. Bishop Jewell said, in one of his letters, that at St. Paul's Cross, after service, you might sometimes see six thousand persons singing them.³

The *Gude and Godlie Ballates*, otherwise entitled *A Compendious Book of Psalms and Spiritual Songs*, appear to have been first published in 1570, in Scotland. The

¹ They may be found in the edition of Coverdale's works, published by the Parker Society.

² D. Laing's Preface to his edition of *The Gude and Godlie Ballates*, p. xxx., to which I am also indebted for other information on sixteenth century psalmody.

³ *Id.* p. xxxii.

compilers and, to some extent, the authors, of it are supposed to have been John and Robert Wedderburn. John was a priest at Dundee, who adopted the Reformed faith. He then fled to Germany, 'heard Luther and Melancthon, and became very fervent and zealous.' He returned to his country in 1542, but had to fly from Cardinal Beaton into England. His younger brother Robert was Vicar of Dundee, and also had to take refuge abroad.¹ The *Book of Godly Ballads* was mainly written abroad, and was largely made up of translations from the psalms and hymns of Germany, many of which were, in their turn, old Latin hymns, translated and adapted. Among the renderings from the German comes Luther's well-known Christmas song, *Von Himmel hoch da komm ich her*, familiar to English readers in Miss Winkworth's translation, *From heaven above to earth I come*. In Wedderburn's version it begins :—

I come from heaven to tell
The best Nowell that e'er befell :
To you these tidings true I bring,
And I will of them say and sing.

The version of the Psalms, though very superior to Coverdale's, is not remarkable. The most interesting part of the book is the third section of it, which mainly consists of popular songs and ballads 'changed to godly purposes.' Throughout the sixteenth century this was evidently a frequent practice, and was by no means confined, as is sometimes supposed, to particular Protestant churches. An ancient collection of hymns, printed at Venice in 1512, shows that it was then a general custom in Italy to sing pious hymns to profane and popular melodies.² So also a Roman Catholic version of the Psalms in Flemish verse, printed in 1540, has the first line of a ballad printed at the head of every Psalm. It was, however, a much more common usage among the Protestant Churches of Holland, France,

¹ M'Crie's *Life of Knox*, quoted in Mr. D. Laing's Preface.

² Roscoe's *Lorenzo de Medici*, quoted in Mr. D. Laing's Preface.

and Switzerland. Coverdale and others introduced the custom into England; and the same was done by Wedderburn and, a little later, by Youll in Scotland.

We are used in certain hymn-books of our own days, especially in those of a more or less revivalist tone, to jingles and choruses, which undoubtedly delight the ears of the majority of those congregations to which they are particularly addressed, but which seem sadly deficient in dignity, if not in reverence, to more cultivated and self-restrained minds. How acceptable to a coloured congregation in Carolina would be the hymn of which I quote the first verses, and with what gusto it would be sung!—

Quho [who] is at my windo? Quho, quho?
Go from my windo, go, go!
Quho callis thair, sa lyke a strangair?
Go from my windo, go!

Lord, I am heir [here], ane wretchit mortal,
That for Thy mercy dois cry and call
Unto Thé, my Lord Celestiall.
Se quho is at thy windo, quho.

How dare thow for mercy cry,
Sa lang in sin as thow dois ly?
Mercy to have thou art not worthy.
Go from my windo, go!

Nay, I call thé nocht fra my dure I wis,
Lyke any stranger that unknawin is;
Thow art my brother, and my will it is,
That in at my dure thow go.¹

It is almost more startling still to find in a collection of Godly Ballads one beginning

With huntis up, with huntis up;
It is now parfite day.

This is the beginning, not exactly of a hymn, but of a Protestant song, which goes on to tell that it is the King of men is gone a-hunting, that the Apostles are the hounds, and the Pope the fox.

¹ *Gude and Godlie Ballates*, p. 116.

But there is much that is touching in the following :—

All my hart, ay this is my sang,
 With dowbill mirth and joy amang ;
 As blyith as byrd my God to fang [lay hold upon] :
 Christ hes my hart ay.

Quha [who] hes my hart bot heuinnis King ?
 Quhilk causis me for joy to sing,
 Quhome that I love atouir [above] all thing :
 Christ hes my hart ay.

He is fair, sober, and bening [benign],
 Sweil, meik, and gentill in all thing,
 Maist worthiest to have louing :
 Christ hes my hart ay.

For vs that blissil barne [bairn] was borne ;
 For vs He was baith rent and torne ;
 For us He was crownit with thorne :
 Christ hes my hart ay.

For vs He sched His precious blude ;
 For vs He was naillit on the rude ;
 For us He mony battell stude :
 Christ hes my hart ay.

Nixt Him to lufe His Mother fair,
 With steidfast hart, for ever mair ;
 Scho bure [she bare] the byrth, fred vs from cair :
 Christ hes my hart ay.

We pray to God that sittis abufe,
 Fra Him let neuer our hartis remufe,
 Nor for na suddand worldly lufe :
 Christ hes my hart ay,

He is the lufe of luivaris [lovers] all
 He cummis on vs when we call,
 For vs he drank the bitter gall :
 Christ hes my hart ay.¹

The following also we can well imagine to have been popular, and not without reason, for its refrain rather clings on the ear. I quote the first three verses :—

All my Lufe, leif me not,
 Leif me not, leif me not ;
 All my Lufe, leif me not
 Thus myne alone.

¹ *Gude and Godlie Ballates*, p. 122.

With ane burding on my bak,
 I may not beir it I am sa waik ;
 Lufe, this burden from me tak
 Or ellis I am gone.

With sinnis I am ladin soir [sore]
 Leif me not, leif me not ;
 With sinnes I am ladin soir,
 Leif me not alone.
 I pray Thé, Lord, thairfoir
 Keip not my sinnes in stoir
 Lowse [loose] me, or I be forloir [forlorn]
 And heir my mone.

With Thy handis Thou hes me brocht,
 Leif me not, leif me not ;
 With Thy handis Thou hes me brocht,
 Leif me not alone.
 I was sauld, and thou me bocht
 With Thy blude Thow hes me coft [purchased] ;
 Now am I hidder socht
 To Thé, Lord, alone.

The following verses are a portion of a good specimen of this sort of verse. The subject is the Passion of our Saviour, who is represented as setting forth to His Mother His purposes of salvation for man. In its whole form it is a close imitation of *The Nutbrown Maid*. I extract a short passage in which the duty of man to man is spoken of, and the great hope he is to set before him :—

The poor in need
 To clothe and feed,
 Part of his rent and wage
 He must bestow ;
 Remembering how
 All came of one lynage [lineage].
 Forsaking sin
 He may me win,
 And to mine heritage
 I shall him take,
 His soul to make
 My spouse in marriage,
 For to persever
 With me for ever.

¹ *Gude and Godlie Ballates*, p. 192.

With joy she may say then,
That she hath won
A kinge's son,
And not a banished man.

Sir David Lyndesay (1490-1558) was a keen and vigorous observer of the great religious movement of his time. He was admitted early into the service of the Scottish Court, was knighted and created Lyon King of Arms, and served in several important missions to foreign powers. A Protestant by natural character, he openly espoused the cause of the Reformation in 1566. Even before that time the rising party had owed not a little to the wit and energy with which, in his voluminous verse writings, he had borne witness against the corruptions of the predominant church. The earnestness of his religious feeling is very unmistakable. His principal, as it was also his latest, work, entitled *The Monarchy*, is a long poem of 6000 lines on the rise and fall of nations. In the beginning of it, like Milton, he invokes, he says, no Muse but the Great God Himself,

He who gave sapience to Solomon,
To David grace, strength to the strong Sampson ;
and then, with a prayer to the Saviour who died for us
upon the Cross,

Wherefore I shall beseech God's excellence
To grant me grace, wisdom and eloquence,
And bathe me with those dulce and balmy strands,
Which on the Cross did speedily outspring
From His most tender feet and heavenly hands :
And grant me grace to write nor endite nothing
But His high honours and his dear loving,
Without whose help there may no good be wrought
To His pleasure, good word, or work, or thought.¹

The following are some lines on those capacities of man's spiritual nature which no mere earthly thing can satisfy. He had been speaking of the dissatisfaction of Solomon, and all his wealth and wisdom :—

¹ Sir D. Lyndesay in *The Monarchy*, Prologue, E.E.T.S. 12 : 'The quhilk gaif sapience to King Salomone.'

My son, the sooth if thou wouldst know,
 The verity I shall thee show.
 There is no worldly thing at all
 May satisfy a human soul.
 For it is so unsatiable,
 That heaven and earth may not be able
 One soul alone to make content,
 Till it see God omnipotent.
 Was never none, nor ne'er shall be
 Satiated, that sight till that he see.

There is often not a little bitterness in his invectives against the corruptions of the Church, but it is ever the things which lie at the heart of religion which are dearest to him. After a prayer expressed with a sort of fierceness of craving that God might 'make an hasty reformation on them which do tramp down the gracious word,' he concludes :

O Lord ! I mak the supplicatioun,
 Supporte our Faith, our Hope, and Charitye.²

So also when he speaks of confession. It will not, I hope, be thought inconsistent with my purpose in this work of careful avoiding controversial questions, if I quote a few lines. For it was a point on which Lyndesay held quite moderate views. He saw not harm, but good, in occasionally seeking religious counsel and advice in a spiritual trouble. He aimed his shafts against the abuses of the system :—

And mickle Latin he did mummill,
 I heard no thing but hummil bummil.
 He showed me nocht of God'es word,
 Which sharper is than any sword,
 And deep into our heart doth print
 Our sin, wherethrough we do repent.
 He put me nothing into fear
 Wherethrough I should my sin forbear ;
 He showed me not the malediction
 Of God for sin, nor the affliction,
 And in this life the great mischief,
 Ordained to punish lust and thief ;

¹ Lyndesay's Fourth Book of *The Monarchy*, 5040-9: 'My sonne, the suth gyf thow wald knaw.'

² Lyndesay's Fourth Book of *The Monarchy*, 2706-8.

Nor showed he me of hell'es pain
 That I might fear and vice refrain.
 He counselled me not to abstain,
 And lead a holy life and cleán.
 Of Christ'es blood no thing he knew,
 Nor of His promises full true,
 That save all such as will believe
 That Satan shall us never grieve ;
 He taught me not that I should trust
 The comfort of the Holy Ghost.
 He bade me not to Christ be kind [made kin to] ;
 To keep his law with heart and mind,
 And love and thank his great mercy
 From sin and hell that saved me ;
 And love my neighbour as my self ;
 Of this no thing he could me tell.

But only prescribed certain forms and penances and
 pilgrimages which only lead to harm.

To the great God omnipotent
 Confess thy sin and sore repent ;
 And trust in Christ (as writeth Paul)
 Who shed His blood to save thy soul ;
 For none can thee absolve but He,
 Nor take away thy sin from thee.
 If of good counsel thou hast need
 Or has not learned well thy creed,
 Or wicked vices reign in thee
 The which thou canst not mortifie,
 Or be in desperation
 And would have consolation,
 Then to a preacher true go, pass,
 And show thy sin and thy trespass ;
 Thou needest not to show him all,
 Nor tell thy sin both great and small,
 Which is impossible to be,
 But show the vice that troubles thee,
 And he shall of thy soul have ruth,
 And thee instruct into the truth,
 And with the word of verity
 Shall comfort and shall counsel thee ;
 The Sacraments show thee at length,
 Thy little faith to stark and strength[en]
 And how thou shouldst them rightly use
 And all hypocrisy refuse ;
 Confession first was ordained free
 In this sort in the Church to be.'

¹ Lyndesays *Kitte's Confessioun*, E.E.T.S. 47 : 'And mekle Latyne he did mummil.'

The following, by an unknown author, is from the Bannatyne Manuscript, a valuable collection of Scotch verse compiled in 1568 by George Bannatyne:—

O God, that in time all things didst begin,
 In time Thou madest earth and heaven of nought ;
 In time Thou boughtest man, redeemed his sin ;
 In time shalt Thou unmake what Thou hast wrought ;
 In time are safe all that Thy blood hast bought ;
 In time, good Lord, give peace, so that we may
 In time repent for every deed and thought—
 Time in good time, for time will soon away.

Our time shall pass away, and in short space ;
 Time beareth witness what I say is true ;
 Our fathers had time here in the like cause,
 Time passed with them, as with us passeth now ;
 Time tarried not with them ; away time drew,
 They tarried yet a time, as we to-day ;
 And time shall pass from us, God knoweth how :
 Take time, while time doth last ; time will away.

In time ask grace ; in time take thou compassion ;
 In time of wealth mind time of wretched need ;
 In time give praise ; in time make God oblation
 In time fast, pray ; and give in time almsdeed ;
 In time offer thy heart ; for time doth still proceed ;
 Trusting to time, so time shall thee betray ;
 Speak thou in time, that so in time thou speed ;
 Take time while time doth last ; time will away.

Now time draws in, and time goeth apace ;
 Trust not to time, lest time shall thee assail ;
 Now is the time of mercy and of grace ;
 The time of penitence, time to bewail ;
 Take thou this time, that time shall not prevail ;
 This is the time of measure ; that is the time of joy ;
 This time shall have an end ; that time shall never fail.
 But live thou loose from time, lest time lift all away.¹

William Lauder was a Scotch poet who was born about 1520, and died in 1573. His earlier productions were the plays or semi-religious Moralities which were

¹ The Bannatyne MS., printed for the Hunterian Club, 1875, p. 227 :

O God ! that in tyme all thingis did begin,
 In tyme thow maid hevin and erd of nocht !

then popular. One of these was performed in 1554, at the expense of the Edinburgh magistrates, on occasion of the entrance into Edinburgh of the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise: another, in which the seven planets were principal personages, was performed in 1558, in celebration of the marriage of the Queen of Scots. He soon afterwards joined the Reformers, and was admitted as a minister in the Presbytery of Perth. In 1556 he wrote, in a somewhat stern tone, on the office and duty of kings. His austere language was doubtless not unwarranted, for there was no less lawlessness and misrule in Scotland than in the preceding century. There is a fervour not unlike that of a Hebrew prophet in words such as these:—

And partiality smores [smothers] down
Justice in every land and town.

They know themselves that gifts be ta'en,
To hurt the poor, and then let free
The rich; O Lord, to this have ee [eye],
And help the poor that are in stress,
Harried by robbers merciless.
Know, kings, that there is no refúge,
Except your judges justly judge
The cause of every crëature
Both of the rich and of the poor,
Your crown, your sceptre, sword and wand,
They shall be ta'en out of your hand,
And given to those, from you and yours,
That will do justice at all hours.
The malediction of the poor
Shall on you and your seed endure
Until that ye be rooted out.
This shall not fail, without a doubt,
But it shall light, when God shall please,
Howe'er so much ye live at ease.
Though God a while o'erlooks it now,
Yet He, who doth behold and know,
Shall judge ye when ye least shall ween
And turn your mirth and joy to teen.¹

¹ Lauder's *Compendious and Brief Tractate for the Faithful Instruction of Kings and Princes*, ed. by FitzEdward Hall, E.E.T.S. 4, l. 433: 'Quhilk percialytye smoris down.'

So also in one of his minor poems, *The Lamentation*, published in 1568, a year of famine and plague:—

This world is worse than ever it was,
Of mischief full and all malure [malheur],
As false and fragile as the glass.
How long, Lord, shall this world endure?¹

Very little is known of Alexander Montgomery, though his poems were once very popular in Scotland. He was born in Ayrshire, probably about 1540, and died in the last decade of the sixteenth century. He is spoken of as Captain Montgomery, and about 1580 was employed in the Scottish Court. His allegory of *The Cherry and the Sloe* was his most popular work. Among his devotional poems is the following:—

Non tardes converti ad Deum.

Let dread of pain for sin in aftertime,
Let shame to see thyself ensnaréd so,
Let grief conceived for foul accursed crime,
Let hate of sin, the worker of thy wo,
With dread, with shame, with grief, with hate, enforce,
To dew thy cheeks with tears, to deep remorse.

So, hate of sin shall make God's love to grow ;
So, grief shall harbour hope within thine heart ;
So, dread shall cause the flood of joy to flow ;
So, shame shall send sweet solace to thy smart ;
So love,—so hope,—so joy,—so solace sweet,
Shall make thy soul in heavenly bliss to fleet.

Wo, where no hate doth no such love allure !
Wo, where such grief makes no such hope proceed !
Wo, where such dread doth not such joy procure !
Wo, where such shame doth not such solace breed !
Wo, where no hate, no grief, no dread, no shame—
No love, no hope, no joy, no solace frame !²

Declina a malo, et fac bonam.

Leave sin, ere sin leave thee ; do good,
And both without delay :
Less fit he will to-morrow be
Who is not fit to-day.³

¹ Lauder's *Minor Poems*, ed. by Furnivall, E.E.T.S. 41, l. 26 :
'This world is war nor ever it was.'

² *Poems of Alex. Montgomery*, ed. by D. Irving, 1821, p. 276.

³ *Id.* 271.

Alexander Hume (c. 1550-1609), son of Patrick fifth Baron of Polwarth, published his poems in 1599. Among them is a hymn of thanksgiving and triumph, written after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. He calls it *The Song of the Lord's Soldiours*. It begins, 'O King of Kings, that sits above,' and tells with awe-struck and wondering gratitude of the 'means unlooked for by men,' whereby victory was given:—

Men may imagine, men may devise,
Men may conclude, and enterprise,
But Thou dost modify the end.

As wax is melted by the fire,
So by the Lord's consuming ire
The might of man melts clean away ;
To such as constantly believes
Courage and good success He gives,
And will not see their cause decay.

Though for a time the proud prevail,
Their glass will run, their force prevail
Unto the Lord's eternal gloire :
And when before our foes we fall,
Be sure our sins are cause of all,
Which we should earnestly deplore.

O Jah, our God, be Thou our guide,
In battles be Thou on our side,
And we shall neither fall nor flee ;
Through Christ Thy Son our sins forgive,
And make us in Thy law to live,
That we may praise and worship Thee.¹

He wrote also a bright, pretty poem of *Thanks for a Summer Day*, full of warmth and glow and sunlight. It begins:—

O perfitte light ! quhilk schaid [parted] away
The darkness from the light ;

and carries us from sweet dawn to hot noon, till at length the sun goes down in splendour :

The gloming comes, the day is spent,
The sun goes out of sight,
And painted is the occident
With purple sanguine bright.

¹ *Hume's Poems* in Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, vol. ii. p. 384.

The scarlet nor the golden thread,
 Who would their beauty try,
 Are nothing like the colour red,
 And beauty of the sky.

Each tree is mirrored perfectly in the stream's clear depth, the trout are leaping, the air is musical with rustic sounds, such as might well tempt men to join in the hymn of peace :—

O ! then it were a seemly thing
 While all is still and calm,
 The praise of God to play and sing
 With cornet and with shalme.

All labourers draw home at even
 And can to other say,
 Thanks to the gracious God of heaven
 Who sent this summer day.¹

James the First of England (1603-1625 ; James VI. of Scotland, 1567-1603) would perhaps have valued above all other distinctions the fame of a poet and philosopher. 'But sen, alas ! (as he once wrote) God by nature hath denied me the like lofty and quick ingyne, . . . I was forced to have refuge to the secound, which was to do what lay in me to set forth the praise of others when I could not merit the like by myself.' And certainly it was no small merit in this somewhat awkward and ungainly monarch that, whatever may have been his other defects, he was at all events quite in earnest in his patronage of genius and learning. Still if not a poet, he was at all events a rhymer, and now and then attained a somewhat higher level, as in the following sonnet, published in 1591, at the same time as his *Victory of Lepanto*. I quote without modernising any of the words :—

The azured vaulte, the crystall circles bright,
 The gleaming fyrie torches powdred there,
 The changing sound, the shyning beamie light,
 The sad and bearded fyres, the monsters faire,

¹ *Hume's Poems* in Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, vol. ii. p. 384.

The prodiges appearing in the aire,
 The rearding thunders, and the blustering winds,
 The foules in hew, in shape, in nature raire,
 The prettie notes that wing'd musicians finds ;
 In earth the sav'rie floures, the mettal'd minds [mines],
 The wholesome hearbes, the hautie pleasant trees,
 The sylver streames, the beasts of sundrie kinds,
 The bounded roares, and fishes of the seas,—
 All these for teaching man the Lord did frame
 To do His will, whose glory shines in thame.¹

The following stanza may be quoted, not for its poetry, but for the praiseworthy sentiment on the part of its royal author, from *Ane Schort Poeme of Tyme*, which he wrote as he was 'pansing' [musing] in the fields at sunrise one fair summer morning, when he could not sleep nor nowise take his rest :—

But sen that tyme is sic a precious thing,
 I wald we sould bestow it into that
 Quhilk were most pleasour to our heavenly King.
 Flee ydilteth [idleness], which is the greatest lat [let].
 Bot sen that death to all is destinat,
 Let us employ that tyme that God hath send us
 In doing weill, that good men may commend us.²

He also translated about this time some of the Psalms. For example :—

For lyons young at night beginnis to raire,
 And from their dennis to crave of God some pray :
 Then in the morning, gone is all their caire,
 And homeward to their caves rinnis fast, fra day
 Beginne to kythe [appear] the sunne dois so them fray.
 Then man gois furth, fra tyme the sunne dois ryse,
 And while the evening he remains away
 At tesume [tiresome?] labours, where his living lyes.³

His complete version of the Psalms is of later date, I think after he was King of England. The following are a few lines from it :—

¹ From his *Maiesties Poeticall Exercises at Vacant Houres*, ed. by R. Gillies, 1814. 'A sonnet.'

² *Id.* O. iii.

³ *Id.* N. iv. This particular Psalm (the 103rd), is a translation by the King from Tremellius's Latin version.

And therefore ye that are great kings,
Be wise whate'er befall ;
Ye that are judges of the earth,
Be well instructed all.
Serve ye the Lord with fervent fear,
That He may you protect,
And lift your heart aloft with joy,
Yet trembling with respect.¹

¹ Psalm ii. 10. King James's *Psalms*, 1631.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE only verses written beyond all possibility of question by Lord Bacon are *Certaine Psalmes* written by him during a sickness in 1624, and dedicated 'to his very good friend,' George Herbert. 'Where divinity and poesy met, he could not,' he said, 'make better choice.' The religious musings of so great a man would have an interest of their own even if they were wholly devoid of all poetical value. But, in themselves, they by no means deserve the tone of disparagement in which they have sometimes been spoken of. The 104th Psalm, for instance, that noble hymn of Creation, is one that he paraphrases with much vigour. He seems to join in it from his heart:—

Father and King of powers, both high and low,
Whose sounding fame all Creatures serve to blow ;
My soul shall with the rest strike up Thy praise,
And carol of Thy works and wondrous ways.

As long as life doth last I hymns will sing
With cheerful voice to the Eternal King :
As long as I have being, I will praise
The works of God and all His wondrous ways.
I know that He my words will not despise ;
Thanksgiving is to Him a sacrifice.¹

Some particular expressions also in this Psalm are worthy of note. For example:—

Thence round about a silver veil doth fall
Of crystal light, mother of colours all.

¹ *The Poems of Lord Bacon*, ed. by A. B. Grosart, 1870.

The earth :

hath no pillars but His sacred will.

The moon :

so constant in inconstancy.

The sea :

There do the stately ships plough up the floods.

He has given us a vivid imaginative picture in his paraphrase of the 137th Psalm:—

Whenas we sat all sad and desolate,
By Babylon, upon the river's side,
Eased from the tasks, which in our captive state
We were enforced daily to abide,—
Our harps we had brought with us to the field
Some solace to our heavy souls to yield.

But soon we found we failed of our account :
For when our minds some freedom did obtain,
Straightways the memory of Sion's mount
Did cause afresh our wounds to bleed again ;
So that with present griefs and future fears
Our eyes burst forth into a stream of tears.

As for our harps, since sorrow stroke them dumb,
We hanged them on the willow-trees were near ;
Yet did our cruel masters to us come,
Asking of us some Hebrew songs to hear.
Taunting us rather in our misery
Than much delighting in our melody.

Alas, said we, who can once form or frame
His grieved and oppressed heart to sing
The praises of Jehovah's glorious name
In banishment, under a foreign king ?
In Sion is His seat and dwelling-place ;
Thence doth He show the brightness of His face.

Jerusalem, where God His throne hath set,
Shall any hour absent thee from my mind ?
Then let my right hand quite her skill forget,
Then let my voice and words no passage find ;
Nay, if I do not Thee prefer in all
That in the compass of my thoughts can fall.

Although there is not the same certainty that the following short poem is by Lord Bacon, there seems to be a very high degree of probability that it is his:—

The man of life upright, whose guiltless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds and thoughts of vanity :

The man whose silent days in harmless joys are spent,
 Whom hopes can not delude, nor fortune discontent ;
 That man needs neither tower nor armour for defence :
 He only can behold with unaffrighted eyes
 The horror of the deep, and terror of the skies ;
 Thus scorning all the care that fate or fortune brings,
 He makes the heaven his book, his wisdom heavenly things ;
 Good thoughts his only friends, his wealth a well-spent age,
 The earth his sober aim and quiet pilgrimage.¹

The Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I., who in 1613 married the Elector Palatine Frederic, and was grandmother to George I., gave Lord Harington some rather pretty verses composed by her, of which I quote a few :—

I.

This is joy, this is true pleasure,
 If we best things make our treasure,
 And enjoy them at full leisure,
 Evermore in richest measure.

II.

God is only excellent,—
 Let up to Him our love be sent ;
 Whose desires are set or bent
 On ought else shall much repent.

IV.

All the vast world doth contain,
 To content man's heart, are vain,
 That still justly will complain,
 And unsatisfied remain.

VI.

God most holy, high and great
 Our delight doth make complete ;
 When in us He takes his seat,
 Only then we are replete.

VII.

Why should vain joys us transport ?
 Earthly pleasures are but short,
 And are mingled in such sort,
 Grievs are greater than the sport.

¹ Verses made by Mr. Francis Bacon. Lord Bacon's Poems (Grosart)

XIX.

O my God, for Christ his sake
 Quite from me this dulness take ;
 Cause me earth's love to forsake,
 And of heaven my realm to make.

XXV.

What care I for lofty place,
 If the Lord grant me His grace,
 Shewing me His pleasant face,
 And with joy I end my race.

XXVII.

O my soul, of heavenly birth,
 Do thou scorn this basest earth,
 Place not here thy joy and mirth
 Where of bliss is greatest dearth.

XXVIII.

From below thy mind remove,
 And affect the things above,
 Set thy heart and fix thy love
 Where thou truest joy shall prove.¹

Sir John Harington, created knight by James I., son of the John Haryngton mentioned in the preceding chapters, from whose *Nugae Antiquae* the above verses are extracted, has included in the same work some of his own versions of the Psalms.

Sir John Beaumont (1583-1627), elder brother of Francis Beaumont the dramatist, succeeded to the family estates of his ancient and honourable family in 1605. He was made a baronet in 1626. His son who succeeded him fell on the King's side at the siege of Gloucester. He was himself a thorough royalist, a man in whose loyalty to the throne was 'that self-forgetting and beautiful devotion, which transfigured the meanest, and turned the Crown into an aureole.'² But he died before the civil troubles began, having spent most of his life at his pleasant country seat of Grace-Dieu in

¹ In Sir John Harington's *Nugae Antiquae*, ii. 411.

² Grosart.

Leicestershire, 'a gentleman,' says Burton, 'of great learning, gravity, and worthiness.' His religious poems are full of genuine devotion, and contain many beauties, so that it is much to be regretted that his *Crowne of Thornes*, a poem in eight books, has been lost. Sir Thomas Hawkins wrote of it in terms of great admiration.

The following are a few lines from his poem on the Epiphany, addressed to the *Faire Easterne Starre*:—

Jerusalem erects her stately towers,
 Displays her windows, and adorns her bowers ;
 Yet there thou canst not cast a trembling spark.
 Let Herod's palace still continue dark :
 Each school and synagogue thy force repels ;
 There Pride enthroned in misty error dwells.

While this weak cottage all thy splendour takes,
 A joyful gate of every chink it makes.

Of the delights of knowledge, and of its limitation he says:—

O knowledge ! if a heaven on earth could be,
 I would expect to reap that bliss in thee :
 But thou art blind, and they that have thy light,
 More clearly know they live in darksome night.

Here are some touching lines *On my dear son Geruase Beaumont*:—

Can I, who have for others oft compiled
 The songs of death, forget my sweetest child ?
 Which, like a flower crushed with a blast, is dead
 And ere full time hangs down his smiling head,
 Expecting with clear hope to live anew,
 Among the angels fed with heavenly dew.
 We have this sign of joy, that many days
 While on the Earth his struggling spirit stays,
 The name of Jesus in his mouth contains
 His only food, his sleep, his ease from pains.
 O may that sound be rooted in my mind
 Of which in him such strong effect I find.
 Dear Lord, receive my son, whose winning love
 To me was like a friendship, far above
 The course of nature, or his tender age,
 Whose looks could all my bitter griefs assuage.

Let his pure soul, ordain'd sev'n yeers to be
 In that frail body, which was part of me,
 Remain my pledge in heaven, as sent to show
 How to this port at every step I go.

There are many verses by Sir John Beaumont full of deep and sensitive Christian feeling on sin, and hope, and the comforts of grace and such other essentials of religion. But my last short quotation, chosen for its play of fancy, must be the concluding lines of a poem written in the last year of his life on the conjunction of the two festivals of the Annunciation and the Resurrection:—

Let faithful souls this double feast attend
 In two processions : let the first descend
 The temple stairs, and with a down-cast eye,
 Upon the lowest pavement prostrate lie ;
 In creeping violets, white lilies, shine
 Their humble thoughts, and every pure design.
 The other troop shall climb, with sacred heat,
 The rich degrees of Solomon's bright seat,
 In glowing roses fervent zeal they bear
 And in the azure flower-de-lis appear
 Celestial contemplations, which aspire
 Above the sky, up to th' immortal quire.¹

Sir John Beaumont's son, John, who succeeded to the baronetcy, and fell, as I have said, at Gloucester, a man of extraordinary physical strength, wrote in 1638 an elegy² not wanting in poetry but chiefly noteworthy as being in memory of the *Lycidas* of Milton, Edward King. He must indeed have been a good man, and one of no ordinary parts, to have won the deep love and admiration of men so different as this ardent Cavalier and the immortal poet of Puritanism.

Phineas and Giles Fletcher were brothers, both of them gifted with genuine poetical feeling. Their cousin, John Fletcher, is well known by name as a dramatic poet. Their father also, Elizabeth's ambassador to Muscovy, was a man of considerable literary ability.

¹ *Sir J. Beaumont's Poems*, p. 68,

² Appendix to above edition of *Sir J. Beaumont's Poems*, p. 328.

Phineas (1584-1650) was the elder of the brothers. He was educated at Eton and King's College, took orders, and held the benefice of Hilgay in Norfolk. His *Purple Island* was published in 1633, but had been written by him early in life. It is utterly spoilt as a poem by extraordinary want of judgment in the selection of subject and its mode of treatment. The *Purple Island* is the body of man pervaded with ensanguined rills; and the first five cantos are dedicated to a fanciful description of its anatomy, a topic which no possible skill could make other than displeasing. The rest of the poem is more endurable, and contains beauties which quite vindicate it from Pope's very depreciatory criticism. It is a continuous allegory, representing how the island is the battlefield of powers of good and evil. The virtues, represented as imaginary characters, defend it; it is attacked by a hideous host of vices and unruly passions. In the end Christ comes to the rescue, and the story ends with the espousal of the Redeemer with Eclecta, His purified and glorious Church.

From Canto I. 58:—

O Thou deep well of life, wide stream of love,—
 More deep, more wide than widest deepest seas,—
 Who, dying, death to endless death didst prove,
 To work this wilful, rebel island's ease;
 Thy love no time began, no time decays,
 But still increaseth with decreasing days:
 Where then may we begin, where may we end Thy praise?

From Canto VI. 74-75:—

Receive, which we can only back return
 (Yet that we may return, Thou first must give)
 A heart which fain would smoke, which fain would burn
 In praise for Thee, to Thee would only live.
 And Thou who sat'st in night to give us day,
 Light and inflame us with Thy glorious ray,
 That we may back reflect, and borrowed light repay.

So we, beholding with immortal eye
 The glorious picture of Thy heavenly face,
 In his first beauty and true majesty,
 May shake from our dull souls these fetters base,

And mounting up to that bright crystal sphere,
 Whence Thou strik'st all the world with shuddering fear
 May not be held by earth nor hold vile earth so dear.

From his paraphrase of Psalm cxxx. :—

From the deeps of grief and fear,
 O Lord, to Thee my soul repairs ;
 From the heaven bow down Thine ear ;
 Let Thy mercy meet my prayers.
 O, if Thou markst
 What's done amiss,
 What soul so pure
 Can see Thy bliss?

As a watchman waits for day,
 And looks for light, and looks again ;
 When the night grows old and grey,
 To be relieved he looks amain ;
 So look, so wait,
 So long mine eyes
 To see my Lord,
 My Sun arise.

Wait, ye saints, wait on our Lord ;
 For from His tongue sweet mercy flows :
 Wait on His Cross, wait on His word ;
 Upon that tree redemption grows.
 He will redeem
 His Israel
 From sin and wrath
 From death and hell.

Giles Fletcher (*c.* 1588-1623) was two years or more younger than his brother Phineas, but died much earlier. He was at Trinity College, Cambridge, and afterwards held the living of Alderton in Suffolk. His one poem is *Christ's Victory*, published in 1610. It is a work the merits of which have been very variously estimated. Cattermole, in his interesting selections from the sacred poetry of the seventeenth century, was so struck with what he considered 'the extraordinary merit and interest of it,' that he reprinted the whole. He was anxious, he said, 'to impart to others a portion of the delight with which he had himself read this exquisite poem.' The judgment of others is far less

favourable. For my own part, I think it an interesting and readable book, and that it contains some beautiful descriptions, but that it has such serious faults as to be entirely disqualified from a position among sacred poems of anything like the first order. I should have admired it far more if the subject had not been such a grave and lofty one. As it is, it seems to me ornate, too often wanting in simple dignity, too full of affectation and flowers of fancy. He followed Spenser, and a subject somewhat like Spenser's would have suited Fletcher better than one akin to that which Milton chose. And here it should be said that there is strong evidence that Milton had read the poem, and that he was influenced by his memories of it both in *Comus* and in *Paradise Regained*.

The first Book of the poem tells of *Christ's Victory in Heaven*. It describes the arraignment of man before God by Justice, Mercy pleading on his behalf, and the Nativity of Christ. The following are some of the verses in which Justice personified is finely portrayed:—

X.

She was a virgin of austere regard ;
 Not as the world esteems her, deaf and blind,
 But as the eagle, that hath oft compared
 Her eye with heaven's, so, and more brightly, shined
 Her laming sight ; for she the same could wind
 Into the solid heart, and with her ears
 The silence of the thought loud speaking hears,
 And in one hand a pair of even scales she wears.

XV.

Upon two stony tables spread before her,
 She lean'd her bosom, more than stony hard ;
 There slept the impartial judge, and strict restorer
 Of wrong or right with pain or with reward ;
 There hung the score of all our debts, the card
 Where good, and bad, and life, and death were painted :
 Was never heart of mortal so untainted,
 But when that scroll was read, with thousand terrors fainted.

XVI.

Witness the thunder that Mount Sinai heard,
 When all the mount with fiery clouds did flame,

And wondering Israel, with the sight afeared,
Blinded with seeing, durst not touch the same,
But like a wood of shaking leaves became.

On this, dread Justice, she, the living Law,
Bowing herself with a majestic awe,

All heaven, to hear her speech, did into silence draw.¹

Of the greatness of man's hope of Victory:—

LXXVI.

What hath man done that man shall not undo,
Since God to him is grown so near akin.

Did his sin slay him? he shall slay his foe:

Hath he lost all? he all again shall win.

Is sin his master? he shall master sin.

Too hard of soul with sin the field to try?

The only way to conquer was to fly.

But thus long death hath lived, and now death's self shall die.

Of the Nativity of Christ:—

LXXXII.

The angels caroll'd loud their song of praise;

The cursed oracles were stricken dumb;

To see their Shepherd the poor shepherds press;

To see their King the kingly sophies come;

And, them to guide unto his Master's home,

A star comes dancing up the orient,

That springs for joy over the starry tent,

Where gold, to make their Prince a crown, they all present.

The second Book, entitled *Christ's Triumph on Earth*, gives in an imaginative and rather fanciful form the story of the Temptation. The Tempter first appears in the guise of a good old hermit; and both in this part of the account and in the pictures which follow of the Den of Despair, of the False Angel of Presumption, and of the Garden of Vain Glory, there is no lack of poetical power even where there is some offence against religious taste.

The third Book, *Christ's Triumph over Death*, is the story of Christ's sufferings and death. The following are two stanzas upon the Hosannas of the multitude:—

¹ *G. Fletcher's Poems, Anderson's British Poets, vol. iv.*

XXXII

It was but now their sounding clamours sang,
 'Blessed is He that comes from the most High !'
 And all the mountains with 'Hosanna !' rung ;
 And now, 'Away with him—away !' they cry,
 And nothing can be heard but 'Crucify !'

It was but now, the crown itself they save,
 The golden name of king unto Him gave ;
 And now no king, but only Cæsar they will have.

XXXIII

It was but now they gathered blooming may,
 And of his arms disrob'd the branching tree,
 To strew with boughs and blossoms all Thy way ;
 And now the branchless trunk a cross for Thee,
 And may, dismayed, the coronet must be :

It was but now they were so kind to throw
 Their own best garments where Thy feet should go ;
 And now Thyself they strip, and bleeding wounds they show.

The fourth Book, *Christ's Triumph after Death*, is of the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Bliss of Heaven, and the Beatific Vision of God.

The following is by Thomas Pestel, a chaplain to Charles I. I borrow it from Professor Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song* :—

A PSALM FOR SUNDAY NIGHT.

O sing the glories of our Lord ;
 His grace and truth resound,
 And His stupendous acts record,
 Whose mercies have no bound.

He made the all-informing light
 And hosts of angels fair ;
 'Tis he with shadows clothes the night,
 He clouds and clears the air.

Those restless skies with stars enchased,
 He on firm hinges set ;
 The wave-embracéd sea He placed
 His hanging cabinet.

We in His summer sunshine stand,
 And by His favour grow ;
 We gather what His bounteous hand
 Is pleased to bestow.

When He contracts His hand, we mourn,
 And all our strength is vain ;
 To former dust in death we turn,
 Till He inspire again.¹

It would perhaps scarcely have been expected that no devotional poetry of the seventeenth century should be more touching in depth of religious feeling than that which comes from the pen of the distinguished dramatist Ben Jonson (1574-1637). His powers were indeed great enough for any form of composition, and he fitly succeeded Shakespeare as second only to him. But his strong and passionate temper was under insufficient restraint. His faults were all of the intemperate kind. They were blended nevertheless with much that was admirable, with a keen perception of what is good and beautiful, with an eager desire to contribute towards a reformation of manners, with tenderness and generosity. There is no wonder that there should be vigour and impetuosity of religious feeling in the verses which express contrition for misdoing in the past, and a true desire to live nearer to God in time to come. The following is part of his *Hymn to God the Father* :—

Hear me, O God !
 A broken heart
 Is my best part ;
 Use still Thy rod,
 That I may prove
 Therein Thy love.

If Thou hadst not
 Been stern to me,
 But left me free,
 I had forgot
 Myself and Thee.

For sin 's so sweet,
 As [that] minds ill bent
 Rarely repent,
 Until they meet
 Their punishment.

¹ From F. T. Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song*, No. 89.

But I'll come in
 Before my loss
 Me further toss,
 As sure to win
 Under His cross.

Such also is his prayerful cry to the blessed Trinity 'the gladdest light dark man can think upon' to receive his sacrifice of a troubled spirit. It begins:—

O holy, blessed, glorious Trinity
 Of persons, still one God in unity,
 The faithful man's believed mystery,
 Help, help to lift
 Myself up to Thee, harrowed, torn, and bruis'd
 By sin and Satan, and my flesh misus'd ;
 As my heart lies in pieces, all confus'd,
 O take my gift !

There is also something very genuine in his answer to those who interpreted as 'melancholy' the deep emotion of his soul.

Good and great God ! can I not think of Thee
 But it must straight my melancholy be ?
 Is it interpreted in me disease,
 That, laden with my sins, I seek for ease ?
 O be Thou witness, that the reins dost know
 And hearts of all, if I be sad for show ;
 And judge me after, if I dare pretend
 To ought but grace, or aim at other end.
 As Thou art all, so be Thou all to me,
 First, midst, and last, converted One and Three !
 My faith, my hope, my love ; and in this state,
 My Judge, my Witness, and my Advocate.
 Where have I been this while exiled from Thee ?
 And whither rapt ? Now Thou but stoopst to me.
 Dwell, dwell here still ! O, being everywhere,
 How can I doubt to find Thee ever here ?'

The following verses are from *An Hymn on the Nativity of my Saviour*:—

I sing the birth was born to-night,
 The Author both of life and light ;

¹ *B. Jonson's Poems, Anderson's British Poets, vol. iv.*

The angel so did sound it :
 And like the ravish'd shepherds said,
 Who saw the light and were afraid,
 Yet search'd, and true they found it.
 The Son of God, th' Eternal King,
 That did us all salvation bring
 And freed the soul from danger ;
 He whom the whole world could not take,
 The Word, which heaven and earth did make,
 Was now laid in a manger.

What comfort by Him do we win
 Who made Himself the price of sin
 To make us heirs of glory ?
 To see this Babe, all innocence,
 A martyr born in our defence :
 Can man forget the story ?

Lastly, I must quote the metaphor by which he illustrates life having its value not in length but in beauty. It occurs in the middle of an ode to two noble friends cut off in the prime of youth :—

It is not growing like a tree
 In bulk does make men better be ;
 Or standing long, an oak, three hundred year,
 To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere :
 A lily of a day
 Is fairer far in May,
 Although it fall and die that night ;
 It was the plant and flower of light.
 In small proportions we just beauties see,
 And in short measures life may perfect be.

Patrick Hannay, member of an old landed Scotch family, appears to have been born about 1590. He took a Master of Arts degree, followed King James to England on his accession to the English Crown, served as a soldier under the King of Bohemia, wrote a court elegy on the death of Queen Anne of Denmark in 1619, and in 1622 published his collected poems, the longest of which is *Philomela*. Between 1639 and 1646, he was returned to the Scotch Parliament as Commissioner for the burgh of Wigtown. The following is from his sonnets and songs :—

O how my sin-clogg'd soul would soar aloft,
 And scale the crystal sky to seek remede !
 But that foul sin (wherewith I stain it oft)
 Makes it to sink through doubt of my misdeed :
 In scroll of guilty conscience I read
 The rueful legend of my passéd life ;
 The thought whereof maketh my heart to bleed,
 Finding my foul offences are so rife.

Fear makes me faint to find such and so many
 As there are rankéd in that ragged scroll ;
 Despair doth say there was ne'er such in any ;
 Weeping cannot them wash, nor heart condole.

What erst as trifles seeméd to my sight
 Now are death-worthy : my late-liking sin
 Is now displeasing and would bar me quite
 All hope of help, since such I wallowed in.

Hope to my heart my Saviour doth present
 With all His Passion proved for sinners' sake ;
 Yet none but he that doth from heart repent
 Can use of that great Satisfaction make :
 I hold of Him by a firm faith must take,
 And all His suffering to myself apply :
 If penitence want not, nor faith be weak,
 Of heaven I know He cannot me deny.

And thou, frail flesh, shame not now to begin
 Thee to submit to the reforming Spirit :
 Think of the byways thou hast wandered in,
 Which lead to death and hell-deserved merit.
 Why art thou proud ? Thou canst not heaven inherit !
 Lie down in dust, do no works of thine own,
 But what the soul commands, O willing hear it ;
 By thy obedience let its rule be known.

But, Lord, without Thy sweet assisting grace
 I can do nought, all my attempts are vain.
 I cannot come without Thou call, alas !
 Grant me this grace, and bring me home again ;
 Let Thy blest Spirit, Faith, Hope, and Love remain
 Still in my soul : the flesh, the world and devil
 Deprive of power ; let them no more reign ;
 Or, if they tempt, deliver me from evil.¹

¹ *Poetical Works of Patrick Hannay.* From ed. of 1622 for Hunterian Club, 1875, p. 247.

Michael Drayton (1563-1631), the prolific author of the *Polyolbion*—a sort of topographical poem in thirty books—as well as of much historical verse, published also (1630) some ‘Divine Poems’ on the deeds of Noah, Moses, and David. They are not for the most part very interesting; but the story of David’s encounter with Goliath is told with a good deal of vivid force. I quote some lines from it:—

And now before young David could come in,
 The host of Israel somewhat did begin
 To raise itself; some climb the nearest tree,
 And some the tops of tents, whence they might see
 How this unarmed youth himself would bear
 Against the all-armed giant (which they fear):
 Some get up to the fronts of easy hills;
 That by their motion a vast murmur fills
 The neighbouring valleys, that the enemy thought
 Something would by the Israelites be wrought
 They had not heard of, and they longed to see
 What strange and warlike stratagem ’t should be.

When soon they saw a goodly youth descend,
 Himself alone, none after to attend,
 That at his need with arms might him supply,—
 As merely careless of his enemy:
 His head uncovered, and his locks of hair,
 As he came on, being played with by the air,
 Tossed to and fro, did with such pleasure move,
 As they had been provocatives of love:
 His sleeves stript up above his elbows were;
 And in his hand a stiff short staff did bear
 Which by the leather to it, and the string,
 They easily might discern to be a sling.
 Suiting to these he wore a shepherd’s scrip,
 Which from his side hung down upon his hip,

And though he seemed thus to be very young,
 Yet was he well proportioned and strong,
 And with a comely and undaunted grace,
 Holding a steady and most even pace,
 This way or that way never stood to gaze,
 But like a man that death could not amaze,
 Came close up to Goliah, and so near
 As he might easily reach him with his spear.

In meantime David, looking in his face,
 Between his temples, saw how large a space
 He was to hit—steps back a yard or two—
 The giant wondering what the youth would do ;—
 Whose nimble hand out of his scrip doth bring
 A pebble stone and puts it in his sling :
 At which the giant openly doth jeer,
 And, as in scorn, stands leaning on his spear,
 Which gives young David much content to see ;
 And to himself thus secretly saith he—
 Stand but one minute still, stand but so fast,
 And have at all Philistia at a cast ;
 When with such sleight the shot away he sent,
 That from his sling as 't had been lightning went,
 And him so full upon the forehead smit,
 Which gave a crack, when his thick scalp it hit,
 As 't had been thrown against some rock or post,
 That the shrill clap was heard through either host.
 Staggering a while upon his spear he leant,
 Till on a sudden he began to faint ;
 When down he came like an old o'ergrown oak,
 His huge root hewn up by the labourer's stroke,
 That with his very weight he shook the ground ;
 His brazen armour gives a jarring sound
 Like a cracked bell, or vessel chanced to fall
 From some high place, which did like death appal
 The proud Philistines, hopeless that remain
 To see their champion, great Goliah, slain.
 When such a shout the host of Israel gave
 As cleft the clouds, and like to men that rave,
 O'ercome with comfort, cry, 'The boy, the boy,
 O the brave David, Israel's only joy,
 God's chosen champion ! O most wondrous thing !
 The great Goliah slain with a poor sling !'¹

It may be remarked that in telling of the destruction of Pharaoh's host, Drayton refers to the Spanish Armada, which he appears to have seen from Dover, sweeping over the sea 'like a mighty wood.'

His *Harmonie of the Church* consists of translations and paraphrases.

John Donne (1573-1631) was born of Roman Catholic parents. While he was reading law at Lincoln's Inn his father died and left him a moderate competence.

¹ Drayton's *David and Goliah*, Anderson's *British Poets*, iii. 609.

He then gave up the law, devoted himself for some time to the questions between Roman Catholics and Protestants, and ultimately adopted the reformed faith. After spending some years in Spain and Italy, he became secretary to the Lord Keeper Egerton. In 1612 King James persuaded him to take orders, and made him one of his Chaplains in ordinary. He was afterwards Preacher at Lincoln's Inn, Dean of St. Paul's, Vicar of St. Dunstan in the West, and Prolocutor of Convocation. His secular poems, some of which might better not have been published, were most of them written in his earlier years. His *Progress of the Soul* was published in 1601; his *Divine Poems, Holy Sonnets*, etc., at various later dates. His sacred, as well as his secular poems, are often injured by affectations in language and carelessness of style; and he was thought in his own time rather obscure and metaphysical. But there is feeling, devotion, and earnestness in his verses. He enjoyed the hearty friendship of George Herbert and other good men. In prose he wrote many essays, sermons, meditations, etc.

From his sonnets:—

Death ! be not proud, though some have called thee
 Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so ;
 For those thou thinkest thou dost overthrow
 Die not, poor Death ! nor yet canst thou kill me.
 From rest and sleep, which but thy picture be,
 Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow ;
 And soonest our best men with thee do go,
 Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
 Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
 And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell ;
 And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
 And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then ?
 One short sleep past we wake eternally,
 And death shall be no more : Death, thou shalt die !

From *The Cross* :—

From me no pulpit, nor misgrounded law,
 Nor scandal taken, shall this cross withdraw ;
 It shall not, for it cannot ; for the loss
 Of this cross were to me another cross.

Better were worse, for no affliction,
 No cross is so extreme as to have none.
 Who can blot out the cross, which th' instrument
 Of God dew'd on me in the Sacrament ?

From *The Litany* :—

Let not my mind be blinder by more light ;
 Nor faith, by reason added, lose her sight.

From *Good Friday* :—

O think me worth thine anger ; punish me ;
 Burn off my rust and my deformity.

From the paraphrase of Psalm cxxxviii. :—

By Euphrates' flowery side
 We did bide,
 From dear Juda far absented,
 Tearing the air with our cries ;
 And our eyes
 With their streams his stream augmented.

When poor Sion's doleful state
 Desolate ;
 Sackéd, burnéd, and enthralled,
 And the temple spoiled, which we
 Ne'er should see,
 To our mirthless mind we called,
 Our mute harps, untuned, unstrung,
 Up we hung
 On green willows near beside us,
 Where, we sitting all forlorn,
 Thus, in scorn,
 Our proud spoilers 'gan deride us.

Come, sad captives, leave your moans,
 And your groans
 Under Sion's ruins bury ;
 Tune your harps, and sing us lays
 In the praise
 Of your God, and let's be merry.

Can, ah ! can we leave our moans,
 And our groans
 Under Sion's ruins bury ?
 Can we in this land sing lays
 In the praise
 Of our God, and here be merry ?

No, dear Sion, if I yet
 Do forget
 Thine affliction miserable,
 Let my nimble joints become
 Stiff and numb.
 To touch warbling harp unable.
 Let my tongue lose singing still ;
 Let it still
 To my parchéd roof be glued,
 If in either harp or voice
 I rejoice,
 Till thy joys shall be renewed.¹

Among the worthies of the English Church none hold a higher place than George Herbert. He was born in 1593, a son of Sir Edward Herbert, and kinsman of the Earl of Pembroke. In 1619 he was orator to the University of Cambridge, in friendly intimacy with Sir Henry Wotton and Dr. Donne. About this time he was frequently at Court, was high in the king's favour, and was expected by his friends to become soon a Secretary of State. But his mind became set on other work than this. 'I will always,' said he, 'contemn any title or dignity that can be conferred upon me, when I shall compare them with the title of being a priest, and serving at the altar of Jesus, my master. I can never do too much for Him that hath done so much for me as to make me a Christian.' In 1630 King Charles gave him the living of Bemerton, where he lived profoundly revered by all his parishioners and neighbours for the few years that intervened before his early death in 1633. He must have been one of the few of whom it could be truly said that God was in all his thoughts, and the pure tone of his piety was yet further beautified by a most refined and poetic mind. Like Bishop Ken, he delighted in music and sacred song. On the Sunday before his death, we are told, that he rose suddenly from his bed or couch, called for one of his instruments, took it into his hand, and said:—

¹ *Dr. John Donne's Poems, Anderson's British Poets, iv.*

My God, my God,
My music shall find Thee,
And every string
Should have His attribute to sing.

Then, having tuned it, he played, and sang those familiar lines of his :—

The Sundays of man's life
Threaded together on time's string
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal, glorious King.
On Sunday heaven's door stands ope ;
Blessings are plentiful and rife,—
More plentiful than hope.

From a boy he had dedicated his poetical powers to the service of his Maker. Thus in some early New Year's verses to his mother he had written :—

Doth poetry
Wear men's livery, only serve her turn ?
Sure, Lord, there is enough in Thee to dry
Oceans of ink ; for as the deluge did
Cover the earth, so doth Thy majesty.

He thought also that verse might touch the hearts of some who would not be reached in any other way :—

Hearken unto a verser, who may chance
Rhyme thee to good, and make a bait of pleasure :
A verse may find him who a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice.

He has made his poetry the more full of teaching, because it abounds in pithy apophthegms. He delighted in proverbs, knew their value as a means of popular instruction, and loved to condense his thoughts into short and often quaint sayings, which might dwell in the memory as proverbs do.

The following are a few passages from his poems :—

Let thy heart be true to God,
Thy mouth to it, thy action to them both.
Slight those who say amid their sickly healths,
'Thou liv'st by rule !' What doth not so but man ?
Houses are built by rules, and commonwealths.
Entice the trusty sun, if that thou can
From his ecliptic line ! beckon the sky !
Who lives by rule then keeps good company. (*Church Porch.*)

Be thrifty, but not covetous : therefore give
 Thy need, thy honour, and thy friend his due.

(*Church Porch*)

Pitch thy behaviour low, thy projects high :
 So shalt thou humble and magnanimous be.
 Sink not in spirit : who aimeth at the sky,
 Shoots higher much than he who aims a tree.
 A grain of glory mixed with humbleness
 Cures both a fever and lethargicness.

(*Id.*)

Kneeling ne'er spoilt silk stocking ; quit thy state.
 All equals are within the Church's gate.

(*Id.*)

The worst speak something good ; if all want sense,
 God takes a text, and preacheth patience.
 He that gets patience, and the blessing which
 Preachers conclude with, hath not lost his pains :
 He that by being at Church escapes the ditch,
 Which he might fall in by companions, gains :
 He that loves God's abode, and to combine
 With saints on earth, shall one day with them shine.

(*Id.*)

If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains ;
 If well, the pain doth fade, the joy remains.

(*Id.*)

Philosophers have measured mountains,
 Fathomed the depths of seas, of states, and kings,
 Walked with a staff to heaven, and traced fountains.
 But there are two vast spacious things,
 The which to measure it doth more behove ;
 Yet few there are that sound them—Sin and Love.

(*The Agony*)

If bliss had lain in art and strength,
 None but the wise and strong had gained it ;
 Where now by faith all arms are of a length,
 One size doth all condition fill.
 A peasant may believe as much
 As a great clerk, and reach the highest stature.
 Thus dost thou make proud knowledge bend and crouch,
 While grace fills up uneven nature.

(*Faith*)

Who goeth on the way which Christ hath gone
 Is much more sure to meet with Him than one
 That travelleth by-ways.
 Perhaps my God, though He be far before,
 May take me by the hand, and, more,
 May strengthen my decays.

(*Lent*)

He that loveth gold, though dross,
Tells to all he meets his loss :
He that sins, hath he no loss ?
He that finds a silver vein,
Thinks on it and thinks again :
Brings thy Saviour's death no gain ?

(Bareness)

All may of Thee partake ;
Nothing can be so mean
Which with this tincture, 'for Thy sake,'
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine ;
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that, and the action, fine.

(The Elixir)

Who is the honest man ?
He that doth still and strongly good pursue,
To God, his neighbour, and himself, most true ;
Whom neither force nor fawning can
Inspire or wrench from giving all their due.
Whose honesty is not
So loose and easy, that a ruffling wind
Can blow away, or glittering look it blind :
Who rides his sure and even trot,
While the world now rides by, now lags behind :
Who, when great trials come,
Nor seeks nor shows them ; but doth calmly stay,
Till he the thing and the example weigh :
All being brought into a sum,
What place or person calls for, he doth pay.
Whom none can work, or woo,
To use in anything a trick or sleight ;
For above all things he abhors deceit ;
His words and works, and fashion too,
All of a piece, and all are clear and straight.
Who never melts or thaws
At close temptations : when the day is done,
His goodness sets not, but in dark can run :
The sun to others writeth laws,
And is their virtue :—Virtue is his sun.
Who, when he is to treat
With sick folks, women, those whom passions sway,
Allows for that, and keeps his constant way :
Whom others' faults do not defeat,
But though men fail him, yet his part doth play.

Whom nothing can procure,
 When the wide world runs bias from his will,
 To writhe his limbs, and share, not mend, the ill—
 This is the marksman, safe and sure,
 Who still is right, and prays to be so still.

(*Constancy*)

The following are some pathetic verses, expressing that longing for a clearer vision, that craving after some present revelation of God to sight and sense, that spirit of, so to say, wondering remonstrance at the Creator being hidden from His creature, which presses more upon some minds than any other of the mysteries which encompass human life. It is entitled *The Search*.

Whither, O whither, art Thou fled,
 My Lord, my Love?
 My searches are my daily bread ;
 Yet never prove.

My knees pierce th' earth, mine eye the sky ;
 And yet the sphere
 And centre both to me deny
 That Thou art there.

Yet can I mark how herbs below,
 Grow green and gay ;
 As if to meet Thee they did know,
 While I decay.

Yet can I mark how stars above
 Simper and shine,
 As having keys into Thy love
 While poor I pine.

I sent a sigh to seek Thee out,
 Deep drawn in pain,
 Winged like an arrow, but my scout
 Returns in vain.

I turned another—having store—
 Into a groan,
 Because the search was dumb before ;
 But all was one.

Where is my God? What hidden place
 Conceals thee still?
 What covert dare eclipse thy face?
 Is it Thy Will?

Finally I must mention, without any need of quoting, the delightful hymn in two stanzas, beginning 'Let all the world in every corner sing.'

Herbert's poems are indeed a treasury of religious thought. Yet they have their faults. There is much that is obscure, much that is over-figurative and far-fetched. The obscurity in particular is sometimes very disappointing. Not very unfrequently there is a music, and an appearance of fine fancy in verses which, when read, leave no clear impression of their meaning. But where there is so much sober sense, joined with the most delicate and refined feeling, such profound piety, such love of the Church, such music, such play of imagination, when once we begin to select passages, it is hard to know where to stop.

The *Divine and Moral Speculations* of Robert Aylet were published in 1625. The following is of Death:—

Come, let's shake hands ; we in the end must meet :
 I have provided me this goodly chain
 Of graces, at thy coming thee to greet ;
 For thou wilt not for favour, gold, or gain
 Thy fatal stroke one moment here refrain.
 Well,—close mine eyes, and dim my body's light :
 These shining gems for ever shall remain
 My soul for to enlighten ; oh, then smite !
 It skills not when, not how, so as my heart stands right.

Then witness, Death, that willing I lay down
 My body—sure to put it on again,
 My fleshly baggage—for a heavenly crown,
 My earthly bondage—in the heavens to reign.
 I leave this tent of brittle clay, to gain
 In heaven a mansion, holy, spiritual.
 Lo, my corruption here I down have lain
 For incorruption, pure, angelical.
 And for a heavenly parlour, changed my earthly hall.

Lord, this I crave ; direct me in the way,
 So shall I certainly attain my end :
 If well my part on mortal stage I play,
 Saints, angels, my beholders, shall commend

My action : God and Christ shall be my friend ;
 And when my flesh to nature's tyring room,
 From whence it came, shall quietly descend,
 It there shall rest until the day of doom,
 And then in heav'nly quire a singing-man become.

Sweet Death, then friendly let me thee embrace ;
 He truly lives that, living, learns to die :
 Now smiling, like a friend, I see thy face,
 Not terrible, like to an enemy.
 But I with prayer end my melody :
 Lord, grant when death my passing-bell doth ring,
 My soul may hear the heavenly harmony
 Of saints and angels, which most joyful sing
 Sweet Hallelujahs to their Saviour, God, and King.¹

Dr. Thomas Campion (c. 1567-1620)—not to be confounded with Edmund Campion the Jesuit who was executed in 1581—published his *Divine and Moral Songs* in 1612. He was a physician, but also a member of Gray's Inn, and was a writer both of Latin and English secular poetry, and of several masques. The following is from one of his poems :—

Awake, awake, thou heavy sprite,
 That sleep'st the deadly sleep of sin
 Rise now and walk the ways of light !
 'Tis not too late yet to begin.
 Seek heaven early, seek it late ;
 True Faith still finds an open gate.
 Get up, get up, thou leaden man !
 Thy track to endless joy or pain
 Yields but the model of a span ;
 Yet burns out thy life's lamp in vain !
 One minute bounds thy bane or bliss :
 Then watch and labour while time is.²

From John Amner's Hymns (1615) :—

A stranger here, as all my fathers were
 That went before, I wander to and fro ;
 From earth to heaven is my pilgrimage,
 A tedious way for flesh and blood to go :
 O Thou that art the Way, pity the blind,
 And teach me how I may Thy dwelling find.³

¹ Robert Aylet's *Divine and Moral Meditations*, etc., 1655-54.

² *Works by Dr. Thomas Campion*, ed. by A. H. Bullen, p. 59.

³ *More Songs from Elizabethan Song-books*, ed. by A. H. Bullen, 1888, p. 2.

From a manuscript in Christ Church, of about the same period :—

Turn in, my Lord, turn in to me,
 My heart's a homely place :
 But Thou canst make corruption flee
 And fill it with Thy grace ;
 So furnishéd it will be brave,
 And a rich dwelling Thou shalt have.¹

Dr. William Loe, or Leo, wrote his *Songs of Sion* about 1620. He held at different times various appointments: as Vicar of Churcham, in 1593, Master of the Collegiate School at Gloucester (1600), Prebendary (1602) and Sub-dean (1605) of Gloucester, Pastor to the 'Merchant Adventurers' at Hamburg, Preacher at Putney (1624), and at Wandsworth (1618), and Chaplain to the King, soon before his death in 1645. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. In his prose writings he is often somewhat bitter and violent in controversy with Roman Catholicism. But in his poems there is nothing but what is inspired by a spirit of deep and gentle piety. These *Songs of Sion* are all dedicated to different leading members of his Hamburg congregation. They are written throughout in words of one syllable, not from any affectation, but from a not unreasonable dislike to make use in sacred verse of the too pedantical conceits that were common in the writings of his day, and to draw rather from wells of pure English undefiled. 'I would fain,' he writes, 'make an essay to know whether we might express our hearts to God in our holy soliloquies in mōasillables in our owne mother tongue or no. It being a received opinion amōgst many of those who seeme rather to be judicious than caprichious, that heretofore our English tongue, in the true idiome thereof, consisted altogether of mono-sillables, untill it came to be blended and mingled with the commixture of exotique languages.'

¹ *More Songs from Elizabethan Song-books*, ed. by A. H. Bullen, 1888, p. 122.

The following is from his lines on the Seven Words of Christ upon the Cross:—

A thief doth cry and call ;
 Christ hears him by and by :
 O soul, thy Christ will hear thee sure
 If thou dost call and cry.

O learn, it is but one
 To whom Christ grants an ear,
 That sued to Him in death at last,
 And sought Him in his fear.

Yet it is one, my soul,
 Lest thou shouldst faint and die,
 And that thy Christ would not thee hear
 In death when thou shall cry.

And yet it is but one,
 Lest, soul, thou shouldst be proud,
 And think that God would hear thee still,
 When that thy cry is loud.

O learn, sweet soul, by this,
 To sue to God in life
 And drive not off till death do come,
 To die in jar and strife.¹

Charles Fitzgeoffrey (1575-1638) was Vicar of St. Dominic in Cornwall. Mr. Grosart speaks of him as a high-hearted, outspoken, patriotic man, and in the highest sense evangelical. The following lines are from *The Blessed Birthday*:—

Come, Faith, and fathom the profundities
 Of these so secret sacred mysteries :
 The line of Reason is too short to sound
 This sea, which neither bottom hath nor bound :

The wisest here no wiser are than fools :
 Christ in a Stall was born, not in the Schools.
 His birth by th' Angel was not first made known
 To Scribes and Rabbins, but to Shepherds shown,
 People who in simplicity did live ;
 Dispute they could not, but they could believe.
 Unto His feast, which was for all men fitted,
 The Wise-men were the last that were admitted :

¹ *Dr. Loe's Poems*, in Grosart's Miscellany: 'On the Seven Words.'

Who humbly did fall down when they were come ;
 Their humane wisdom they did leave at home ;
 And thus their great Inviter more contented
 Than all the precious presents they presented.¹

'Next to the Scripture poems,' said Richard Baxter, 'there are none so savoury to me as Mr. George Herbert's, and Mr. George Sandys's.' Sandys, born 1577, was a son of the Archbishop of York. He travelled extensively in France, Italy, Turkey, Egypt and Palestine, and also visited Virginia as Treasurer of the new colony. Charles I. was much attached to him, and during his captivity at Carisbrook found much pleasure in his paraphrases of the Psalms. These were published in 1636, and were followed by paraphrases of the other parts of Scripture in 1638.

From Psalm cxxi. :—

To the hills thine eyes erect,
 Help from thence alone expect.
 He who heaven and earth has made
 Shall from Sion send thee aid.
 God, thy ever-watchful guide,
 Will not suffer thee to slide ;
 He, even He, who Israel keeps
 Never slumbers, never sleeps.
 He, thy Guard, with wings displayed
 Shall refresh thee in their shade.
 Suns shall not with heat infect,
 But their temperate beams reflect ;
 Nor unwholesome serene shall
 From the moon's moist influence fall.
 When thou travell'st on the way,
 When at home thou spend'st the day ;
 When sweet peace thy life delights,
 When embroiled in bloody fights,
 God shall all thy steps attend,
 Now and evermore defend.

Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639) was educated at Winchester, thence passed to New College, and then to Queen's. After gaining high repute in Oxford for wit and learning, he travelled abroad for several years,

¹ *Poems of Charles Fitzgeoffrey*, ed. by Grosart, p. 152.

then returned to England and became secretary to the Earl of Essex. On the attainder of that nobleman he again retired into Italy, and was engaged in the secret diplomatic service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. At King James's accession, he came back to England, was knighted, and employed in many important embassies. In 1623, the provostship of Eton College was given him, and he then took deacon's orders. Besides his prose writings on *The State of Christendom*, on *The Elements of Architecture*, etc., he wrote a few poems. One of these, *The Character of a Happy Life*, is familiar to most readers, though I must quote it none the less. It is said to have been first printed in 1614:—

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will ;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill !
Whose passions not his masters are ;
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Untied unto the world by care
Of public fame or private breath ;
Who envies none that chance doth raise,
Nor vice ; who never understood
How deepest wounds are given by praise,
Nor rules of state, but rules of good.
Who hath his life from rumours freed ;
Whose conscience is his strong retreat ;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
Nor ruin make oppressors great ;
Who God doth late and early pray
More of His grace than gifts to lend ;
And entertains the harmless day
With a religious book or friend.
This man is freed from servile band
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall ;
Lord of himself, though not of lands ;
And having nothing, yet hath all.¹

I next extract the greater part of a hymn which he

¹ Poems from *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, etc., in Hannah's *Courtly Poets*, 90. It does not seem clear that this poem is strictly original, there being a German poem of the same age, very closely resembling it. Note in *id.*

wrote during his embassy at Venice, when the plague was raging there:—

Thus, then, our Strength, Father of life and death,
 To whom our thanks, our vows, ourselves we owe,
 From me, Thy tenant of this fading breath,
 Accept those lines which from Thy goodness flow,
 And Thou, that wert Thy regal prophet's muse,
 Do not Thy praise in weaker strains refuse !

Let these poor notes ascend unto Thy throne,
 Where majesty doth sit with mercy crowned,
 Where my Redeemer lives, in whom alone
 The errors of my wandering life are drowned ;
 Where all the Choir of Heaven resound the same,
 That only Thine, Thine is the Saving Name !

Well then, my soul, joy in the midst of pain ;
 Thy Christ, that conquered hell, shall from above
 With greater triumph yet return again,
 And conquer His own justice with His love !
 Commanding earth and seas to render those
 Unto His bliss, for whom He paid His woes.

Now have I done ; now are my thoughts at peace ;
 And now my joys are stronger than my grief :
 I feel those comforts that shall never cease,
 Future in hope, but present in belief :
 Thy words are true, Thy promises are just,
 And Thou wilt find Thy dearly-bought in dust.¹

Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling (1580-1640) wrote a number of poems and tragedies, some classical and others biblical. I quote a few lines from a long poem in twelve books upon *Doomesday*:—

Let not the godly man affliction fear ;
 God wrestle may with some, but none o'erthrows.
 Who gives the burden, gives the strength to bear ;
 And best reward the greatest service [obedience] owes [possesses] ;
 Those who would reap, they at the first must eare [plough],
 God's love, his faith, a good man's trouble shows.²

William Cartwright (1611-43) was a man of some note at Oxford, both as a preacher, and reader in

¹ Poems from *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, 92.

² *Poetical Works of Sir W. Alexander, Earl of Stirling*, in 3 vols. 1870.

metaphysics. When the Civil War broke out, he acted with zeal and efficiency for the King, who went into mourning for him when he died of camp-fever. His poems and plays were published in 1651.

CONSIDERATION.

Fool that I was, that little of my span
Which I have sinned, until it styles me man,
I counted life till now ; henceforth I'll say
'Twas but a drowsy lingering or delay :
Let it forgotten perish, let none tell
That then I was : To live is to live well.
Off then, thou old man, and give place unto
The Ancient of Days ! Let Him renew
Mine age like as the eagles, and endow
My breast with innocence, that he, whom thou
Hast made a man of sin and subtly sworn
A vassal to thy tyranny, may turn
Infant again, and having all of child
Want wilt hereafter to be so beguiled.¹

Francis Quarles (1592-1644), son of an official in Elizabeth's Court, was a member of Lincoln's Inn, then Steward to the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I., and afterwards Secretary to Archbishop Usher in Ireland. When the Civil War broke out, his attachment to the King, whom he joined at Oxford, brought upon him the hostility of the Puritan party. His property was plundered, and various manuscripts which he had prepared for the press were destroyed. This loss he took so much to heart that it was thought to have hastened his death. One of his works, *The Emblems, Divine and Moral, together with Hieroglyphics of the Life of Man*, has been many times reprinted. It is not merely interesting for its quaintness, but valuable for the warm spirit of devotion with which it is penetrated. Each poem is headed by a curious 'hieroglyphic,' or emblematic engraving, with a text and a Latin motto, and is illustrated on the opposite page with quotations from the

¹ *Cartwright's Poems*, Chalmers's *English Poets*, vi. 528.

early Fathers, and with a short epigram. I give an example:—The hieroglyphic represents a heavenly globe at the top of a hill. A man is painfully riding up to it on an ass—so slowly that he is outstripped by a snail, and looking back the while to the terrestrial world below, towards which another rider, mounted on a stag, is spurring at full speed. The motto is, ‘Da mihi fraena, timor; da mihi calcar, amor.’ The text is from John iii. 19: ‘Loving darkness rather than light.’ The quotations are all three from St. Augustine. One is from his *Exposition of the Psalms*: ‘Two several lovers built two several cities: the love of God buildeth a Jerusalem; the love of the world buildeth a Babylon. Let every one inquire of himself what he loveth, and he shall resolve himself of whence he is a citizen.’ The other two are from *The Confessions*: ‘All things are driven by their own weight, and tend to their own centre. My weight is my love; by that I am driven whithersoever I am driven.’ ‘Lord, he loveth Thee the less, that loveth anything with Thee, which he loveth not for Thee.’ The epigram is—

Lord, scourge my ass, if she shall make no haste,
 And curb my stag, if he should fly too fast;
 If he be over swift, or she prove idle,
 Let love lend her a spur; fear, him a bridle.

The poem runs thus:—

Lord, when we leave the world, and come to Thee,
 How dull, how slug are we!
 How backward! how preposterous is the motion
 Of our ungain devotion!
 Our thoughts are millstones, and our souls are lead,
 And our desires are dead:
 Our vows are fairly promised, faintly paid;
 Or broken, or not made:
 Our better work (if any good) attends
 Upon our private ends;
 In whose performance one poor worldly scoff
 Foils us, or beats us off.
 If Thy sharp scourge find out some secret fault
 We grumble or revolt;
 And if Thy gentle hand forbear, we stray,
 Or idly lose the way.

Is the road fair? we loiter. Clogged with mire?
 We stick, or else retire :
 A lamb appears a lion ; and we fear
 Each bush we see's a bear.
 When our dull souls direct our thoughts to Thee,
 As slow as snails are we.
 But at the earth we dart our winged desire,
 We burn, we burn like fire.
 Like as the amorous needle joys to bend
 To her magnetic friend ;
 Or as the greedy lover's eyeballs fly
 At his fair mistress' eye,
 So, so we cling to earth ; we fly and puff,
 Yet fly not fast enough.
 If pleasure beckon with her balmy hand,
 Her beck's a strong command :
 If honour call us with her courtly breath,
 An hour's delay is death :
 If profit's golden-fingered charm inveigles,
 We clip more swift than eagles :
 Let Auster weep, or blustering Boreas roar,
 Till eyes or lungs be sore ;
 Let Neptune swell until his dropsied sides
 Burst into broken tides ;
 Not threatening rocks, nor winds, nor waves, nor fire,
 Can curb our fierce desire :
 Not fire nor rocks can stop our furious minds,
 Nor waves, nor winds ;
 How fast and fearless do our footsteps flee !
 The light-foot roebuck's not so swift as we.¹

The following is an extract from the poem headed by an emblem which bears the motto, ' Phosphore redde diem : '—

How long ! how long shall these benighted eyes
 Languish in shades, like feeble flies
 Expecting Spring ! How long shall darkness soil
 The face of earth, and thus beguile
 Our souls of sprightly action ; when will day
 Begin to dawn, whose new-born ray
 May gild the weathercocks of our devotion,
 And give our unsouled souls new motion !
 Sweet Phosphor, bring the day !
 Thy light will fray
 These horrid mists ; sweet Phosphor, bring the day !²

¹ *Quarles' Emblems, Divine and Moral*, i. 13.

² *Id.* i. 14.

The following is headed by the emblem of a man in a cage, with the text, 'Bring my soul out of prison,' Ps. cxlii. 7:—

My soul is like a bird ; my flesh the cage,
Wherein she wears her weary pilgrimage
Of hours as few as evil, daily fed
With sacred wine, and sacramental bread.
The keys that lock her in, and let her out,
Are birth and death ; 'twixt both she hops about
From perch to perch, from sense to reason ; then
From higher reason down to sense again :
From sense she climbs to faith ; where for a season
She sits and sings ; then down again to reason :
From reason back to faith, and straight from thence
She rudely flutters to the perch of sense ;
From sense to hope ; then hops from hope to doubt :
From doubt to dull despair.

Great Lord of souls, to whom shall prisoners fly
But Thee ? Thou hadst Thy cage, as well as I ;
And for my sake Thy pleasure was to know
The sorrows that it brought, and feltst them too.¹

My last quotation is from some verses under a hieroglyphic of a closed lantern ; one of the patristic quotations is from St. Bernard : ' If thou be one of the foolish virgins, the congregation is necessary for thee ; if thou be one of the wise virgins, thou art necessary for the congregation.'

Was man—the highest masterpiece of Nature,
The curious abstract of the whole creation,
Whose soul was copied from his great Creator,
Made to give light, and set for observation,
Ordained for this ? to spend his light
In a dark lantern cloister'd up in night ?
Remember, O remember, thou wert set
For men to see the great Creator by ;
Thy flame is not thy own ; it is a debt
Thou ow'st thy Maker.

My God, my light is dark enough at lightest,
Increase her flame, and give her strength to shine :
'Tis frail at best : 'tis dim enough at brightest,
But 'tis her glory to be foiled by Thine.²

¹ Quarles' *Emblems, Divine and Moral*, v. 10.

² *Id.* viii. 5.

Alexander Rosse, one of Charles the First's chaplains, a good and learned man, wrote among many other books one entitled *Mel Heliconium, or Poetical Honey Gathered out of the Weeds of Parnassus*, published in 1646, 'the fruit of some sequestered hours from his divinity exercises.' It is a quaint book ; his plan being to take, as a sort of text, some mythological story, and then to explain as a spiritual allegory what he calls 'the mysteries' of it. Each allegory is concluded with some appropriate verses. Thus he symbolises from the story of Atlas, who was turned into a mountain by Perseus, son of Jupiter, because he refused to lodge him :—

Go to ! my soul, the doors unlock !
Behold, the Son of God doth knock,
And offers to come in.
O suffer not to go from hence
So great a God, so just a Prince :
That were a grievous sin !
Refuse not, then, to entertain
So great a guest, who would so fain
Come lodge and sup with thee.¹

Again, Chiron was skilled in astronomy, music, and physic. Even so the Christian must be contemplative, and have his thoughts in heaven ; music must be in his heart, good words in his mouth, good deeds in his actions. Chiron was wounded in the foot by Hercules, and endured it without murmur. Patient suffering is a part of Christianity. But Chiron entreated Jupiter, who placed him among the stars, with a sacrifice in his hand, and an altar before him. Even so affliction mortifies the flesh, and makes the Christian meet for heaven.

To gaze upon night's sparkling eyes,
Which still are rolling in the skies,
Is Chiron's head ; but we
Must have his curing hands also,
And feet which may endure God's blow
And voice of melody.

¹ *Mel Heliconium*, by Alex. Rosse, His Majesty's Chapleain in Ordinary, 1646, p. 45.

Our hands must work salvation,
 Our heads must meditate upon
 Heaven's shining canopy ;
 Our tongues must praise God's actions,
 The feet of our affections
 For sin must wounded be.
 I will before my Altar stand,
 With sacrifices in my hand,
 And thus to God will pray :
 Lord, heal these wounded feet of mine,
 Then make me as a star to shine,
 Or as the brightest day.
 Give me the head of knowledge, and
 A well-tuned tongue, a working hand,
 And feet which may Thy blow
 Endure ! O, wound me, so that I
 By wounds may be prepared to die
 And weaned from things below.¹

The following stanzas are part of a longer poem than the rest, founded upon the story of Fortuna, daughter of Oceanus. They appear to me worthy to rank high in any record of the sacred poetry of our older writers :—

But as the fire refines the gold,
 And as the cold
 Revives the fire ; and as in frost
 The stars shine most :
 And as the palm lifts up his crest
 The higher that it is opprest :

So crosses and affliction
 Which fall upon
 The just, makes not their faith to fail
 Nor courage quail ;
 Who shine, burn, sparkle, fructify
 As gold, fire, stars, and the palm-tree.

I'd rather have a blustering gale
 And swelling sail,
 Than lie becalméd in the main,
 And ne'er attain
 My wishéd port ; O let the blast
 Of troubles drive me home at last !

¹ *Mel Heliconium*, p. 94.

That tree is strong and firmly fixed
 Which is perplex
 With frequent storms, which when they blow,
 The roots below
 Take stronger hold ; O, if I were
 Strong as this tree my storms to bear !

The idle sword breeds rust, the cloth
 Begets the moth,
 Not worm ; the standing water dies,
 And putrifies :
 We first must tread the Camomell,
 Or else it will afford no smell.

The pilot's skill how can we know
 Till tempests blow ?
 How is that soldier's valour seen
 Which ne'er had been
 In fight ? they scarce true soldiers are,
 That have no wound to shew, nor scar.

Those soldiers which the General
 Calls out of all
 His army to attempt some great
 And brave exploit,
 Are those sure whom he means to grace
 With honour, and some higher place.

Except we fight, there is no crown
 And no renown ;
 Unless we sweat in the vineyard
 There's no reward :
 Unless we climb Mount Calvary,
 Mount Olivet we shall not see.

God loves his sons, and them corrects
 Whom he respects,
 And whips them when they gad and roam,
 And brings them home,
 And fits them, that He may advance
 Them to their due inheritance.

All whom God means shall bear his blows,
 He hard'neth those ;
 He wrestles with those sons of His
 Whom He will bless ;

With Jacob if He make thee lame,
He'll bless thee and enlarge thy name.

Lord, if this be Thy Providence,
Teach me from hence,
How I may patiently drink up
That deadly cup
Which Thy Son drank ; help me to bear
His Cross, that I His Crown may wear.¹

There is a pathetic interest in the aspirations which conclude the book, written as they were at the outbreak of the civil troubles :—

And let the good ship ride
Called Charity, securely on the main ;
Be pilot, Lord, and guide
Her to the Cape of Good Hope ; let her gain
The land of promise ; with the gale
Of Thy good Spirit fill her sail.

And let her compass be
Thy word, and with the helm of discipline
From sinful rocks keep me,
And let the pole-star of Thy truth be seen ;
Let Faith, the bright eye of my soul,
Be always looking on that Pole.

The man of Thy right hand
Preserve, Lord, as the apple of thine eye ;
And from this sinful land
Let not true Love with her two sisters fly ;
But as its name is Albion,
So in it still let all be one !¹

The poems of Patrick Carey were first published by Sir Walter Scott from a single MS. bearing the date 1651. His verses show that he was a lawyer, a supporter of the Royalist party, and a High Churchman, or possibly a Roman Catholic. The following are from his *Triolets* :—

All those joys which caught my mind
Now I find
To be bubbles, full of wind :

¹ *Mel Heliconium*, p. 154.

² *Id.* 176.

Glowworms, only shining bright
 When that we
 Clouded be
 By dark folly's stupid night.

Looking up then I did go
 To and fro,
 When indeed they were below :
 For now that mine eyes see clear,
 Fair no more,
 Small and poor,
 Far beneath me they appear.

But a nobler light I spy,
 Much more high
 Than that sun which shines i' th' sky :
 Since its sight, all earthly things
 I detest :
 There to rest
 Give, O give me the Dove's wings.

Another *Triolet* :—

Worldly designs, fears, hopes, farewell !
 Farewell all earthly joys and cares !
 On nobler thoughts my soul shall dwell.
 Worldly designs, fears, hopes, farewell !
 All quiet, in my peaceful cell
 I'll think on God, free from your snares.
 Worldly designs, fears, hopes, farewell !
 Farewell all earthly joys and cares.

I'll seek my God's law to fulfil,
 Riches and power I'll set at nought.
 Let others strive for them that will ;
 I'll seek my God's law to fulfil :
 Lest sinful pleasures my soul kill,
 By folly's vain delights first caught,
 I'll seek my God's law to fulfil,—
 Riches and power I'll set at naught.

Yes, my dear God, I've found it so ;
 No joys but Thine are purely sweet ;
 Other delights come mixed with woe.
 Yes, my dear Lord, I've found it so.
 Pleasure at Courts is but a show :
 With true content in cells we meet ;
 Yes, my dear Lord, I've found it so,
 No joys but Thine are purely sweet.

From *Dirige nos, Domine* :—

Open thyself and then look in ;
 Consider what thou mightst have been,
 And what thou art now made by sin.
 Ashamed o' th' state to which th'art brought,
 Detest and grieve for each past fault,
 Sigh, weep, and blush for each foul thought.
 Fear, but despair not, and still love ;
 Look humbly up to God above,
 And Him thou'lt soon to pity move.
 Resolve on that which prudence shows,
 Reform what thou dost well propose,
 And keep i' th' way thou hast once chose.
 Vice, and what looks like vicious shun ;
 Let use make good acts eas'ly done :
 Have zeal, as when th' hadst first begun.
 Hope strongly, yet be humble still :
 Thy good is God's ; what's thine, is ill ;
 Do thus, and thee affect He will.

William Drummond (1585-1649) 'the first Scotch poet who wrote in English with purity and elegance,' was son of Sir John Drummond, an officer in the Court of James VI. He lived a retired, tranquil life in his pleasant home at Hawthornden, where he devoted much of his time to classical studies, to poetry, and to writing the history of his country. He kept up a friendly intercourse with Ben Jonson and other English poets, also with several eminent men abroad, whose acquaintance he had made in a visit to France, Germany, and Italy. Without taking much personal share in the great struggle of his time, he was a thorough Cavalier in sympathy, and frequently had to suffer molestation on that account. His great grief at the King being brought to the scaffold is said to have shortened his life.

Drummond's *Flowers of Sion* were published in 1630. The *Divine Poems*, and the rest of his poetry, appeared partly in 1616, and partly in the complete edition of his works, which did not appear till 1711. The following are from the *Flowers of Sion* :—

Love, which is here a care,
 That wit and will doth mar,
 Uncertain truce, and a most certain war,
 A shrill tempestuous wind,
 Which doth disturb the mind,
 And like wild waves all our designs commove :
 Among those powers above,
 Which see their Maker's face,
 It a contentment is, a quiet peace,
 A pleasure void of grief, a constant rest,
 Eternal joy which nothing can molest.¹

Why, worldlings, do ye trust frail honour's dreams,
 And lean to gilded glories which decay?
 Why do ye toil to registrate your names
 On icy pillars which soon melt away?
 True honour is not here ; that place it claims
 Where black-browed night doth not exile the day
 Nor no far-shining lamp dives in the sea,
 But an eternal sun spreads lasting beams ;
 There it attendeth you where spotless bands
 Of spirits stand gazing on their sovereign Bliss,
 Where years not hold it in their cank'ring hands,
 But who once noble ever noble is.

Look home, lest he your weakened wit make thrall,
 Who Eden's foolish gardener erst made fall.

Sweet bird, that sing'st away the early hours
 Of winters past or coming, void of care,
 Well pleas'd with delights which present are,
 Fair seasons, budding sprays, sweet-smelling flowers—
 To rocks, to springs, to rills, from leafy bowers,
 Thou thy Creator's goodness dost declare,
 And what dear gifts on thee He did not spare,
 A stain to human sense in sin that lowers.
 What soul can be so sick which by thy songs
 (Attired in sweetness) sweetly is not driven
 Quite to forget earth's turmoils, spites, and wrongs,
 And lift a reverent eye and thought to heaven ?

Sweet, artless songster, thou my mind dost raise
 To airs of spheres, yea, and to angels' lays.

Among the *Divine Poems* are various hymns, as for the several days of the week, the Sundays in Lent, the chief festivals of the Church, the Dedication of a Church, etc.

¹ *Drummond's Works, Anderson's English Poets, vol. iv.*

Joseph Beaumont, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and Master of Peterhouse, wrote during the civil troubles, and published soon after the Restoration, his poem of *Psyche, or Love's Mystery*. It is an inordinately long poem, of some four or five hundred thousand lines, telling in allegory the history of a human soul and its redemption by Christ. The soul is led by Grace and by her Guardian Angel. Lust, Pride, Heresy, Persecution, Spiritual Dereliction, beset her on her way, till she reaches eternal felicity at last. In proof and testimony of the Saviour's love to the soul, several of the cantos are devoted to a history of Christ's life on earth. This, at all events to a modern reader, constitutes far the most interesting part of the book, the incidents of the Gospel history, especially those of the Passion, being told with no small degree of imaginative force, and with a strong and powerful colouring, which is sometimes rather coarse, and sometimes too histrionic, but exceedingly vivid, and, where it tells of suffering, terribly so. The rest of the narrative, however unreadable a great part of it now is, may, when books were comparatively few, and when allegory was still popular, have been to the taste of many, a sort of *Pilgrim's Progress*. In the preface to the second folio edition, Charles Beaumont, son of the author, says that the first edition had become very scarce and very dear, and that its republication had been 'earnestly and often desired by many.' Out of this great sea of verse I extract a few short quotations of man and his passion :—

What boots it, man, that nature's courtesy,
Lifting his awful looks high towards heaven,
Hath built his temples up with majesty,
And into his hand imperial power given?

What royal non-sense is a diadem
Abroad—for one who's not at home supreme?

How does this wild world mock him, when it lays
Its universal homage at his feet ;
Whom, whilst the air, the earth, the sea obeys,
A saucy pack of passions dare to meet

With plain defiance, and presume to hope
His pleasure shall go down, their pleasure up.¹

Of 'the holy travellers through cold and frost' reaching Bethlehem :—

The men were ice ; so were their doors, for both
Hard frozen stood against poor-looking guests :
Where'er they knocked the surly host was wroth,
Crying 'My house is full.' Indeed those nests
Were only courteous traps, which barred out
All birds but such as store of feathers brought.

Thus was the Universe's King shut out
Of his own world as he was entering in :
Long had the noble pilgrims patient sought,
And yet could at no door admission win,
And now night crowded on apace, and drew
Their curtain, who as yet no lodging knew.²

Of the demoniac healed :—

But ne'er did air put on so calm a face,
When every wind to its own home was blown,
And heaven of all its storms delivered, as
Redeemed he, now once again his own,
Finding the furies which his heart did swell
Had left himself within himself to dwell.

Of zeal, fired by the Cup of Life :—

Oft have I seen brave spirits when they rose
From this great Banquet, filled with generous rage,
Fly in the face of vice, and nobly choose
Against its stoutest ramparts to engage
Their heavenly confidence : nor has their high
Adventure failed to reach down victory.

Oft have I seen them smile in sweet disdain
Upon misfortune's most insulting look,
Oft have I seen them kindly entertain
Those guests faint human nature worst can brook,
Grief, sickness, loss, oppression, calumny,
Shame, plunder, banishment and poverty.⁴

¹ *Psyche*, Canto v., stanzas 1, 2.

³ *Id.* Canto x. stanza 297.

² *Id.* Canto vii., stanzas 134-6.

⁴ *Id.* Canto xii. stanzas 151-2.

Of the Lord's Day :—

The other Sabbath was a shade of Thee ;
 And Thou the copy out of that which shall,
 Amid the triumphs of Immensity,
 Be all Heaven's everlasting festival ;
 That Sabbath, which no higher name shall know
 Than this, the Lord's Day ; and that day art Thou.¹

Joseph Hall (1574-1656), bishop successively of Exeter and Norwich, is now best remembered by his *Meditations*, the one among his voluminous prose writings which has maintained a place in popular esteem. His satires, written in earlier life, while he was a fellow at Emanuel College, Cambridge, were the first English compositions of their kind. Although he had always been a vigorous defender of Episcopacy, he was in most respects a Puritan. He was sent in 1618 to the Synod of Dort with some other English Divines, preached a Latin sermon before the Assembly and was received with very special honours. When the Civil War broke out, he protested against the validity of laws passed during the compelled absence of the bishops from Parliament. He was committed to the Tower, and though released after a few months' captivity, had his revenues sequestered, and was reduced for the rest of his life to poverty.

Bishop Hall translated into verse the first ten Psalms, but with no particular success. The following is part of one of his *Anthems* :—

Lord, what art Thou? Pure life, power, beauty, bliss :
 Where dwell'st Thou? Up above, in perfect light ;
 What is Thy time? Eternity it is :
 What state? Attendance of each glorious spright ;
 Thyself, Thy place, Thy days, Thy state
 Pass all the thoughts of power create.
 How shall I reach Thee, Lord? Oh, soar above,
 Ambitious soul : But which way shall I fly?
 Thou, Lord, art way and end : What wings have I?
 Aspiring thoughts, of faith, of hope, of love :
 Oh, let these wings, that way alone,
 Present me to Thy blissful throne.²

¹ *Psyche*, Canto xv. stanza 113.

² *Works of Joseph Hall*, 1839, vol. xii. p. 317.

Francis Rous (1579-1658) a Cornishman, was Provost of Eton in 1643, member of Parliament for Devonshire in 1653, and for Cornwall in 1656. He was a Presbyterian, one of Cromwell's Privy Council, a 'trier of clerical candidates' and a lay member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. His version of the Psalms was accepted and published by Parliament in 1646. In 1649 the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland approved it, and it has been largely used there ever since. It is described as having vigour, though often prosaic and ungraceful. The version of the 23d Psalm, beginning 'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,' is considered his best.¹

The following lines have an interest, as coming from the hand of William Bradford (1590-1657), one of the 'Pilgrim Fathers' who went to America in the *Mayflower*. He was Governor of Plymouth in Massachusetts:—

PROVIDENCE AND THE PILGRIM.

From my years young in days of youth,
 God did make known to me this truth,
 And call'd me from my native place
 For to enjoy the means of grace.
 In wilderness He did me guide,
 And in strange lands for me provide.
 In fears and wants, through weal and woe,
 A pilgrim, passed I to and fro:
 Oft left of them whom I did trust;
 How vain it is to rest on dust!
 A man of sorrow I have been,
 And many changes I have seen.
 Wars, wants, peace, plenty, have I known;
 And some advanced, others thrown down.
 The humble poor,—cheerful and glad;
 Rich,—discontent, sour and sad:
 When fears and sorrows have been mixt
 Consolations came betwixt.
 Faint not, poor soul, in God still trust,
 Fear not the things thou suffer must;

¹ Duffield's *English Hymns*, 1886, p. 533.

For whom He loves He doth chastise,
And then all tears wipes from their eyes.¹

The following are a few lines upon the treasures of Scripture. They are by Peter Heylyn (1600-62), chaplain to Charles I., a divine of some note, who, in the time of the civil disturbances, took an active part in supporting the royal and ecclesiastical prerogatives:—

If thou art merry, here are airs ;
If melancholy, here are prayers ;
If studious, here are those things writ ;
Which may deserve thy ablest wit ;
If hungry, here is food divine ;
If thirsty, nectar, heavenly wine.

Read then ; but, first, thyself prepare
To read with zeal and mark with care ;
And when thou readst what here is writ,
Let thy best practice second it :
So twice each precept read shall be,—
First in the book, and, next, in thee.²

Mildmay, second Earl of Westmoreland (1601-1664), was Herrick's contemporary and friend. In the Civil War he declared for the King, and remained with him till 1663. He then submitted to the Parliament. His *Otia Sacra* was never published, but was privately printed for gifts in 1648. An impression of fifty copies of it was edited a few years ago by Mr. Grosart.

The following is entitled *To Kiss God's Rod*:—

Whatever God's divine
Decree
Awardeth unto mine
Or me,
Though 't may seem ill,
With patience
I am resolved to undergo,
Nor to His purpose once say no,
But moderate both mind and will :
And conquering the rebellions of sense
Place all content in true obedience.³

¹ Stedman and Hutchinson's *Library of American Literature*, 1889, i. 115.

² Quoted by F. Saunders in *Evenings with the Sacred Poets*, 232.

³ *Poems of Mildmay, Earl of Westmoreland*, ed. by Grosart, p. 21.

I add two short extracts, more for the worthiness of the man than of his verse.

From *A Dedication of my First Son* :—

Wherefore accept, I pray Thee, this,
 Thou 'st given, and my first son is.
 Let him be Thine, and from his cradling
 Begin his service's first reckoning.
 Grant with his days Thy grace increase and fill
 His heart, nor leave there room to harbour ill,
 That in the progress of his years
 He may enjoy whose badge he wears.¹

From *My Happy Life* :—

First my God served, I do commend
 The rest to some choice book or friend,
 Wherein I may such treasure find
 T' enrich my nobler part, the mind ;
 And that my body health comprise
 Use too some moderate exercise ;
 Whether invited to the field,
 To see what pastime that can yield,
 With horse, or hound, or hawk, or t' be
 More taken with a well-grown tree
 Under whose shades I may rehearse
 The holy lays of sacred verse.²

William Habington (1605-1645) belonged to a Roman Catholic family, and was educated for the Jesuit order, which, however, he declined to enter. He married a daughter of the Earl of Northumberland, the 'Castara' of his poems, which contain much that is admirable in purity and dignity of thought. The following is headed :—

Nox nocti indicat Scientiam.

When I survey the bright
 Celestial sphere,—
 So rich with jewels hung, that night
 Doth like an Æthiop bride appear,—
 My soul her wings doth spread,
 And heavenward flies,
 Th' Almighty's mysteries to read
 In the large volumes of the skies.

¹ *Poems of Mildmay, Earl of Westmoreland*, ed. by Grosart, 1879, p. 83.

² *Id.* 135.

For the large firmament
 Shoots forth no flame
 So silent, but is eloquent
 In speaking the Creator's name.

No unregarded star
 Contracts its light
 Into so small a character,
 Removed far from our human sight,
 But if we steadfast look,
 We shall discern
 In it, as in some holy book,
 How man may heavenly knowledge learn.

It tells the conqueror,
 That far-stretch'd power,
 Which his proud dangers traffic for,
 Is but the triumph of an hour ;

That from the furthest North
 Some nation may,
 Yet undiscover'd, issue forth
 And o'er his new-got conquest sway.

Some nation, yet shut in
 With hills of ice,
 May be let out to scourge his sin,
 Till they shall equal him in vice.

And then they likewise shall
 Their ruin have ;
 For, as yourselves, your empires fall,
 And every kingdom hath a grave.

Thus those celestial fires,
 Though seeming mute,
 The fallacy of our desires
 And all the pride of life confute.

For they have watch'd since first
 The world had birth :
 And found sin in itself accurst,
 And nothing permanent on earth.¹

From *Cupio Dissolvi* :—

For in the fire when ore is tried
 And by that torment purified,

¹ *Habington's Poems* ; Chalmers's *British Poets*, vi. 476.

Do we deplore the loss?
 And when Thou shalt my soul refine,
 That it thereby may purer shine,
 Shall I grieve for the dross?¹

Christopher Harvey (1597-1663) was appointed in 1630 to the Rectory of Whitney, on the Wye, and in 1639 to the Vicarage of Clifton, in Warwickshire. He was also for a time Master of Kington Grammar School in Herefordshire. His series of poems entitled *The Synagogue*, as well as his *Schola Cordis*, were both published in 1647, anonymously. He modestly called himself an imitator of George Herbert, and both in his devout churchmanly thought, and in the humours and subtleties of language with which his thoughts are expressed, following in his teacher's steps. *The Synagogue* of Harvey has often been bound up, not unaptly, with Herbert's *Temple*. Certainly in this case the disciple is not equal to his master; but some of his poems are, in their originality and fervency of thought, something far better than mere imitation. The following is named *Invitation*:—

Turn in, my Lord, turn in to me;
 Mine heart's a homely place,
 But thou canst make corruption flee
 And fill it with Thy grace:
 So furnishéd, it will be brave,
 And a rich dwelling Thou shalt have.

It was Thy lodging once before;
 It builded was by Thee;
 But I by sin set ope the door;
 It rendered was by me; [given up]
 And so the building was defaced
 And in Thy room another placed.

But he usurps; the right is Thine:
 O dispossess him, Lord;
 Do Thou but say, 'This heart is mine,'
 He's gone at the first word;
 Thy word's Thy will, Thy will's Thy power,
 Thy time is always. Now's mine hour.

¹ *Habington's Poems*, 482.

Now say to sin, 'Depart,'
 And 'Son, give me thine heart !'
 Thou, that by saying, 'Let it be,' didst make it,
 Canst, if Thou wilt, by saying, 'Give't me,' take it.¹

The following is from *The Seeding of the Heart* :—

Lord, I have lain
 Barren too long, and fain
 I would redeem the time, that I may be
 Fruitful to Thee—
 Fruitful in knowledge, faith, obedience,
 Ere I go hence ;
 That when I come
 At harvest to be reapéd, and brought home,
 Thine angels may
 My soil in thy celestial garner lay,
 Where perfect joy and bliss
 Eternal is.

If to entreat
 A crop of purest wheat,
 A blessing too transcendent should appear
 For me to bear,
 Lord, make me what Thou wilt, so Thou wilt take
 What Thou dost make,
 And not disdain
 To house me, though among Thy coarsest grain ;
 So I may be
 Laid with the gleanings gathered by Thee
 When the full sheaves are spent,
 I am content.²

Of the Bible :—

The Bible, that's the Book—the Book indeed,
 The Book of books ;
 On which who looks,
 As he should do, aright, shall never need
 Wish for a better light
 To guide him in the night.

It is the looking-glass of souls, wherein
 All men may see
 Whether they be
 Still, as by nature th'are, deform'd with sin ;
 Or in a better case,
 As new adorned with grace.

¹ *Christopher Harvey's Poems*, ed. by Grosart. *The Synagogue*, No. 57.

² *Schola Cordis*, Ode 28.

'Tis the great magazine of spiritual arms,
 Wherein doth lie
 Th' artillery
 Of heav'n ready charged against all harms
 That might come by the blows
 Of our infernal foes.

It is the index [pointer] to eternity ;
 He cannot miss
 Of endless bliss,
 That takes this chart to steer his voyage by.¹

Of good doctrine preached without skill :—

So that the meat be wholesome, though
 The sauce shall not be toothsome, I'll not go
 Empty away, and starve my soul
 To feed my foolish fancy.²

When the Liturgy was finally revised in 1661, the translation of *Veni Creator*, as it stands in our Consecration and Ordination Services, 'Come, Holy Ghost, our Soul inspire,' was introduced. It is by Bishop Cosin, and is rather a shortened paraphrase than a translation of the old Latin hymn.

Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), so well known by his *History of the Worthies of England*, was, before the Civil War, Prebend of Salisbury and Lecturer at the Savoy, to which preferments he was restored in 1660. He was a sincere but moderate Royalist, a learned man, and a very eminent preacher. His first publication, 1631, written while he was a Fellow of Sidney College, Cambridge, was a poem on David's Sin and Repentance, from which I take the following verses :—

Go, fond affectors of a flaunting strain,
 Whose sermons strike at sins with slanting blows ;
 Give me the man that 's powerful and plain,
 The monster vice unmaskéd to expose :
 Such preachers do the soul and marrow part,
 And cause the guilty conscience to smart ;
 Such please no itching ears, but pierce the heart.

¹ *Christopher Harvey's Poems, The Synagogue*, No. 14. ² *Id.* No. 15.

This made King David's marble mind to melt,
 And to the former temper to return,
 Thawing his frozen breast, whenas he felt
 The lively sparks of Grace therein to burn,
 Which under ashes cold were choked before :
 And now he weeps, and wails, and sighs full sore,
 Though sure such sorrow did his joy restore.

So have I seen one slumbered in a swoond,
 Whose sullen soul into his heart did hie :
 His pensive friends soon heave him from the ground,
 And to his face life-water do apply :
 At length a long expected sigh doth strive
 To bring the welcome news, the man's alive,
 Whose soul at last doth in each part arrive.

Then to his harp he did himself betake,
 (His tongue-tied harp, long gone out of request)
 And next to this his glory must awake,
 The member he of all accounted best :
 Then with those hands, which he for grief did wring,
 He also lightly strikes the warbling string,
 And makes one voice serve both to sob and sing.¹

Richard Standfast was Chaplain in Ordinary to Charles I., was deprived of his preferments during the Commonwealth, and reinstated at the Restoration. He published some poems in 1664. The following are the first and last verses of *Complaint of a Sinner* :—

Sin, sin
 With my life did begin,
 And I have lived therein
 All my days heretofore !
 Sins of heart, head, hand and tongue,
 Through my life all along,
 Like a thread have they run,
 Binding me to be undone :
 Many and great are they grown ;
 And if justice scan the score,
 I must perish evermore.

Grace, grace,
 In my heart do Thou place,
 That I may win the race

¹ *David's Heartie Repentance*, etc., by Thomas Fuller, 1631 ; Grosart, 1868.

Which Thy laws do require.
 Give me, Lord, I humbly sue,
 Grace to know, grace to do,
 Grace that may me so renew,
 And confirm and perfect too,
 That, when death shall claim his due
 Grace in glory may expire.
 This is all I do require.¹

The following, from the well-known lines, beginning 'The glories of our birth and state,' are by James Shirley, the dramatic poet (1596-1666):—

All heads must come
 To the cold tomb ;
 Only the actions of the just
 Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.³

Jeremy Taylor, whose piety, wit, and learning adorned the English Church throughout the troubled period of the Commonwealth, was born in the early years of the seventeenth century, and died in 1667. The son of a Cambridge tradesman, he entered Caius College at the age of thirteen, and there remained till he took his degree. Archbishop Laud was struck by his talents while he was supplying for a time the place of the Lecturer at St. Paul's Cathedral, procured his election as Fellow of All Souls, made him his chaplain, and gave him after a time the Rectory of Uppingham. In 1642 he was made Chaplain to the King, and, after the strife had broken out, attended him in his military movements. When the Royal cause was shattered, he was allowed to officiate for the Earl of Carbury at the Golden Grove in Carmarthenshire, and to teach a school. There he wrote his principal works, until, almost at a blow, he lost three sons by sickness. Then he went to London, and, not without great hazard, ministered to a congregation of Loyalists. He afterwards went to Ireland with Lord Conway, and, after the Restoration, was made Bishop first of Down and

¹ From Sir Egerton Brydges' *British Bibliography*, i. 71.

² E. Taylor's *Flowers and Fruits from Old English Gardens*, 1864, 119.

Connor, and afterwards of Dromore. His *Golden Grove*, written during his retirement in Wales, treated of Things to be Believed, Things to be Done, Things to be Prayed for, and concluded with some hymns for festivals and solemn days. His vivid and exuberant imagination found freer scope in prose than in measure; but his poetry is by no means wanting in the qualities which gave splendour to his general style. The following is part of a hymn for Advent :—

When, Lord, O when, shall we
 Our dear salvation see?
 Arise, arise!
 Our fainting eyes
 Have longed all night; and 'twas a long one too.

But Thou hast given us hopes that we
 At length another day shall see—
 Wherein each vile neglected place,
 Gilt with the aspect of Thy face,
 Shall be, like that, the porch and gate of heaven.
 How long, dear God, how long!
 See how the nations throng:
 All human kind,
 Knit and combined
 Into one body, look for Thee their Head.
 Pity our multitude;
 Lord, we are vile and rude,
 Headless, and senseless, without Thee,
 Of all things but the want of Thy blest face:
 O haste apace,
 And Thy bright self to this our body wed!¹

From the Second Hymn for Advent :—

Lord, come away:
 Why dost Thou stay?
 The road is ready, and Thy paths, made straight,
 With longing expectation wait
 The consecration of Thy beauteous feet.
 Ride on triumphantly; behold, we lay
 Our lusts and proud wills in Thy way.
 Hosanna! welcome to our hearts! Lord, here
 Thou hast a temple too, and full as dear
 As that of Sion, and as full of sin:

¹ *Jeremy Taylor's Works*, ed. by Bishop Heber, vol. xv. p. 76.

Nothing but thieves and robbers dwell therein :
Enter and chase them forth, and cleanse the floor.

And then, if our stiff tongues shall be
Mute in the presence of Thy Deity,
The stones out of the temple wall
Shall cry aloud, and call

Hosanna ! and Thy glorious footsteps greet. Amen.¹

George Wither (1588-1667) is sometimes called the Puritan poet. The term is not quite correct, for he did not adopt Puritan opinions till 1646, and many of his poems were published long before this. His life was spent among many vicissitudes. He had been brought up in comfort, if not in luxury, and had spent two years at Magdalen College, Oxford, when a sudden reverse in his father's fortunes summoned him home to hold the plough. After a while he made his way to London, and entered at Lincoln's Inn. He soon became known as a writer of poetry and satire. Tho' galling force with which he lashed the vices of the time made him enemies, and lodged him for some time in the Marshalsea prison, where he appears to have suffered great hardships. In 1623 he published his *Hymns and Songs of the Church*. They were set to music by Orlando Gibbons, one of the best musicians of the day. In 1625 he acted a noble part in aiding the sick and dying in the Plague. In 1631 he published his version of the Psalms. During the Civil Wars he threw himself with great vigour and vehemence into the Puritan cause, and at the Restoration was sent first to Newgate, then to the Tower. In 1663 he was released, and was in London at the time of the second Plague and the Great Fire. He was always a man of simple piety and austere principle, and, though he changed and veered in politics, it was not from lack of honesty. He lost the Protector's goodwill through his wholly unbending demeanour to him.

In his *Hymns and Songs of the Church*, Wither rendered into verse a good deal of the poetry both of the

¹ *Jeremy Taylor's Works*, p. 82.

Old and New Testaments. The following is the second verse in the Song of Deborah :—

When Thou departedst, Lord, from Seir,
 When Thou leftst Edom's field,
 Earth shook, the heavens droppéd there,
 The clouds did water yield.
 Lord, at Thy sight
 A trembling fright
 Upon the mountains fell :
 E'en at Thy look
 Mount Sinai shook,
 Lord God of Israel !¹

These are followed by hymns for the holy days and fast days of the Church, and for other special occasions. I quote the first two stanzas out of sixteen of the *Song for Good Friday* :—

You that like heedless strangers pass along,
 As if nought here concernéd you to-day ;
 Draw near, and hear the saddest passion song
 That ever you did meet with on your way :
 So sad a story ne'er was told before,
 Nor shall there be the like for evermore.
 The greatest King that ever wore a crown,
 More than the basest vassal was abused ;
 The truest Lover that was ever known,
 By them He loved was most unkindly used ;
 And He that was from all transgressions clear,
 Was plagued for all the sins that ever were.²

Among his other hymns may be specially mentioned the carol, 'As on the Night before this Happy Morn'³—the psalm beginning, 'Come, O come, in pious lays, Sing we God Almighty's praise'⁴—the morning hymn, 'Since Thou hast added now, O God, Unto my life another day,' and especially his evening hymn, 'Behold the sun, that seemed but now Enthroned overhead,' which

¹ *George Wither's Hymns and Songs of the Church*, ed. by E. Farr. Song iii.

² *Id.* Song lv.

³ *Id.* Song xlvi. It may be also seen in Sylvester's *Garland of Christmas Carols*, p. III.

⁴ It is quoted in Lord Selborne's *Book of Praise*, as are also the Morning and Evening Hymns.

last I forbear quoting, only to give more room for a part of his delightful *Lullaby Song* :—

Sweet baby, sleep ! What ails my dear,
 What ails my darling thus to cry ?
 Be still, my child, and lend thine ear
 To hear me sing thy lullaby.
 My pretty lamb, forbear to weep ;
 Be still, my dear ; sweet baby, sleep !

Thou blessed soul, what canst thou fear ?
 What thing to thee can mischief do ?
 Thy God is now thy Father dear,
 His holy Spouse thy mother too.
 Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep ;
 Be still, my babe ; sweet baby, sleep.

While thus thy lullaby I sing,
 For thee great blessings ripening be ;
 Thine Eldest Brother is a King,
 And hath a kingdom bought for thee.
 Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep ;
 Be still, my babe ; sweet baby, sleep.

Sweet baby, sleep, and nothing fear ;
 For whosoever thee offends
 By thy protector threatened are,
 And God and angels are thy friends.
 Sweet baby, etc.

When God with us was dwelling here,
 In little babes He took delight ;
 Such innocents as thou, my dear,
 Are ever precious in His sight.
 Sweet baby, etc.

A little infant once was He,
 And strength in weakness then was laid
 Upon His Virgin mother's knee,
 That power to thee might be conveyed.
 Sweet baby, etc.

In this thy frailty and thy need
 He friends and helpers doth prepare,
 Which thee shall cherish, clothe, and feed
 For of thy weal they tender are.
 Sweet baby, etc.

The wants that He did then sustain
 Have purchased wealth, my babe, for thee ;
 And by His torments and His pain
 Thy rest and ease securéd be.
 My baby, etc.

Thou hast, yet more, to perfect this,
 A promise and an earnest got
 Of gaining everlasting bliss,
 Though thou, my babe, perceiv'st it not.
 Sweet baby, etc.

Among his other poems, I must simply refer to a pleasing *Hymn for Anniversaries of Marriage*, and to some pathetic lines on the *Loss of an only Child*.¹

Nicholas Billingsly published his *Treasury of Divine Raptures* in 1667. In it he has ranged a great variety of subjects in a series of short poems, under the first three letters of the alphabet. They are not very noteworthy, but some contain pithy expressions. Thus, under the heading *Burdens* :—

God never burthens us, but that He may
 Unburthen us of sin.²

John Austin, a Roman Catholic, published in 1668 his *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*. Among the prayers and meditations there are a number of hymns. The following is from the *Office for Sunday Lauds* :—

Hark, my soul, how every thing
 Strives to serve the bounteous king :
 Each a double tribute pays,
 Sings its part, and then obeys.
 Nature's sweet and chiefest quire
 Him with cheerful notes admire ;
 Chanting every day their lauds
 Whilst the grove their song applauds.
 Though their voices lower be,
 Streams have too their melody ;
 Night and day they warbling run,
 Never pause but still sing on.
 All the flowers that gild the spring
 Hither their still music bring ;

¹ E. Taylor's *Flowers and Fruits from Old English Gardens*, p. 105.

² Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, ii. 204.

If heav'n bless them, thankful they
Smell more sweet, and look more gay.

Only we can scarce afford
One short office to our Lord ;
We on whom His bounty flows,
All things gives and nothing owes.

Wake for shame, my sluggish heart,
Wake, and gladly sing thy part ;
Learn of birds and springs and flowers
How to use thy nobler powers.

Call on nature to thy aid,
Since 'twas He whole nature made ;
Join in one eternal song,
Who to one God all belong.

Live for ever, glorious Lord !
Live by all Thy works adored !
One in Three, and Three in One,
Thrice we bow to Thee alone.¹

The following, by John Austin, I borrow from that interesting collection of poetry, *Poems of the Inner Life* :—

SEEKING GOD.

Fain would my thoughts fly up to Thee,
Thy peace, sweet Lord, to find ;
But when I offer, still the world
Lays clogs upon my mind.

Sometimes I climb a little way
And thence look down below :
How nothing, there, do all things seem
That here make such a show !

Then round about I turn my eyes
To feast my hungry sight ;
I meet with heaven in every thing,
In every thing delight.

I see Thy wisdom ruling all,
And it with joy admire ;
I see myself among such hopes
As set my heart on fire.

¹ John Austin, *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*, third ed. 1684, p. 76.

When I have thus triumphed awhile,
 And think to build my nest,
 Some cross conceits come fluttering by
 And interrupt my rest.

Then to the earth again I fall,
 And from my low dust cry,
 'Twas not in my wing, Lord, but Thine,
 That I got up so high.'

And now, my God, whether I rise,
 Or still lie down in dust,
 Both I submit to Thy blest will ;
 In both, on Thee I trust.

Guide thou my way, who art Thyself
 My everlasting end,
 That every step, or swift or slow,
 Still to Thyself may tend.¹

Henry King (1592-1669) was a son of John King, Bishop of London. He himself, after holding various preferments, as the rectories of Chigwell, Fulham, Petworth, a prebend of St. Paul's, the archdeaconry of Colchester, and the deanery of Rochester, was consecrated to the See of Chichester in 1641. When Chichester at the end of the next year surrendered to the Parliament, his goods were ransacked, his estates sequestrated, and he had to bear many indignities from the soldiery. After a short imprisonment he was permitted to find a home among his friends. At the Restoration the See of Chichester was restored to him. He was intimate with Isaac Walton, and with Dr. Donne, whom he speaks of in one of his letters as his 'dear and incomparable friend.' He was also familiar with George Herbert, Hall, Ben Jonson, and Sandys. His version of the Psalms was published in 1651, his poems in 1657. His Psalms are not for the most part very successful. The following lines from Psalm cxxxix. are as worthy as any of quotation :—

How shall I from Thy spirit fly,
 Or Thy all-present power deny?

¹ From *Poems of the Inner Life*, 1877, p. 117.

If I climb Heaven, 'tis Thine own sphere ;
 If stoop to Hell, lo, thou art there,
 If borne upon the morning's wing,
 Far as the sea doth swell or spring
 Thy right hand shall protect and lead,
 Where'er my weary footsteps tread.
 If I pretend the darkness shall
 Upon me like a covering fall,
 Those heavy fogs, those mists of night,
 Will quickly clear and turn to light.
 The thickest shade, or blackest cloud,
 Can nothing from Thy knowledge shroud
 For darkness doth like noontide shine,
 Light'ned by brighter beams of thine.¹

There is nothing, however, in King's poems equal to the tenderness and pathos of his elegy to the memory of his wife, from which I extract the following lines :—

Sleep on, my love, in thy cold bed,
 Never to be disquieted !
 My last good-night ! Thou wilt not wake,
 Till I thy fate shall overtake :
 Till age, or grief, or sickness must
 Marry my body to the dust
 It so much loves ; and fill the room
 My heart keeps empty in thy tomb.
 Stay for me there ; I will not fail
 To meet thee in that hollow Vale :
 And think not much of my delay ;
 I am already on the way,
 And follow thee with all the speed
 Desires can make, or sorrows breed,
 Each minute is a short degree,
 And every hour a step towards thee.
 At night when I betake to rest,
 Next morn I rise nearer my West
 Of life, almost by eight hours' sail
 Than when sleep breathed his drowsy gale.

The thought of this bids me go on,
 And wait my dissolution
 With hope and comfort. Dear (forgive
 The crime) I am content to live
 Divided, with but half a heart,
 Till we shall meet and never part.²

¹ *Poems and Psalms of Henry King*, ed. by J. Hannah, 1845.

² *Id.* p. 27 *The Exequy*.

Richard Crashaw (c. 1603-1650) was Fellow of Peter-House, Cambridge, but was ejected from his Fellowship in 1644 for refusing to take the Covenant. He sometime after adopted the Roman Catholic Faith, led to it by his enthusiastic admiration of the saintly mystic, St. Theresa. After suffering much from extreme poverty in Paris, he was introduced by the poet Cowley to the exiled Queen Henrietta, and through her interest became Secretary to one of the Cardinals, and Sub-Canon at Loretto. There is much tenderness and depth of feeling in his sacred verses, none the less discernible amid the quibs and conceits of language often affected by him. Sometimes, however, there is too much of the love-song in them. The following is from a poem *To the Name of Jesus* :—

Cheer thee, my heart ;
 For thou too hast a part
 And place in the great throng
 Of this unbounded, all-embracing song.
 Powers of my soul, be proud,
 And speak aloud
 To all the dear-bought nations this redeeming name,
 And in the wealth of one rich word proclaim
 New smiles to nature.
 May it be no wrong,
 Blest Heaven, to you and your superior song,
 That we, dark sons of dust and sorrow,
 A while dare borrow
 The name of your delights and our desires.
 And fit it to so far inferior lyres ;
 Our murmurs have their music too,
 Ye mighty souls, as well as you,
 Nor yield the noblest nest
 Of warbling seraphims to the cares of love
 A choicer lesson than the loyal breast
 Of a poor panting turtle-dove.¹

From the *Divine Epigrams* the following is one of two lines *Upon the Sepulchre of our Lord* :—

Here where our Lord once lay His head
 Now the grave lies buried.

¹ *Crashaw's Poems*, Anderson's *English Poets*, vol. iv.

Another is on *Two Men went up into the Temple to pray*:—

Two went to pray? O, rather say,
 One went to brag, th' other to pray :
 One stands up close and treads on high,
 Where th' other does not send his eye ;
 One nearer to God's altar trod ;
 The other to the altar's God.

John, one of Francis Quarles's eighteen children was, like his father, a writer of sacred verse (1624-65). He was at Exeter College, Oxford, served as chaplain in the Royal forces, went abroad during the Commonwealth, and died of the plague in London. The following is from one of his hymns :—

Great God, Thy garden is defaced,
 The weeds thrive there, Thy flowers decay
 O call to mind Thy promise past,
 Restore Thou them, cut these away :
 Till then let not the weeds have power
 To starve or stint the poorest flower.

Shall mountain, desert, beast, and tree,
 Yield to that heavenly voice of Thine,
 And shall that voice not startle me,
 Nor stir this stone, this heart of mine?
 No, Lord, till Thou new bore mine ear,
 Thy voice is lost, I cannot hear.

Fountain of light and living breath,
 Whose mercies never fail nor fade,
 Fill me with life that hath no death,
 Fill me with light that hath no shade,
 Appoint the remnant of my days
 To see Thy power and sing Thy praise.

Lord God of gods, before whose throne
 Stand storms and fire, O what shall we
 Return to heaven that is our own,
 When all the world belongs to Thee?
 We have no offering to impart
 But praises and a wounded heart.

What I possess, or what I crave
 Brings no content, Great God, to me,

If what I would, or what I have,
Be not possest and blest in Thee :
What I enjoy, O make it mine,
In making me, that have it, Thine.¹

Abraham Cowley (1618-1667) was indeed a poet from a child, for his *Pyramus and Thisbe*, which holds a respectable place among his poems, was written in his tenth year, and before he was thirteen he was already the author of a volume of poetry. From Cambridge, where he was at college, he migrated to Oxford, as being the headquarters of the Royalists, to whom he had warmly attached himself. He there became an intimate friend of Lord Falkland. During the Commonwealth he was in Paris, secretary to the Earl of St. Alban's. In 1656, he was sent to England on a confidential mission, found himself in danger, and thought of retiring to America. After the Restoration he lived at Chertsey. His remains lie in Westminster Abbey between Chaucer and Spenser. As a poet, his name does not by any means rank with theirs, and, indeed, the artificial glitter of the style did more for a length of time to corrupt than to enrich the English tongue. Yet he was well worthy of high honour, as one who joined great wit, learning, and brilliancy to the virtues and humility of a good Christian man.

Cowley did not write much sacred poetry of any interest, for his *Davideis*—a poem in four books on the history of David—was written in a form that did not suit his particular talents, and is very uninteresting. But he had a full perception of the capacity which sacred subjects have for poetical treatment. 'When I consider,' he writes, 'how many bright and magnificent subjects the holy Scripture affords and proffers, as it were, to poesy, in the wise managing and illustrating whereof the glory of God Almighty might be joined with the singular ability and noblest delight of mankind, it is not without grief and indignation that I

¹ J. Quarles, in R. Cattermole's *Sacred Poetry of the Seventeenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 363.

behold that divine Science employing all her inexhaustible riches of art and eloquence either in the wicked and beggarly flattery of great persons, or the unmanly idolizing of foolish women, or the wretched affectation of scurril laughter, or, at best, on the confused antiquated dreams of senseless fables and metamorphoses.' It was time, he added, to recover poetry from its too general debasement, and 'to restore it to the kingdom of God, who is the father of it.'¹

The following is part of some verses on *Reason: the Use of it in Divine Matters*. He has been speaking of the vain expectation of visions and inspirations, in the hope of which some sacrifice the gift of reasoning, and

Like senseless chemists, their own wealth destroy,
Imaginary gold t' enjoy.

Then he continues :—

In vain, alas ! these outward hopes are tried ;
Reason within 's our only guide.
Reason ! which (God be praised !) still walks, for all
Its old original fall ;
And since Itself the boundless Godhead join'd
With a reasonable mind,
It plainly shows that mysteries divine
May with our reason join.

The holy Book, like the eighth sphere, does shine
With thousand lights of truth divine ;
So numberless the stars, that to the eye
It makes but all one galaxy.
Yet reason must assist, too, for in seas,
So vast and dangerous are these,
Our course by stars above we cannot know
Without the compass too below.

Though reason cannot through faith's mysteries see,
It sees that these and such there be,
Leads to heaven doors, and there does humbly keep,
And there through chinks and keyholes peep ;
Though it, like Moses, by a sad command,
Must not come into th' Holy Land,
Yet thither it infallibly does guide,
And from afar 'tis all descried.²

¹ From the Preface to his Works.

² *Cowley's Works*. Anderson's *English Poets*.

CHRIST'S PASSION.

Enough, my Muse, of earthly things,
And inspirations but of wind,
Take up thy lute, and to it bind
Loud and everlasting strings ;
And on them play, and to them sing
The happy mournful stories,
The lamentable glories,
Of the great Crucified King.
Mountainous heap of wonders ! which dost rise
Till earth thou joinest with the skies !
Too large at bottom, and at top too high,
To be half seen by mortal eye.
How shall I grasp this boundless thing ?
What shall I play ? What shall I sing ?
I'll sing the mighty riddle of mysterious love,
Which neither wretched man below, nor blessed spirits above,
With all their comments can explain,
How all the whole world's Life to die did not disdain.
I'll sing the searchless depths of the compassion divine,
The depths unfathom'd yet
By reason's plummet, and the line of coil ;—
Too light the plummet, and too short the line ;—
How the Eternal Father did bestow
His own Eternal Son as ransom for His foe.
I'll sing aloud, that all aloud may hear
The triumph of the buried Conqueror.
How hell was by its prisoner captive led,
And the great slayer, Death, slain by the dead.
Methinks I hear of murdered men the voice,
Mixed with the murderer's confuséd noise,
Sound from the top of Calvary :
My greedy eyes fly up the hill, and see
Who 'tis hangs there the midmost of the three ;—
Oh, how unlike the others He !
Look how He bends His gentle head with blessings from the
tree !
His gracious hands, ne'er stretched but to do good,
Are nailed to th' infamous wood,
And sinful man does fondly bind
The arms which He extends to embrace all human kind.
Unhappy man ! canst thou stand by and see
All this, as patient as He ?
Since He thy sin does bear,

Make thou His sufferings thine own,
 And weep, and sigh, and groan,
 And beat thy breast, and tear
 Thy garments and thy hair,
 And let thy grief, and let thy love
 Through all thy bleeding bowels move.
 Dost Thou not see thy Prince in purple clad all o'er,
 Not purple brought from the Sidonian shore,
 But made at home with richer gore ?
 Dost thou not see the roses, which adorn
 The thorny garland, by Him worn ?
 Dost thou not see the livid traces
 Of the sharp scourge's rude embraces ?
 If yet thou feelest not the smart
 Of thorns and scourges in thy heart,
 If that be yet not crucified,
 Look on His hands, look on His feet, look on His side.
 Open, oh ! open wide the fountains of thine eyes,
 And let them call
 Their stock of moisture forth where'er it lies,
 For this will ask it all.
 'Twould all, alas ! too little be,
 Though thy salt tears came from a sea :
 Canst thou deny Him this, when He
 Has opened all His vital springs for thee ?
 Take heed ! for by His side's mysterious flood
 May well be understood,
 That He will still require some waters to His blood.

Edmund Waller (1605-87) wrote some *Divine Poems* very near the close of a long life. Possessed of a large fortune, related to Cromwell and Hampden on the one side, and connected with some noble families on the other, gifted with wit, eloquence, and social powers, he might have occupied a very prominent position in the State. He had been chosen a member of Parliament in his eighteenth year, when James the First was reigning, and in his eightieth year was a member of the first Parliament of James the Second. Unfortunately for his fame, his public career was marred by time-serving ; and though he maintained a considerable position under five rulers, it was only by a pliancy which said more for his address than for his principles. It must be said, however, that his verses were never stained by anything

unworthy or corrupt. His regret in his last declining years was, that he had not used his powers more definitely in the service of God. He concludes his poem *On the Fear of God* :—

Wrestling with death, these lines I did endite ;
 No other theme could give my soul delight.
 O that my youth had thus employed my pen !
 Or that I now could write as well as then !
 But 'tis of grace, if sickness, age, and pain,
 Are felt as throes when we are born again :
 Timely they come to wean us from the earth,
 As pangs that wait upon a second birth.¹

The following are some fine lines upon the keener spiritual insight of advanced years :—

The seas are quiet when the winds give o'er,
 So calm are we when passions are no more !
 For then we know how vain it was to boast
 Of fleeting things so certain to be lost.
 Clouds of affection from our younger eyes
 Conceal that emptiness which age descries.

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
 Lets in new light through chinks that time has made :
 Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
 As they draw near to their eternal home.
 Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
 That stand upon the threshold of the new.

A couple of distichs from his poems may be added :—

A soul capacious of the Deity
 Nothing but He that made can satisfy.

—*On the Fear of God.*

Love as He loved ! How can we soar so high ?
 He can add wings, when He commands to fly.

—*On Divine Love.*

A poem of two hundred and twenty-four stanzas on the *Day of Doom* was published in 1673 anonymously, but is now attributed to a clergyman named Wigglesworth. It begins thus :

Still was the night, serene and bright,
 When all men sleeping lay ;
 Calm was the season, and carnal reason
 Thought so 'twould last for aye.

¹ *Waller's Poems.* Anderson's *English Poets*, vol. v.

Soul, take thine ease, let sorrow cease ;
 Much good thou hast in store ;
 This was their song, their cups among,
 The evening before.

Wallowing in all kinds of sin,
 Vile wretches lay secure ;
 The best of men had scarcely then
 Their lamps kept in good ure [practice].
 Virgins unwise, who through disguise,
 Among the best were number'd,
 Had closed their eyes ;—yea, and the wise,
 Through sloth and frailty slumber'd.

Like as of old, when men grew bold,
 God's threat'nings to contemn,
 Who stopt their ear, and would not hear.
 When mercy warn'd them ;
 But took their course, without remorse,
 Till God began to pour
 Destruction the world upon,
 In a tempestuous shower ;

They put away the evil day,
 And still they drown'd their cares,
 Till drown'd were they, and swept away
 By vengeance unawares :
 So, at the last, whilst men sleep fast
 In their security,
 Surprised they are in such a snare
 As cometh suddenly.

For at midnight broke forth a light
 Which turn'd the night to day :
 And speedily an hideous cry
 Did all the world dismay.
 Sinners awake, their hearts do ache,
 Trembling their loins surpriseth ;
 Amazed with fear, by what they hear,
 Each one of them ariseth.

They rush from beds with giddy heads,
 And to their windows run,
 Viewing this light which shines more bright
 Than doth the noonday sun.
 Straightway appears (they see't with tears)
 The Son of God most dread ;
 Who with His train comes on amain,
 To judge both Quick and Dead!¹

¹ *Corsen Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, v. 128.

The religious verses of Robert Herrick (1591-1674) are by no means wanting in beauty and interest. Herrick was not ordained till he was approaching his fortieth year. He had gone late to Cambridge, and after leaving the University, undecided as yet what profession he should enter upon, had plunged wildly into all the revelries to which club life in London then invited young men of literature and wit. During the nine years thus spent, his Anacreonic effusions were all of love and wine and gay fancies. Then, at last, as he says in one of his poems, 'wiser conclusions' came over him, and he longed to 'shape his function for more glorious ends.' He felt that he must break off the self-indulgences and entanglements of earlier life. He was ordained in 1629 to the vicarage of the little village of Dean Prior in Devon. This rural seclusion seemed something of a banishment to him; and by contrast to the life and brightness of the society he had been used to, the people seemed to him

churlish as the seas,
And rude (almost) as rudest savages.¹

When, being a thorough-going Royalist, he was ejected in 1647, he declared himself 'ravisht in spirit' at the thought of returning to London—'blest place of his nativitie.' Still his verses show that he was not unable to appreciate the tranquillities of a homely country life. At the time of his ejection, he thought nothing would ever induce him to return to it; but at the Restoration he was well content to find his way again to his old parish, and he died there at the age of eighty-three.

There had always been a vein of seriousness in Herrick's mirth. The remembrance of death lurked amid his gayest verses, as it does in the festive odes of Horace, or as it is imaged in the skull that peers out amid the grapes and satyrs of a Greek flagon. His entry upon holy orders inspired him with many new feelings of responsibility and purpose. But his general

¹ *Herrick's Poems*, ed. by A. B. Grosart. Hesperides 'To Dean-bourn.'

temperament was what it was before. There was the same irrepressible spirit of merriment, and of not too chastened humour, and the same interfused thread of thoughtfulness and grave reflection. In his poetry he had done with

my unbaptized rhimes,
Writ in my wild unhallowed times,

and was employing his pen in what he has entitled *Noble Numbers*. But even in his gravest and most solemn thoughts, he cannot refrain a jest at what strikes his fancy as humorous even in the most critical circumstances of life. Witness his *Litany* when, in thinking of the spiritual comfort he will need in the dread hour of death, a thought comes into his mind of the doctor standing helplessly by the patient whom he has given up. The *Litany* itself is a touching one and in part well known. Among the verses given here, I include those I have referred to:—

In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When I lie within my bed,
Sick in heart and sick in head,
And with doubt discomfited,
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 artless doctor sees
No more hope, but of his fees,
And his skill runs on the lees,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When his potion and his pill
Has, or none, or little skill,
Meet for nothing but to kill,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When the tapers now burn blue,
 And the comforters are few,
 And that number more than ¹ true,
 Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When the priest his last hath pray'd,
 And I nod to what is said,
 'Cause my speech is now decay'd,
 Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When [God knows] I 'm tost about,
 Either with despair or doubt,
 Yet before the glass be out,
 Sweet Spirit, comfort me !²

The following verses are entitled *The Goodness of his Lord* :—

When winds and seas do rage,
 And threaten to undo me,
 Thou dost their wrath assuage,
 If I but call unto Thee.

A mighty storm last night
 Did seek my soul to swallow,
 But by the peep of light
 A gentle calm did follow.

What need I then despair,
 Though ill stand round about me ;
 Since mischiefs neither dare
 To bark or bite without Thee.³

FROM SOME LINES 'TO GOD.'

Make, make me Thine, my gracious God,
 Or with Thy staff, or with Thy rod ;
 And be the blow too what it will,
 Lord, I will kiss it, though it kill.⁴

SOME LINES 'TO HIS EVER-LOVING GOD.'

Can I not come to Thee, my God, for these
 So very-many-meeting hindrances,
 That slack my pace, but yet not make me stay ?
 Who slowly goes, rids in the end his way.
 Clear Thou my paths, or shorten Thou my miles,
 Remove the bars, or lift me o'er the stiles ;

¹ *i.e.* more in number than true in friendship.

² *Herrick's Poems*, iii. 132.

³ *Id.* iii. 174.

⁴ *Id.* iii. 138.

Since rough the way is, help me when I call,
 And take me up, or else prevent the fall,
 I ken my home ; and it affords some ease
 To see far off the smoking villages.
 Fain would I rest ; yet covet not to die
 For fear of future biting penury :
 No, no, my God, Thou know'st my wishes be
 To leave this life, not loving it, but Thee.¹

ANOTHER.

Thou bidst me come ; I cannot come ; for why,
 Thou dwell'st aloft, and I want wings to fly,
 To mount my soul, she must have pinions given ;
 For, 'tis no easy way from earth to heaven.²

HUMILITY.

Humble we must be, if to Heaven we go,
 High is the roof there ; but the gate is low.³

My last quotation shall be from *A Thanksgiving to God for his House* :—

Lord, Thou hast given me a cell
 Wherein to dwell.
 A little house, whose humble roof
 Is weatherproof.
 Under the spars of which I lie
 Both soft and dry ;
 Where Thou, my chamber for to ward.
 Hast set a guard
 Of harmless thoughts, to watch and keep
 Me, while I sleep.
 Low is my porch, as is my fate,
 Both void of state ;
 And yet the threshold of my door
 Is worn by th' poor,
 Who thither come, and freely get
 Good words, or meat.

Lord, 'tis thy plenty-dropping hand
 That soils [*enriches*] my land ;
 And giv'st me, for my bushel sown
 Twice ten for one ;
 Thou mak'st my teeming hen to lay
 Her egg each day ;

¹ *Herrick's Poems*, iii. 139.

² *Id.* 140.

³ *Id.* 156.

Besides my healthful ewes to bear
 Me twins each year :
 The while the conduits of my kine
 Run cream [for wine]
 All these, and better thou dost send
 Me, to this end,
 That I should render for my part
 A thankful heart ;
 Which, fired with incense, I resign
 As wholly thine ;
 But the acceptance, that must be,
 My Christ, by Thee.¹

The family of John Milton (1608-74) seems to have derived its name from Great Milton in Oxfordshire, where, until their lands were sequestered in the Wars of the Roses, his forefathers had held a position of some standing. His grandfather was a substantial yeoman, ranger of the forest of Shotover ; his father a scrivener of repute who lived in Cheapside and was particularly distinguished for his great musical talent. The poet in his boyhood had excellent tuition both at St. Paul's school, than which there was then no better school in England, and from Thomas Young his private tutor. He was an eager student, rarely, even at the age of twelve, leaving his books till midnight or later ; and when, in his seventeenth year, he went to Christ's College, Cambridge, was already well known for his skill in Latin and for the elegance of his Latin verse. His taste for English poetry was also early developed.² The versions, printed in his works, of the 114th and 136th Psalms were written by him when he was but fifteen. Of the poets, Spenser was his special favourite. At Cambridge he spent more than seven years, but without much satisfaction to himself. His temper, independent to a fault, could ill brook either the restraints of the somewhat pedagogic discipline which the great youth of many of the students doubtless made necessary, or the dull scholastic formalities and narrow ecclesiasticism,

¹ *Herrick's Poems*, 135.

² Quoted in Grosart's Mem. Introd. to *Herrick's Poems*, ccvi.

which were apt to encumber the teaching. He left Cambridge in 1632, resolved at last not to take orders in the Church of England, with no idea of any other profession, but, as his letters show, with some great and fixed project in his mind. It was at this time he wrote his second sonnet, in which he says that though his inward ripeness may seem tardy—

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even [*proportional*]
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven ;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye.

His father had now retired from business and had settled at Horton in Buckinghamshire. There for five years in quietness and study Milton prepared himself, with a depth of purpose which had in it something of solemnity, for the vocation of a great poet. 'I have,' he wrote in 1641, an 'inward prompting which grows daily upon me, that by labour and intent study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times, as they would not willingly let it die.' And after speaking of the knowledge and virtue requisite for the writer of 'a true poem,' he adds: 'This is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lives of those whom He pleases.'

In 1629, while he was yet at Cambridge, he had written the *Ode on the Nativity*. This fine poem bears marks of immaturity, of knowledge not yet fully assimilated, and of imagination not yet held firmly under constraint, but contains passages which quite presage the grandeur of *Paradise Lost*. Such are the words which tell of the general peace reigning throughout the

¹ Quoted in Mark Pattison's *Milton*, 1879, p. 16.

vast Roman Empire at the time when Christ was born—

No war, or battle's sound
 Was heard the world around :
 The idle spear and shield were high up hung,
 The hookéd chariot stood
 Unstain'd with hostile blood ;
 The trumpet spake not to the arméd throng,
 And kings sat still with awful eye,
 As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

Or the hymn of the angels on Christ's birth :—

Such music (as 'tis said)
 Before was never made
 But when of old the sons of morning sung,
 While the Creator great
 His constellations set,
 And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
 And cast the dark foundations deep,
 And bid the welt'ring waves their oozy channel keep.
 Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
 Once bless our human ears,
 If ye have power to touch our senses so ;
 And let your silver chime
 Move in melodious time,
 And let the base of heaven's deep organ blow ;
 And in your ninefold harmony
 Make up full consort to th' angelic symphony.

Such too are the splendid stanzas which represented the pagan deities vanquished and departing from the earth, beginning 'The oracles are dumb.'

To the Horton period belong *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Lycidas*, and *Comus*. There is nothing as yet of the Puritan in those beautiful and familiar lines in *Il Penseroso* (1632) :—

But let my due feet never fail
 To walk the studious cloisters pale,
 And love the high embowéd roof,
 With antic pillars massy proof,
 And storied windows richly dight
 Casting a dim religious light ;
 There let the pealing organ blow
 To the full-voiced quire below

In service high, and anthems clear,
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
 Dissolve me into ecstasies,
 And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

Neither was Milton a Puritan when he wrote, in *Comus* (1634), the last Cavalier mask ; introducing nevertheless, gracefully and without effort, into the fantastic pageantry essential to these shows an element of spiritual beauty and nobility of purpose which raised it high above the level of other such representations. For example :—

This I hold firm ;
 Virtue may be assail'd but never hurt,
 Surprised by unjust force, but not intrall'd ;
 Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm,
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory :
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,
 And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
 Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
 It shall be in eternal restless change
 Self-fed, and self-consumed : if this fail,
 The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
 And earth's base built on stubble.¹

From the exquisite dirge entitled *Lycidas* (1637), may be quoted those lines near the end :—

Weep no more, woful Shepherds, weep no more,
 For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor ;
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
 And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :
 So Lycidas sank low, but mounted high.
 Thro' the dear might of Him that walk'd the waves,
 Where other groves and other streams along,
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,

¹ In a like spirit are the concluding lines :

Love Virtue, she alone is free,
 She can teach ye how to climb
 Higher than the sphery chime ;
 Or if Virtue feeble were,
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.

In the blest kingdoms meek of Joy and Love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

In 1638 and part of 1639 Milton travelled in Italy, staying in Paris on his way, and in Geneva on his return. He then settled in London, and undertook the tuition, first of his nephews, and then of other pupils. The stormy years of fierce civil strife were very unfavourable to Milton's genius as a poet, nor is there occasion to speak here of the passionate fervour with which he dedicated all his powers to the service of the Republic. In 1648, when the Puritans were bent on supplanting Sternhold and Hopkins' Version of the Psalms, and again in 1653, Milton attempted the task, and failed in it. In 1649 the Parliamentary Council of State, who had resolved to employ the Latin tongue in their communications with foreign powers, appointed him their Secretary. His eyesight was already getting weak; and the great labour which this office involved completed the mischief. Early in 1652, at the age of forty-three, he was totally blind, and, though he continued to hold his Secretaryship, his political labours were very much restricted. It was about this time, before 1658, that he wrote the sonnet on his blindness, touching in its manly patience:—

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide ;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied ?'
I fondly ask : but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work or His own gifts ; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve Him best : His state
Is kingly : thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest ;
They also serve who only stand and wait.

Although, at the Restoration, some of Milton's polemical works were burnt by the common hangman, he escaped harsh treatment personally. His outward circumstances were now pitiable. He, of course, lost his office; his property was destroyed by confiscation and other losses. His political hopes were utterly ruined. He had not even a party; for his determined independence of thought, and his habit of fearlessly pushing opinions to their utmost consequences, had estranged him more or less from all religious and political communions. Moreover, throughout his life his mind had always been a lonely one, dwelling in itself. His blindness completed the isolation. It is true that his third wife was kind and attentive to his material comforts; but there does not seem to have been much further congeniality. It was in this solitude that he finally worked out the great poem which, amid all vicissitudes, and amid all other occupations, had ever been in his mind as the work he hoped to achieve. He had written a few lines of it in 1642; he systematically began it in 1648; it was finished in 1663 or rather later; it was published in 1667. His great poem rose up, majestic and sublime, amid the materialism and moral corruption which had set in after the Restoration.¹ Secluded at last from the confusing turmoil of civil strife, the blind poet turned the whole powers of his

¹ I must quote here Ernest Myers's beautiful sonnet:

MILTON.

He left the upland lawns and serene air
 Wherefrom his soul her noble nurture drew,
 And reared his helm among the unquiet crew
 Battling beneath; the morning radiance rare
 Of his young brow amid the tumult there
 Grew dim with sulphurous dust and sanguine dew;
 Yet through all soilure they who marked him knew
 The signs of his life's dayspring, calm and fair.
 But when peace came, peace fouler far than war,
 And mirth more dissonant than battle's tone,
 He, with a scornful sigh of his clear soul,
 Back to his mountain clomb, now bleak and frore,
 And with the awful night he dwelt alone
 In darkness, listening to the thunder's roll.

inward vision to those eternal harmonies of most divine peace which man, created after God's own image, might once more regain, and which he had once possessed—

till disproportioned Sin
 Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
 Broke the fair music that all creatures made
 To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
 In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
 In first obedience, and their state of good.
 O may we soon again renew that song,
 And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
 To His celestial consort us unite,
 To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light.¹

Notwithstanding the grandeur, both of the general conception of Milton's sacred epic, and of the manner in which it is worked out, it must be said that it is not altogether satisfying. Evil in the world, and the hope of restitution from it, is indeed a subject of the very deepest interest. But *Paradise Lost* is, perhaps unavoidably, too far away, too remote from this present world, greatly to touch the heart. It will never cease to be read, and, having been read, to be well remembered, and to leave its mark upon the mind of the reader; and in no poem—unless it be in some parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, or in some passages of Æschylus—will he find more noble imagery, or a more majestic flow of rhythm. But neither as a great epic, nor as a great religious poem, has it much moving power. In one respect, its grandeur does certainly appeal directly to our own consciousness. It inspires and quickens a sense of mighty powers of good and evil environing human life. This impression would be far deeper still, if it were not that the poet carries on his story with a clear precision of, so to say, historical detail, which goes far to dissipate the dim mysterious outlines which stir imagination on its spiritual side. Milton's poem would be an intensely interesting one, if only we could forget—as some have seemed to forget—that it is not very

¹ Milton's lines: *At a Solemn Music*.

realities, but the inventions of the poet, which are before us in all their circumstances. Invention having so great a part in the poem, there is, in spite of its sublimity, something of delusion and disappointment in it. Sin and death, and all our woes, their entry into the world, and our redemption from them—the most tremendous realities of our existence—these are the solemn themes for which, in exalted words, he invokes the Holy Spirit's aid. They are questions too momentous to be dealt with quite successfully, even by the greatest and most earnest of poets, as materials upon which to rear up the stately but fictitious fabric of an imaginative epic. The epic seems best adapted to what lies on the borderland of history, where truth and fiction may freely blend. Europe before Milton's time had had enough, and far more than enough of allegory in its poetical literature; yet it may, perhaps, be doubted whether the splendid imagery with which the genius of Milton has adorned *Paradise Lost*, might not have shone to yet greater advantage if the awful powers of sin had been clothed in a more confessedly imaginative form. As it is, many of the sublimest parts of the narrative are those which are least determinate in idea, and most suggestive to the imagination. Such are those passages where the form of the ruined archangel is dimly outlined in words which simply give by metaphor or otherwise a general idea of a dark, ominous being, colossal, terrible, and portentous:—

Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
 His mighty stature; on each hand the flames
 Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and, roll'd
 In billows, leave it th' midst a horrid vale.
 Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
 Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air
 That felt unusual weight.

And such appeared in hue, as when the force
 Of subterranean wind transports a hill
 Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
 Of thundering Ætna.¹

¹ *Paradise Lost*, i. 221-32. Cf. also iv. 987.

Or again :—

So spake the grisly terror, and in shape,
 So speaking, and so threatening, grew tenfold
 More dreadful and deform : on th' other side
 Incensed with indignation, Satan stood
 Unterrify'd, and like a comet burn'd,
 That fires the length of Ophiuchus huge
 In th' arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
 Shakes pestilence and war. Each at the head
 Levell'd his deadly aim ; their fatal hands
 No second stroke intend, and such a frown
 Each cast at th' other, as when two black clouds,
 With Heaven's artillery fraught, come rattling on
 Over the Caspian ; then stand front to front
 Hov'ring a space, till winds the signal blow
 To join their dark encounter in mid air.¹

Of a somewhat similar kind is that passage where
 the gates of death open out on the unimaginable abyss
 of night and chaos :—

On a sudden open fly
 With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
 Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
 Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
 Of Erebus. She open'd ; but to shut
 Excell'd her power ; the gates wide open stood,
 That with extended wings a banner'd host
 Under spread ensigns marching might pass through
 With horse and chariots rank'd in loose array ;
 So wide they stood, and like a furnace mouth
 Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame.
 Before their eyes in sudden view appear
 The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
 Illimitable ocean, without bound,
 Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
 And time, and place are lost ; where eldest Night
 And Chaos, ancestors of nature, hold
 Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
 Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.²

Sublimity is, of course, only one element in Milton's
 poetical genius, although a very characteristic one, so
 much so, that one could not with any fitness speak of
Paradise Lost and quote from it only some passages of
 tranquil religious beauty. But if in a work on sacred

¹ *Paradise Lost*, ii. 704-15.

² *Id.* ii. 880-97.

poetry I could only make one quotation from Milton's poems, it should be that exquisite hymn of our first parents in Paradise, beginning: 'These are Thy glorious works, Parent of Good,'¹ that noble anthem of a nature yet unstained by sin. Or else I would select from the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth books those lines full of stimulative religious force which tell of Abdiel, true to his loyalty amid all the hosts of the rebel angels:—

So spake the seraph Abdiel, faithful found,
 Among the faithless, faithful only he ;
 Among innumerable false, unmoved,
 Unshaken, unseduced, unterrify'd,
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal ;
 Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind
 Though single. From amidst them forth he pass'd
 Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustain'd
 Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught.

On to the sacred hill
 They led him, high applauded, and present
 Before the seat supreme ; from whence a voice
 From midst a golden cloud thus mild was heard :
 Servant of God, well done ! well hast thou fought
 The better fight, who single hast maintain'd
 Against revolted multitudes the cause
 Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms ;
 And for the testimony of truth hast borne
 Universal reproach (far worse to bear
 Than violence) ; for this was all thy care
 To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
 Judged thee perverse.²

There is much majestic pathos in the teachings of repentance and renewed life contained in the eleventh book and that passage in the twelfth, bright with the subdued radiance of such goodness and happiness as is still attainable on earth, which begins, 'Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,' and concludes:—

Only add
 Deeds to thy knowledge answerable ; add faith,
 Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,

¹ *Paradise Lost*, v. 153.

² *Id.* v. 896-905, vi. 25-37.

By name to come call'd Charity, the soul
 Of all the rest ; then wilt thou not be loath
 To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
 A Paradise within thee, happier far.

It has been said of *Paradise Regained* (1671) that 'it is probably the most unadorned poem extant in any language.' The imaginative expansion in Milton's thought of the brief scriptural record of Christ's temptation could not fail to have an interest. But poetry cannot dispense with its natural grace of ornament ; and therefore even Milton's genius could not redeem this austere poem from frigidity and even flatness.

Samson Agonistes was published the same year. In style and outward form it is too much of a scholastic composition, but inwardly is full of suppressed force, and instinct with the thoughts which swelled in Milton's breast. Apart from this, its most striking feature is the wonderful manner in which the spirit of the Greek drama is incorporated with the intenser religious feeling of the Hebrews, while both alike are combined with the sentiment of the English Puritan, and with the poet's own personality. It may be added that there are passages in it which strongly call to mind our earliest religious poetry of the period before the Conquest. The forty or fifty lines beginning : 'God of our fathers, what is man?' are singularly like some of the poetry ascribed to Cynewulf. Perhaps, however, the passage which most of all blends reminiscences of the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Anglo-Saxon poetry with sympathetic feeling for the Puritan poet himself, now in his old age, blind, saddened, and patient, and brave in a devout trust in the all-ruling providence of God, is the following passage :—

Chorus—Oh, how comely it is, and how reviving
 To the spirits of just men long oppress'd,
 When God into the hands of their deliverer
 Puts invincible might
 To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
 The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
 Hardy and industrious to support

Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
 The righteous and all such as honour truth ;
 He all their ammunition
 And feats of war defeats,
 With plain heroic magnitude of mind
 And celestial vigour arm'd ;
 Their armories and magazines contemns,
 Renders them useless, while
 With winged expedition,
 Swift as the lighting glance he executes
 His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd
 Lose their defence distracted and amazed.

But patience is more oft the exercise
 Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
 Making them each his own deliverer,
 And victor over all
 That Tyranny or Fortune can inflict.
 Either of these is in thy lot,
 Samson, with might endued
 Above the sons of men ; but sight bereaved
 May chance to number thee with those
 Whom patience finally must crown.¹

I give for a last extract from Milton some lines which may not be so well known as most that he wrote, though they are among his miscellaneous poems. They were found among Milton's MSS., with the inscription in his own hand, 'On Time : to be set on a clock-case.'

Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race,
 Call on the lazy, leaden-stepping hours,
 Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace ;
 And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
 Which is no more than what is false and vain,
 And merely mortal dross ;
 So little is our loss,
 So little is thy gain,
 For when 'as each thing bad thou hast entomb'd,
 And last of all thy greedy self consumed,
 Then long eternity shall greet our bliss
 With an individual kiss ;
 And joy shall overtake us as a flood,
 When every thing that is sincerely good
 And perfectly divine,
 With truth and peace and love shall ever shine

¹ *Samson Agonistes*, 1267-96.

About the supreme throne
 Of Him, to Whose happy-making sight alone
 When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,
 Then, all this earthly grossness quit,
 Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit
 Triumphant over Death and Chance, and thee, O Time.

Andrew Marvell (1620-78), a strong Puritan and wholly fearless and incorruptible in opposition to encroachments on civil or religious liberty, and keen in lashing vice in high places, but quite alive also to wit and humour and to fine and delicate sentiment, has left, among his numerous satirical verses, a few religious poems so good that we may regret that he did not write more. He was the son of a clergyman of the English Church; sat in Parliament for several years before his death as member for Hull; was a friend and admirer of Milton, whom he appears to have first met while he was travelling in France and Italy, and when Milton was becoming blind held under him the appointment of Assistant Latin Secretary to the Parliament of the Protectorate.

Of his poems, that which is now most known, or known next best to his ode on Milton, in the *Pilgrim's Song*, of which the opening lines are:—

Where the remote Bermudas ride
 In th' ocean's bosom unespied,
 From a small boat that row'd along
 The list'ning winds received this song :
 'What should we do but sing His praise
 That led us through the watery maze
 Unto an isle so long unknown,
 And yet far kinder than our own.'¹

The following is entitled *A Drop of Dew*:—

See, how the Orient dew,
 Shed from the bosom of the morn
 Into the blowing roses,
 Yet, careless of its mansion new,
 For the clear region where 'twas born,
 Round in itself incloses ; { *i.e.* gathers itself
 And in its little globe's extent into itself.
 Frames, as it can, its native element.

¹ *The Works of Andrew Marvell* (ed. Thompson), iii. 228.

How it the purple flower does slight,
 Scarce touching where it lies ;
 But, gazing back upon the skies,
 Shines with a mournful light,
 Like its own tear,
 Because so long divided from the sphere !
 Restless it rolls, and unsecure,
 Trembling lest it grow impure,
 Till the warm sun pities its pain,
 And to the sky exhales it back again.
 So the soul, that drop, that ray,
 Of the clear fountain of th' eternal day,
 Could it within the human flower be seen,
 Remembering still its former height,
 Shuns the sweet leaves and blossoms green,
 And, recollecting its own light,
 Does, in its pure and circling thoughts, express
 The greater heaven in an heaven less.

The following has been ascribed, though without certainty, to Dr. Nicholas Postgate, a Roman Catholic missionary, who was executed at the age of eighty-two, in 1679, the time of the Oates' plot panic. I take it from Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song*:—

O THAT I HAD WINGS LIKE A DOVE.

O gracious God, O Saviour sweet,
 O Jesus, think on me,
 And suffer me to kiss Thy feet,
 Though late I come to Thee.

Behold, dear Lord, I come to Thee
 With sorrow and with shame,
 For when Thy bitter wounds I see,
 I know I caused the same.

Sweet Jesu, who shall lend me wings
 Of peace and perfect love,
 That I may rise from earthly things
 To rest with Thee above ?

For sin and sorrow overflow
 All earthly things so high,
 That I can find no rest below,
 But unto Thee I fly.

¹ *Works of Marvell*, 408.

Wherefore my soul doth loathe the things
Which gave it once delight,
And unto Thee, the King of kings,
Would mount with all her might.

And yet the weight of flesh and blood
Doth so my wings restrain,
That oft I strive, and gain no good,
But rise to fall again.

Yet, when this fleshly misery
Is master'd by the mind,
I cry, 'Avaunt, O vanity !'
And 'Satan, stand behind.'

So thus, sweet Lord, I fly about
In weak and weary ease,
Like the lone Dove which Noah sent out,
And found no resting place.

My weary wings, sweet Jesu, mark,
And, when Thou thinkest best,
Stretch forth Thy arm from out the ark,
And take me to Thy rest.¹

Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), after an education at Winchester and Pembroke College, studied medicine at Montpellier and Padua, was created Doctor of Medicine at Leyden, gained a high medical reputation, and was knighted by Charles II. His *Religio Medici* was published in 1634, the year after his arrival in London from Holland. In the second part of this work, his subject leads him to speak of sleep. He held that sleep was, in some respects, a higher condition of existence than waking life. 'We are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleeps, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul. It is the ligation of sense, but the liberty of reason, and our waking conceptions do not match the fancies of our sleeps.' He goes on to say that, with himself, he often found that reason, devotion, and imagination were more active in his dreams than at any other time. Then, again, its likeness to death added to its solemnity. 'In fine, I dare not trust it without my prayers, and a half adieu unto

¹ Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song*, 15.

the world, and take my farewell in a colloquy with God.'

The night is come, like to the day ;
Depart not Thou, great God, away.
Let not my sins, black as the night,
Eclipse the lustre of Thy light.

Thou, whose nature cannot sleep,
On my temples sentry keep ;
Guard me 'gainst those watchful foes
Whose eyes are open while mine close.
Let no dreams my head infest,
But such as Jacob's temples blest.
While I do rest, my soul advance,
Make my sleep a holy trance ;
That I may, my rest being wrought,
Awake into some holy thought ;
And with an active vigour run
My course, as doth the nimble sun.
Sleep is a death : O make me try,
By sleeping, what it is to die ;
And as gently lay my head
On my grave, as now my bed.
Howe'er I rest, great God, let me
Awake again at least with Thee.
And thus assured, behold I lie
Securely, or to awake or die.
These are my drowsy days ; in vain
I do now wake to sleep again :
O come that hour, when I shall never
Sleep again, but wake for ever.

'This (he continues) is the dormitive I take to bed ward ; I need no other laudanum than this to make me sleep : after which, I close mine eyes in security, content so to take my leave of the sun, and to sleep unto the resurrection.'¹

Samuel Crossman (1624-83), Prebendary of Bristol, wrote a little book of nine poems entitled *The Young Man's Meditations*. Lord Selborne, at the York Conference in 1866, called attention to one of these hymns

¹ Sir T. Browne's *Religio Medici*, Pt. II., ed. by J. A. St. John, 1838, pp. 140-2.

beginning, 'Sweet place, sweet place above!' ¹ and the verses of it beginning 'Jerusalem on high,' ² are now very well known. Sir R. Palmer, in his *Book of Praise*, also gives another, 'My life's a shade.' ³

The following are a few lines from a poem on St. Magdalene, from *A Small Garland of Poems and Godly Songs*, 1684, written by an English Roman Catholic who had taken refuge in Ghent. These religious verses were all adapted to the tunes of popular ballads.

She doth esteem no greater bliss,
No joy to be more sweet,
Than with her tears to wash and kiss,
To wipe and dry His feet.

With love and fear she did draw near,
Not willing to be seen ;
She wash'd His feet most pure and clear,
And He her soul made clean. ⁴

Among the scholars and divines of England in the seventeenth century few were more noteworthy and admirable than Henry More (1614-87), the leader, as he may not improperly be called, of that eminent group of Christian Platonists which included Cudworth, John Smith, Norris, and others. He was the son of a well-to-do Grantham gentleman, of very pronounced predestinarian opinions. More tells us that while he was yet a boy at Eton, these doctrines, instilled into him by a father whom he greatly loved and venerated, sorely exercised his mind, and that he would constantly, as he paced the play-field, muse within himself how such things could be consistent with the justice and goodness of God. ⁵ From Eton he went to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he was contemporary with Milton. There he remained for the rest of a long life as Fellow and Tutor, tranquil and undisturbed through all the com-

¹ Sir R. Palmer's *Book of Praise*, cix.

² *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 233; *Church Hymns*, 394.

³ *Book of Praise*, cliii.

⁴ Corser's *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica*, vi. 414.

⁵ See Grosart's ed. of *More's Poems*. Memorial Introduction, xiii.

motion of the civil war. His seclusion lessened in some respects his influence; but in the Universities great numbers of friends and pupils hung with admiration on his words, and owed much to him both spiritually and intellectually. Never was a man more thoroughly devoted to what was good and pure and true, more intensely earnest to shun all that was sinful and 'to preserve his body as a well-strung instrument to his soul.' His rich imagination and profound learning glowed with the fire of a spiritual enthusiasm, so that what he wrote, though often rather phantastic and unintelligible, is often a most attractive and inspiring combination of mystic fervour and philosophic thought. His ideas of Divine Nature were always elevated; his idea of the human capacity high and ennobling. His poetry is not equal to his prose, and not so poetical; the form of his philosophical verse being, as a rule, somewhat prosaic, and disfigured by awkward words, while its spirit is rather frittered away by allegory. But a high and earnest purpose is ever apparent in it. His principal philosophical poem is the *Song of the Soul*, in which he treats of its life, of its immortality, of its pre-existence, of the infinity of worlds, and so forth. The following are stanzas from it:—

Of the power of the Spirit of Love:—

Even so the weaker mind, that languid lies
 Knit up in cage of dirt—dark, cold, and blind—
 So soon that purer flame of Love unties
 Her clogging chains, and doth her spright unbind,
 She soars aloft, for she herself doth find
 Well plumed; so raised upon her spreaden wing,
 She softly plays, and warbles in the wind,
 And carols out her inward life and spring
 Of overflowing joy, and of pure love doth sing.¹

Of True Piety:—

But true Religion sprung from God above,
 Is, like her fountain, full of Charity,
 Embracing all things with a tender love,
 Full of goodwill and meek expectancy,

¹ Grosart's ed. of *More's Poems, Psychathanasia*, Bk. i. cant. i. 3.

Full of true justice and sure verity,
 In heart and voice : free, large, even infinite,
 Not wedged in strait particularity,
 But grasping all in her vast active spright ;
 Bright lamp of God ! That men would joy in thy pure light !¹

From 'THE PHILOSOPHER'S DEVOTION'; after lines on the
goodness and wisdom and strength of God:—

Now myself I do resign,
 Take me whole, I all am Thine,
 Save me, God ! from self-desire,
 Death's pit, dark hell's raging fire,
 Envy, hatred, vengeance, ire :
 Let not lust my soul bemire !

Quit from these, Thy praise I'll sing,
 Loudly sweep the trembling string,
 Bear a part, O Wisdom's sons !
 Free'd from vain religions.
 Lo ! from far I you salute,
 Sweetly warbling on my lute,—
 India, Egypt, Araby,
 Asia, Greece, and Tartary,
 Carmel tracts and Lebanon,
 With the Mountains of the Moon,
 From whence muddy Nile doth run,
 Or wherever else you wone ; [dwell]
 Breathing in one vital air,
 One we are, though distant far.

Rise, at once let's sacrifice !
 Odours sweet perfume the skies.
 See, how heavenly lightning fires
 Hearts enflamed with high aspires !
 All the substance of our souls
 Up in clouds of incense rolls.²

A translation of the *Dies Iræ* by the Earl of Roscommon (1633-84) is not wanting in pathetic force. The two closing lines of those quoted below were his own last utterance before he died :—

VIII.

Thou mighty, formidable King,
 Thou mercy's unexhausted spring,
 Some comfortable pity bring !

¹ Grosart's ed. of *More's Poems, Psychathanasia*, Bk. ii. cant. ii. 6.

² *Id.* 181.

IX.

Forget not what my ransom cost,
Nor let my dear-bought soul be lost,
In storms of guilty terror tost.

X.

Thou Who for me didst feel such pain,
Whose precious blood the Cross did stain,
Let not those agonies be vain.

XI.

Thou Whom avenging powers obey,
Cancel my debt—too great to pay—
Before the sad accounting day.

XII.

Surrounded by amazing fears,
Whose load my soul with anguish bears,
I sigh, I weep : accept my tears.

XIII.

Thou Who wert mov'd with Mary's grief,
And, by absolving of the thief,
Hast given me hope, now give relief.

XIV.

Prostrate, my contrite heart I rend,
My God, my Father, and my Friend,
Do not forsake me in the end !¹

Roscommon's paraphrase of the 148th Psalm is not very successful.

Theophilus Dorrington, Rector of Wittersham, published his *Devotions in Psalms and Hymns* in 1687. His verses are exclusively adapted from the Psalms, but are applied to the most various occasions of life. Thus, in addition to Church festivals, and State days of thanksgiving, etc., he has written others for recovery from sickness, for restoration from intemperance, the soldier's thanksgiving, the traveller's thanksgiving, the thanksgiving of the released prisoner. There are seaman's and husbandman's hymns, for young men, for old men, for priests, and so forth. There are short

¹ Anderson's *English Poets*, vol. vi.

hymns to be used when washing, when dressing, at going out, at entering into company, on looking at a sun-dial, on gazing at a prospect, and many other miscellaneous occasions. The following verses are intended to come into the memory 'when light is brought into a room':—

Enlighten, Lord, my eyes and mind,
That so I may discern
The wondrous things which they behold
Who Thy just precepts learn.

Thy word is to my feet a lamp,
The way of truth to show ;
A watch-light to point out the path
In which I ought to go.

On me, devoted to Thy fear,
Lord, make Thy face to shine ;
Thy statutes both to know and keep
My heart with zeal incline.¹

Charles Cotton (1630-87), succeeded to an encumbered family estate in Staffordshire. He went to Cambridge, and afterwards travelled abroad. In 1670 he went with a captain's commission to Ireland. Literature, however, was his chief employment, and angling, which brought him into intimacy with Izaak Walton, his chief recreation. The following is from a Christmas Day hymn :—

Rise, shepherds, leave your flocks, and run ;
The soul's great Shepherd now is come !
Oh ! wing your tardy feet, and fly
To greet this dawning majesty ;
Heaven's messenger, in tidings bless'd,
Invites you to the sacred place,
Where the blesséd Babe of joy
Wrapp'd in His holy Father's grace
Comes the serpent to destroy
That lurks in every human breast.
To Judah's Bethlehem turn your feet,
There you shall salvation meet.

¹ Theophilus Dorrington's *Devotions*, etc., 1707, p. 15.

Let each religious soul then rise
 To offer up a sacrifice,
 And on the wings of prayer and praise
 His grateful heart to heaven raise ;
 For this, that in a stable lies,
 This poor neglected Babe, is He
 Hell and death that must control,
 And speak the blesséd word, ' Be free,'
 To every true believing soul.
 Death has no sting, nor Hell no prize ;
 Through His merits great, whilst we
 Travel to eternity,
 And with the blesséd angels sing
 Hosannahs to the heavenly King.¹

Sir William Davenant (1606-1688), was a man of far from strict life, and much influenced by Hobbes' sceptical philosophy. But he evidently thought a good deal about the relation between faith and reason, and the mysteries of human life and of the Divine providence. I quote a few stanzas from his *Gondibert* (1650) :—

Of the Exercise of Man's Faculties on Things Infinite and Divine :—

For error's mist doth bound the spirit's sight,
 As clouds—which make earth's arched roof seem low—
 Restrain the body's eyes ; and still, when light
 Grows clearer upwards, heaven must higher show.

In gathering knowledge from the sacred tree,
 I would not snatch in haste the fruit below ;
 But rather climb, like those who curious be,
 And boldly taste that which doth highest grow.

For knowledge would her prospect take in height :
 'Tis God's loved eaglet, bred by Him to fly,
 Though with weak eyes, still upward at the light,
 And may soar short, but cannot soar too high.²

¹ *C. Cotton's Poems*, Chalmers, iv. 729.

² *Davenant's Poems*, *Gondibert*, 'Death of Astragon,' viii.-ix., xx.-xxxiii. (Anderson, iv.).

Of Praise, as that exercise of devotion in which all forms of faith may with one accord unite. Praise is

The differing world's agreeing sacrifice ;
Where heaven divided faiths united finds ;
But prayer in various discord upward flies.¹

For the following verses I am indebted to Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song*:—

FRail Life ! in which, through mists of human breath,
We grope for truth, and make our progress slow,
Because by passion blinded ; till, by death
Our passions ending, we begin to know.

O harmless Death ; whom still the valiant brave,
The wise expel, the sorrowful invite,
And all the good embrace, who know the grave
A short dark passage to eternal light.²

The *Divine Emblems of John Bunyan* (1628-88), *A Book for Boys and Girls*, published 1686, was only known to be existing in its shorter form until 1889, when a copy of the original work was discovered, and secured to the British Museum. It has now been reprinted in *facsimile*. It is, as its editor calls it, a sort of religious Æsop, homely and unpolished, but not without touches of imagination worthy of the writer of *Pilgrim's Progress*. He addresses it to children, with a sort of apology. They may call him, he says, a baby, for playing with them, but he would fain let them see how the 'fingle-fangles' on which they dote may be gins and snares to entangle and destroy their souls. I give two or three illustrations from it :—

UPON THE WEATHERCOCK.

Brave weathercock, I see thou't set thy nose
Against the wind, which way soe'er it blows.
So let a Christian in any wise
Face it with Antichrist in each disguise.³

¹ *Gondibert*, canto 6, lxxxiv.

² From Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song*, lxxxvi.

³ *John Bunyan's Divine Emblems, etc.*, 1686 ; ed. with Life by J. Brown, D. D., 1889, No. lxix.

OF THE MOLE IN THE GROUND.

A mole's a creature very smooth and slick,
 She digs i' th' dirt, but 'twill not on her stick.
 So's he who counts this world his greatest gains,
 Yet nothing gets but 's labour for his pains.
 Earth's the mole's element ; she can't abide
 To be above ground ; dirt heaps are her pride ;
 And he is like her, who the worldling plays ;
 He imitates her in her works and ways.

Poor idle mole, that thou should'st love to be
 Where thou nor sun, nor moon, nor stars can see.
 But oh, how silly's he, who doth not care,
 So he gets earth, to have of heaven a share.¹

The following is upon the same subject as his well-known sermon :—

UPON THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

What, barren here ! in this so good a soil !
 The sight of this doth make God's heart recoil
 From giving thee His blessing. Barren tree,
 Bear fruit, or else thy end will curséd be !

Art thou not planted by the water side ?
 Know'st not thy Lord by fruit is glorified ?
 The sentence is, Cut down the barren tree ;
 Bear fruit, or else thy end will curséd be !

Hast not been digg'd about and dungéd too ?
 Will neither patience nor yet dressing do ?
 The executioner is come, O tree,
 Bear fruit, or else thy end will curséd be !

He that about thy roots takes pain to dig,
 Would, if on thee were found but one good fig,
 Preserve thee from the axe ; but, barren tree,
 Bear fruit, or else thy end will curséd be !

The utmost end of patience is at hand ;
 'Tis much if thou much longer here doth stand,
 O Cumber-ground, thou art a barren tree,
 Bear fruit, or else thy end will curséd be !

Thy standing nor thy name will help at all,
 When fruitful trees are sparéd, thou must fall ;
 The axe is laid unto thy roots, O tree,
 Bear fruit, or else thy end will curséd be !²

¹ *John Bunyan's Divine Emblems*, No. xix.

² *Id.*

The *Scriptural Poems* ascribed to Bunyan on Job, Daniel, etc., are of doubtful authenticity, and, at all events, are very prosy.

Thomas Flatman (1633-88), a barrister-at-law, published in 1674 some *Poems and Songs*, which passed through three or four editions. Among them are a *Thought on Death*, several lines of which Pope closely imitated in his *Dying Christian*, and two rather pretty morning and evening hymns. The latter of these is as follows :—

Sleep ! drowsy sleep ! come, close mine eyes,
Tired with beholding vanities !
Sweet slumber, come and chase away
The toils and follies of the day :
On your soft bosom will I lie,
Forget the world, and learn to die.
O Israel's watchful Shepherd, spread
Tents of angels round my bed ;
Let not the spirits of the air,
While I slumber, me ensnare,
But save Thy suppliant free from harms
Clasp'd in Thine everlasting arms.
Clouds and thick darkness are Thy throne,
Thy wonderful pavilion :
Oh, dart from thence a shining ray,
And then my midnight shall be day !
That, when the morn in crimson drest
Breaks through the windows of the East,
My hymns of thankful praises shall arise
Like incense or the morning sacrifice.¹

In Richard Baxter (1615-91) the English Church lost, under Charles the Second's Act of Uniformity, a good and true-hearted man, of whom any church might have been proud. He had received holy orders from the Bishop of Winchester in 1638, and, though he soon after adopted several Nonconformist opinions, remained throughout his life wide and generous in his sympathies. In 1640 he was invited to help the Vicar of Kidderminster, but through most of the Civil War was with the Parliamentary army, ever using his influence and

¹ *Poems and Songs by T. Flatman*, 1676, p. 45.

eloquence in favour of milder and more liberal views than those which were generally predominant there. At the Restoration he was made one of the King's Chaplains, and was offered the Bishopric of Hereford. He declined it, but would gladly have remained at Kidderminster, if the Act of Uniformity had been less unbending. *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* had been published by him in 1650. In his later years he suffered, to the great shame of our rulers in Church and State, not a little indignity and persecution. His poetry is much varied in quality, much of it very indifferent, with passages here and there of great beauty, full of religious fervour. The hymn, 'Lord, it belongs not to my care,' is, most deservedly, too well known to need quoting here. Another excellent hymn of his is that which begins, 'Ye holy angels bright!' But it has been much improved and partly recast in 1858 by Chope. The following are some lines from *The Resolution*, written, he says, 'when I was silenced and cast out,' expecting imprisonment:—

What if in prison I must dwell?
 May I not there converse with Thee?
 Save me from sin, Thy wrath, and hell,
 Call me Thy child, and I am free.
 No walls or bars can keep Thee out;
 None can confine a holy soul.
 The streets of Heaven it walks about,
 None can its liberty control.

O loose these chains of sin and flesh;
 Enlarge my heart in Thy commands.
 Could I but love Thee as I wish,
 How light would be all other bands!¹

The following is from *Love breathing Thanks and Praise*:—

Here lies my pain! this is my daily sore:
 I hate my heart for loving God no more.

¹ *Poetical Fragments of R. Baxter.*

Do I not love Thee, when I love to love Thee?
 And when I set up nothing else above Thee?
 Next God Himself, who is my End and Rest,
 Love, which stands next Thee, I esteem my best.¹

John Mason, Rector of Water Stratford, Bucks, was a devout and excellent man, though somewhat carried away in the latter part of his life by wild and extravagant notions. He died in 1694. His *Songs of Praise* were published in 1683. Among them is that hymn which tells of the living water in words which thrill with a more than common rapture of religious expectation:—

The stream doth water Paradise,
 It makes the angels sing.

I may also quote the following:—

FROM SONG I.

How great a Being, Lord, is Thine,
 Which doth all beings keep!
 Thy knowledge is the only line
 To sound so vast a deep:
 Thou art a Sea without a shore,
 A Sun without a sphere;
 Thy time is now and evermore;
 Thy place is everywhere.²

FROM SONG IV.

My God, Thou art my glorious Sun,
 By whose bright beams I shine;
 As Thou, Lord, ever art with me,
 Let me be ever Thine.
 Thou art my living Fountain, Lord,
 Whose streams on me do flow;
 Myself I render unto Thee
 To Whom myself I owe.

I may add the following four lines:—

I come, I wait, I hear, I pray!
 Thy footsteps, Lord, I trace!
 I sing to think this is the way
 Unto my Saviour's face.³

¹ *Poetical Fragments of R. Baxter*, 18.

² *Songs of Praise* by John Mason, 1859.

³ *Mason's Songs of Praise*, and J. Shepherd's *Penitential Cries*, 1859.

The poems of Henry Vaughan (1621-95) contain, amid a good deal that is rather strained and tedious, some passages worthy of taking a very high place in English sacred verse. He was one of twin brothers in an ancient and honourable Welsh family connected with the Earls of Worcester. They were together at Jesus College, Oxford, in 1638, when Charles was holding his court in that city. The two brothers, Henry and Thomas, attached themselves zealously to the Royal side. Thomas took up arms in the King's cause, then became ordained to the living of his own birthplace, was ejected by the Parliamentary Commissioners, retired to Oxford and devoted his time to alchymy and Rosicrucianism. He wrote some fair poetry in English and Latin. Henry, meanwhile, had left Oxford to study medicine in London, where he became acquainted with Ben Jonson and other literary men of that day. He took his M.D. degree and settled in his old home at Newton, practising his profession, and employing his leisure in literature. In 1649 he had a long and severe illness, during which he became impressed with deeper religious feelings than heretofore. He became acquainted with the poems of George Herbert, read them with delight, and was much influenced by them in his compositions. In 1650 he published the first part of his *Silex Scintillans* (Sparks from the Flint). This was in poetry. During the next few years his writings were chiefly essays and meditations in prose. In 1655 he published the second part of the *Silex Scintillans*. This was his last publication.¹ During the forty years that followed he lived quietly in his pleasant home by the Esk, and died at the age of seventy-three.

Nothing which he wrote is finer than the following, his *In Memoriam* of dear friends:—

¹ Some, however, of his miscellaneous verses, chiefly of an early date, were published in 1678 by one of his Oxford friends.

They are all gone into the world of light
 And I alone sit ling'ring here ;
 Their very memory is fair and bright,
 And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast
 Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
 Or those faint beams in which the hill is drest
 After the sun's remove.

I see them walking in an air of glory,
 Whose light doth trample on my days ;
 My days which are at best but dull and hoary,
 Mere glimmerings and decays.

O holy hope, and high humility,
 High as the heavens above !
 These are your walks, and you have showed them me,
 To kindle my cold love.

Dear, beauteous death ; the jewel of the just !
 Shining nowhere but in the dark ;
 What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
 Could man outlook that mark !

He that hath found some fledged bird's nest may know,
 At first sight, if the bird be flown ;
 But what fair dell or grove he sings in now—
 That is to him unknown.

And yet, as angels in some brighter dream
 Call to the soul when man doth sleep,
 So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes
 And into glory peep.

O Father of eternal life and all
 Created glories under Thee !
 Resume Thy spirit from this world of thrall
 Into true liberty !¹

FROM HIS VERSES 'ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT.'

O day of life, of light, of love,
 The only day dealt from above !
 A day so fresh, so bright, so brave,
 'Twill show us each forgotten grave,
 And make the dead like flowers arise
 Youthful and fair to see new skies.

¹ *Silex Scintillans*, Pt. ii. : *H. Vaughan's Poems*, ed. by H. F. Lyte, 1847.

All other days, compared to Thee,
 Are but light's weak minority,
 They are but veils and cyphers drawn
 Like clouds before thy glorious dawn.
 O come ! arise ! shine ! do not stay,
 Dearly loved day !
 The fields are long since white, and I
 With earnest groans for freedom cry ;
 My fellow-creatures too say, Come !
 And stones, though speechless, are not dumb,
 When shall we hear that glorious voice
 Of life and joys ?
 That voice, which to each secret bed
 Of my Lord's dead
 Shall bring true day, and make dust see
 The way to immortality !
 When shall those first white pilgrims rise,
 Whose holy happy histories
 Because they sleep so long, some men
 Count but the blots of a vain pen ?
 Dear Lord, make haste !
 Sin every day commits more waste :
 And Thy old enemy which knows
 His time is short, more raging grows.¹

LOVE AND DISCIPLINE.

Since in a land not barren, still
 (Because Thou dost Thy grace distil)
 My lot is fall'n, blest be Thy will !
 And since these biting frosts but kill
 Some tares in me, which choke or spill
 The seed Thou sowest, blest be Thy skill !
 Blest be Thy dew, and blest Thy frost ;
 And happy I to be so crost
 And cared by crosses, at Thy cost.
 The dew doth cheer what is distrest,
 The frosts ill weeds nip and molest ;
 In both Thou work'st unto the best :—
 Thus, while Thy several mercies plot
 And work on me, now cold, now hot,
 The work goes on and slacketh not.
 For as Thy hand the weather steers,
 So thrive I best 'twixt joys and fears,
 And all the years have some green ears.

¹ *Silex Scintillans*, Pt. ii. p. 184.

Sir Edward Sherburne (1618-1702) was a Roman Catholic, joined the King's army during the Civil Wars, and at the defeat of the Royal cause was much plundered and impoverished. All his later years were spent in studious quiet.

GOOD FRIDAY.

This day Eternal Love for me,
 Fast nailed unto a curséd tree,
 Rending His fleshy veil, did through His side
 A way to Paradise provide.
 This day Life died, and dying, overthrew
 Death, Sin, and Satan too.
 O happy day !
 May sinners say,
 But day can it be said to be,
 Wherein we see
 The bright sun of celestial light
 O'ershadowed with so black a night !¹

No one would look for religious verses of any depth in the works of John Dryden (1631-1701). Still his mind was often occupied with the questions which were disputed between Roman Catholics and Protestants, and between Christianity and Deism. His *Religio Laici*, 1682, is simply an argument in verse on the relation of faith to reason :—

How can the less the greater comprehend?
 Or finite reason reach Infinity?
 For what could fathom God were more than He.

Thus man by his own strength to heaven would soar ;
 And would not be obliged to God for more.
 Vain wretched creature, how art thou misled
 To think thy wit these godlike notions bred,
 These truths are not the product of thy mind,
 But dropt from heaven, and of a nobler kind.
 Reveal'd religion first inform'd thy sight,
 And reason saw not, till faith sprung the light.

Most versions of the *Veni, Creator Spiritus* have more or less merit. Dryden's paraphrase of it is not equal

¹ *Sir E. Sherburne's Poems*, Chalmers's *British Poets*, vol. vi. p. 633.

to some, but would be thought good if there were not others better. The following is part of it:—

Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world's foundations first were laid,
Come, visit every pious mind ;
Come, pour Thy joys on human kind ;
From sin and sorrow set us free,
And make Thy temples worthy Thee.

Refine and purge our earthly parts ;
But, oh, inflame and fire our hearts !
Our frailties help, our vice control,
Submit the senses to the soul ;
And when rebellious they are grown,
Then lay Thy hand, and hold them down,
Chase from our minds th' infernal foe.
And peace, the fruit of love, bestow ;
And, lest our feet should step astray,
Protect and guide us in the way.
Make us eternal truths receive,
And practise all that we believe :
Give us Thyself, that we may see
The Father and the Son by Thee.

Half a century after the death of George Herbert, the tiny parish church of Bemerton again had its pulpit occupied by a rector whose name will ever stand high in the roll of English sacred poets. John Norris was born in 1657, and educated at Winchester, and Exeter College, Oxford. In 1680 he was elected Fellow of All Souls. In 1684 he published his *Poems*. In 1689 he was presented to the Rectory of St. Loe, in Somersetshire, and in 1691 was transferred to that of Bemerton, Wilts. It was there that he published his sermons, essays, and philosophical works. He died there in 1711, and on his tomb are the appropriate and suggestive words, 'Bene latuit.' Norris was one of the chief ornaments of that noble school of Christian Platonists, which about the same period numbered among its English adherents the names of Cudworth, Henry More, John Smith, Benjamin Whichcot, Widrington, and Wilkins. His religious poems are of a wholly different kind from those of his illustrious predecessor at Bemerton.

ton. Their charm chiefly consists in the expression they give to the yearnings and aspirations of the human soul for ideals of beauty and perfectness, not to be realised here in the flesh, but which it believes with a firm hope will be attainable in the fuller life of eternity. If it be said, and that with truth, that his thought is somewhat enveloped in a sort of golden haze, yet this is an atmosphere not unsuited to the region of hope and undefined wistfulness in which a pure and philosophic mind, trained in a lofty creed, looks forward into the mystic future. The frequent fault of his verses is one very common in his age—an artificial striving after sublimity of language, as distinguished from that of thought. The style of Pindar's odes had a fascination for verse-writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which was prejudicial in the extreme to simple purity of diction. Even the success which it now and then attained to was misleading. A majestic combination of words, or a really grand figure of speech, might easily tempt the poet, or his imitators, to a soaring flight which could not be sustained, and which quickly degenerated into inflation and mannerism. Norris is not nearly so liable to this imputation as some of his contemporaries and successors; but he is not free from it. The following little poem is entitled *The Aspiration* :—

How long, great God, how long must I
 Immured in this dark prison lie!
 Where at the grates and avenues of sense
 My soul must watch to have intelligence;
 Where but faint gleams of Thee salute my sight,
 Like doubtful moonshine in a cloudy night.

When shall I leave this magic sphere,
 And be all mind, all eye, all ear?

How cold this clime! and yet my sense
 Perceives even here Thy influence.
 Even here Thy strong magnetic charms I feel,
 And pant and tremble like the amorous steel.
 To lower good, and beauties less divine,
 Sometimes my erroneous needle does decline;
 But yet—so strong the sympathy—
 It turns, and points again to Thee.

I long to see this excellence
 Which at such distance strikes my sense ;
 My impatient soul struggles to disengage
 Her wings from the confinement of her cage.
 To Thee, Thou only fair, my soul aspires
 With holy breathings, languishing desires.
 To Thee my enamoured, panting heart does move
 By efforts of ecstatic love.

How do Thy glorious streams of light
 Refresh my intellectual sight !
 Though broken, and strained through a screen
 Of envious flesh that stands between !
 When shall my imprisoned soul be free,
 That she Thy native uncorrected light may see,
 And gaze upon Thy beatific face to all eternity ?¹

The great problem, the solemn mystery of death, possessed a great fascination for his mind. He often alludes to it, as for example—

What a strange moment will that be,
 My soul, how full of curiosity,
 When wing'd, and ready for thy eternal flight,
 On the utmost edges of the tottering day,
 Hovering, and wishing longer stay,
 Thou shalt advance and have Eternity in sight ;
 Would'st Thou, great Love, this prisoner once set free,
 How would she hasten to be link'd with Thee.
 She'd for no angel's conduct stay,
 But fly, and love on all the way.²

FROM 'SERAPHIC LOVE.'

Through Contemplation's optics I have seen
 Him who is fairer than the sons of men,—
 The Source of good, the Light archetypal,
 Beauty in the original,
 The fairest of ten thousand He,
 Proportion all and Harmony,
 All mortal beauty's but a ray
 Of His bright, ever-shining day—
 A little, feeble, twinkling star,
 Which, now the sun's in place, must disappear.
 There is but One that's good, but One that's fair.
 When just about to try that unknown sea,
 What a strange moment will that be !

¹ *Norris's Poems*, Grosart iii. 174.

² *Id.* 63.

But yet how much more strange that state
 When, loosen'd from th' embrace of this close mate,
 Thou shalt at once be plunged in liberty,
 And move as free and active as a ray
 Shot from the lucid spring of day !
 Thou who just now wast clogg'd with dull mortality.

That it may not seem as if Norris's religious verse were all of the contemplative and speculative kind, I give another quotation. It is from *The Resignation*.

I'll trust my great Physician still,
 I know what He prescribes can ne'er be ill ;
 To each disease He knows what's fit,
 I own Him wise and good, and do submit,
 I'll now no longer grieve or pine,
 Since 'tis Thy pleasure, Lord, it shall be mine.

Thy medicine puts me to great smart,
 Thou'st wounded me in my most tender part ;
 But 'tis with a design to cure,
 I must and will Thy sovereign touch endure.
 All that I prized below is gone,
 But yet I still will pray, 'Thy will be done !'

Since 'tis Thy sentence, I should part
 With the most precious treasure of my heart ;
 I freely that and more resign—
 My heart itself, as its delight is Thine ;
 My little all I give to Thee ;
 Thou gav'st a greater cost, Thy Son, to me.

He left true bliss and joy above,
 Himself He emptied of all good but love :
 For me He freely did forsake
 More good than He from me can ever take.
 A mortal life for a divine
 He took, and did even that at last resign.

Take all, great God ; I will not grieve,
 But still will wish that I had still to give.
 I hear Thy voice ; Thou bidst me quit
 My paradise ; I bless and do submit.
 I will not murmur at Thy word,
 Nor beg Thy angel to sheath up his sword.¹

Among Norris's poems are a few Paraphrases. Those of parts of the 137th and 139th Psalms are excellent.

¹ *Norris's Poems*, Grosart iii. 162.

James Chamberlayne (c. 1660-1724) held the office of Gentleman-Usher to Prince George of Denmark. He was a man of very considerable acquirements, knew well Greek, Latin, High and Low Dutch, French, Portuguese, and Italian, and had some intelligent knowledge of sixteen languages. He continued a work, once in much repute, which his father had begun, on *The Present State of England*, wrote or translated several theological, historical, and philosophical treatises, and was a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was a man of much piety, very anxious for the advancement of religion, and maintained an extensive correspondence with leading men abroad, who he hoped might do something to further these good designs. He wrote in verse a history of our Lord on earth, together with paraphrases of the Psalms, and some original poems (1680). The following is entitled *Domine Jesu* :—

The virtue of that balm which did distil
 From Thy pierc'd side infuse into my will,
 That Thy good pleasure here I may fulfil.
 Make me to Thee as to the centre move ;
 Each thought and act refine ; inflame my love
 To all Thy ways, that I may faithful prove.
 And since to Thee the Cross must be my guide,
 That joy which made Thee, make me to abide
 Its weight, that I in Paradise reside.¹

Thomas Shepherd (1665-1739), who gave up a living in Buckinghamshire, and became the pastor of a Congregational church in Northampton, and afterwards of one at Braintree, Essex, was the author of *Penitential Cries*. They were published in 1692, and were often bound up with Mason's *Songs of Praise*. The following is from the 30th :—

My God, my God, my Light, my Love,
 Mine All in All to me !
 Wilt Thou a gracious Father prove
 To souls that hang on Thee ?

¹ *A Sacred Poem, etc.*, by James Chamberlayne, 1680, p. 182.

My God, my God, my Light, my Love,
 Can'st Thou that soul forsake,
 That follows Thee with artless cries,
 Longing to overtake ?

My God, my God, my Light, my Love,
 Come, come, with me abide ;
 Rejoice me with Thy presence, Lord,
 I have no joy beside.

My God, my God, my Light, my Love,
 Hear Thou my mournful cry ;
 The God of Love hears from above,
 He will not see me die !¹

The poems of John Pomfret (1677-1703), Rector of Luton, once enjoyed a popularity of no ordinary kind. It is said that during 'the whole of the eighteenth century no other volume of poems was so often reprinted, or held in such popular estimation.' It was not among the critics and judges of poetry that they won this favour, but among the multitude, on whose scanty shelves lay a few books in common paper and coarse sheepskin. There Pomfret's Poems held an honoured place, scarcely second to *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. 'They were even printed in America in the middle of that century when so few books had been printed there that two pages might comprise the catalogue.'² Dr. Johnson³ and Southey⁴ are both rather perplexed how to explain all this honour paid to a poet whose merits are not very great. Probably the long immunity from fate which Pomfret's poetical reputation gained was chiefly owing to the pleasure which average human nature always finds in finding its own ideas—those, at all events, which are most creditable or respectable—smoothly clothed in language above, but not too much above, its own level. Much in the same way as among his secular poems *The Choice* touched with a light and easy hand those

¹ T. Shepherd's *Penitential Cries*, 1692.

² *Quarterly Review*, vol. xxxv. p. 189.

³ Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, vol. ii. p. 4.

⁴ Southey's *Later English Poets*, vol. i. p. 96.

objects of ambition which come most home to the heart of an ordinary Englishman in relation to material comfortableness, so, in handling sacred topics, Pomfret keeps well within the range of such religious and moral ideas as the bulk of well-meaning people can easily aspire to. In the poem, for instance, upon the Divine attributes, thoughts which all men are more or less alive to, of human life and of infinity, are suggested, without being entered into too deeply, and with too refined argument for a moderate and uncultivated intellect. Still, among very much that is mediocre, there are a few lines which rise quite above the level. Such are these, from the closing part of Pomfret's poem on the Judgment, which I borrow from Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song* :—

ANGELS' SONG.

O holy, holy, holy Lord,
 Eternal God, Almighty One,
 Be Thou for ever, and be Thou alone
 By all Thy creatures, constantly adored !
 Ineffable, co-equal Three,
 Who from nonentity gave birth
 To angels and to men, to heaven and to earth,
 Yet always wast Thyself, and wilt for ever be.
 But for Thy mercy, we had ne'er possest
 These thrones, and this immense felicity
 Could ne'er have been so infinitely blest !
 Therefore all glory, power, dominion, majesty,
 To Thee, O Lamb of God, to Thee
 For ever, longer than for ever, be.

The following anonymous poem of the seventeenth century I take from Emily Taylor's *Flowers and Fruits from Old English Gardens* :—

THE CHILD'S DEATH.

He did but float a little way
 Adown the stream of time ;
 With dreamy eyes watching the ripples play
 Or listening to their chime.
 His slender sail
 Scarce felt the gale :

He did but float a little way,
 And, putting to the shore,
While yet 'twas early day,
Went calmly on his way,
 To dwell with us no more.
No jarring did he feel,
No grating on his vessel's keel ;
A strip of yellow sand
Mingled the waters with the land,
Where he was seen no more :
O stern word, Never more !
Full short his journey was ; no dust
 Of earth unto his sandals gave ;
The weary weight that old men must,
 He bore not to the grave.
He seem'd a cherub who had lost his way
And wander'd hither : so his stay
With us was short : and 'twas most meet
 That he should be no delver in earth's clod,
Nor need to pause and cleanse his feet
 To stand before his God.

CHAPTER VII

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY¹

'THE Revolution,' remarks Hallam, 'did nothing for poetry. William's reign, always excepting Dryden, is our *nadir* in works of imagination.'² It must have seemed to many as if English poetry had almost died with the death of Dryden in 1701.

Yet the very first year as we should commonly reckon it, of the eighteenth century was distinguished by a very notable accession to the treasures of sacred verse. Bishop Ken (1637-1711) first published his *Morning, Evening, and Midnight Hymns* in 1700, in the seventh edition of his *Manual of Prayer for Winchester Scholars*. All three are beautiful, but the *Midnight Hymn*—excluded by its nature from all congregational hymn-books, and therefore not so popularly known—is perhaps the most beautiful of them all. The good bishop himself used daily, immediately upon rising, to sing to his lute his *Morning Hymn*. He was accustomed, it appears, to adapt the words to his own tunes, for he was skilled in music, and his compositions were grave and solemn. The melody, however, to which the three hymns were originally printed, and which suffered in the course of time corruptions which changed its very structure, was Ravenscroft's version of Tallis's eighth tune. It will be found in the first appendix to the *Life of Ken, by a Layman* (Lond. 1853).

Ken's devotional poems were very numerous. To make and sing them was his recreation and chief

¹ The greater part of this Chapter is a revised reprint of an Essay in the 1st ed. of Abbey and Overton's *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*.

² Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, vol. vi. p. 440.

delight ; his anodyne ¹ in seasons of wearying pain ; his comfort through many a sleepless night. The nightingale warbling in the darkness troubles itself well-nigh as little about what listening men may think of its song, as Ken of the impression which his hymns might leave upon the ears of critics. 'His poems,' as Keble truly says, 'are not popular, nor probably ever will be. . . . The narrative is often cumbrous, and the lyric verse not seldom languid and redundant.'² That simpler style, in which all his best verses are written, is constantly interrupted by a strained and artificial diction, in which he imitated Cowley, with none of Cowley's brilliancy. Ken himself was not blind to their faults. More than once he says he was inclined to burn them, and only refrained from doing so in the thought that verses which reflected the glow and raptures of his own soul might kindle other hearts also.

There can be no object in quoting from the more prosaic or inharmonious verses which he often wrote. Many, however, of his lines are very beautiful.

From *Hymns on the Festivals* :—

God sweetly calls us every day,
Why should we then our bliss delay?
He calls to endless light,
Why should we love the night?
Should we one call but duly heed,
It would to joys eternal lead.³

From *God's Attributes or Perfections* :—

God's children love all human race
In whom they God's dear image trace ;
More likeness they attain,
The greater love they gain :
Saints in whom love is most express'd
Fraternal charity loves best.⁴

¹ See his very beautiful verses under the title *An Anodyne* quoted in Professor Paigraue's *Treasury of Sacred Song*.

² *Quarterly Review*, vol. xxxii. p. 230.

³ *Ken's Works*, i. 383. The poem from which the stanza is taken has been adapted by Bishop W. Walsham How into an admirable hymn for St. Matthew's Day.

⁴ *Id.* ii. 89.

From *Psyche*:--

My God, Thou only art
 Able to know, keep, rule the heart ;
 O make my heart Thy care,
 Which I myself to keep despair.
 No rebels then will garrison my breast,
 Beneath Almighty wings my heart will live at rest .

Ken thus expresses his idea of a Christian pastor, in the first lines of his poem under that head:—

Give me the priest these graces doth possess
 Of an ambassador the just address ;
 A father's tenderness, a shepherd's care ;
 A leader's courage, which the cross can bear ;
 A ruler's awe, a watchman's wakeful eye ;
 A pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply ;
 A fisher's patience, and a labourer's toil ;
 A guide's dexterity to disembroil :
 A prophet's inspiration from above ;
 A teacher's knowledge, and a Saviour's love.

The following is a couplet which Mr. Godfrey Thring has inserted in his *Church of England Hymn-Book*:—

Submit yourself to God, and you shall find
 God fights the battles of a will resign'd.²

The works of three accomplished women may next claim notice.

Lady Chudleigh, authoress of essays which obtained some repute, died in 1710. Her poems were published in 1703, and a third edition of them in 1722. In that entitled *The Resolve*,³ we may trace the spirit of an age in which religion was commonly arrayed, and sometimes disguised, under the sober garb of contemplations upon reason and virtue.

A miscellany of poems published anonymously⁴ by the Countess of Winchelsea in 1713, would scarcely call for remark on the mere account of the two or three sacred pieces interspersed among its fables, moral

¹ *Ken's Works*, iv. 201.

² Appendix, *Hymns for Private Use*, 43.

³ Quoted in Al. Dyce's *Specimens of British Poetesses*, 129.

⁴ *Miscellany Poems on several Occasions, written by a Lady, 1713.*

apologues, pastorals and Pindaric odes. It contains the story not unfrequently found in selections, and put a second time into verse by Hannah More, of the atheist and the acorn.¹ There is a paraphrase of the 148th Psalm,² written with much spirit, and appended to a poem on the famous hurricane—unparalleled in our latitudes—of 1703. But her special title to notice rests almost entirely upon a poem which has only an indirect bearing, though not an unimportant one, upon that class of sacred poetry which finds its chief material in the more spiritual aspects of outward nature. Wordsworth observes of her *Nocturnal Reverie* that, with the exception of a passage or two in the *Windsor Forest* of Pope, it is the only poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the *Paradise Lost* and *The Seasons*, in which external phenomena were contemplated with any originality or genuine imagination.³

The name of Elizabeth Rowe (1676-1737) stands high among the writers of sacred poetry in the eighteenth century. She was daughter of a Mr. Singer, a Dissenting minister of good family and competent fortune, who once suffered imprisonment for Nonconformity, and was living in William III.'s reign at Ilchester. Her earlier poems were published in 1696 under the title of *Philomela*: a name which soon became familiar, if not to the general throng⁴ which haunted the literary 'coffee-houses, at least to all lovers of high-toned religious poetry. Both in her poetical and devotional writings there is a fervour which sometimes almost transgresses the bounds of sober piety, and which, in an age abhorrent of 'enthusiasm,' was looked upon with much suspicion even by those who most admired her talents. 'Some of her expressions,' says Watts, who edited, very soon

¹ *Miscellany Poems*, etc. 202.

² *Id.* 248.

³ Wordsworth's 'Essay Supplementary to Preface,' *Poet. Works*, v. 213.

⁴ 'Meets Philomela in the town
Her due proportion of renown?'

Lady Winchelsea's Poems, 'The Miser and the Poet,' *Miscellany*, 148.

after her death, her *Devout Exercises of the Heart*, 'are a little too rapturous and too near akin to the language of the mystical writers.'¹ 'The reader will here find a spirit dwelling in flesh elevated into divine transports congenial to those of angels and unbodied minds.'²

Her character appears to have been one of much beauty. Her letters convey the idea of a bright and happy temperament. Half her property was dedicated to beneficent purposes,³ and her poorer neighbours always found in her a most kindly friend; while her amiable disposition and accomplished mind rendered her society courted in the best circles.⁴ Her piety, wholly free from Puritan moroseness, was controlled and kept in balance without losing any of its impassioned ardour. It is interesting, too, to see in her the intimate friend of two good men so widely different from one another as Bishop Ken and Dr. Watts.

Perhaps the poem which, both in its beauties and defects, is most characteristic of this author, is *A Hymn in imitation of Canticles V-VII*. Southey has on this account selected it for quotation in his book on the *Later English Poets*.⁵ It should be remembered that a hundred and fifty years ago, as in the preceding periods, the religious significance of the *Book of Canticles* was far more frequently dwelt upon in sermons and in religious works generally than has been the case in later years.

Ye pure inhabitants of light,
Ye virgin minds above,
That feel the sacred violence,
The mighty force of love !

By all your boundless joys, by all
Your love to human kind,
I charge you to instruct me where
My absent Lord to find.

¹ *Devout Exercises of the Heart*, by Mrs. Rowe, ed. by Dr. Isaac Watts, second ed., 1737, Dedication.

² *Id.* Preface by Watts, xiii.

³ *Works in Prose and Verse*, etc., i. lxxvii.

⁴ Watts' Preface to *Devout Exercises*, xviii.

⁵ Southey's *Later English Poets*, i. 349.

I've search'd the pleasant hills and vales,
And climb'd the hills around,
But no glad tidings of my love
Among the swains have found.

I've oft invoked him in the shades,
By every stream and rock ;
The rocks, the streams, and echoing shades
My vain industry mock.

I traced the city's noisy streets,
And told my love aloud ;
But no intelligence could meet
Among the thoughtless crowd.

I've search'd the temple round, for there
He oft has blest my sight,
And half unveil'd, of his lovely face
Disclosed the heavenly light.

But with these glorious views no more
I feast my ravish'd eyes ;
For veil'd with interposing clouds ¹
My eager search he flies.

Oh, could I in some desert land
His sacred footsteps trace,
I'd with glad devotion kneel
And bless the sacred place.

Nor stormy winds should stay my course,
Nor unfrequented shore,
Nor craggy Alps, nor desert wastes,
Where hungry lions roar.

¹ In her hymn, 'In vain the dusky night,' the same thought is well expressed in more sober language :—

'When, when shall I behold Thy face
All radiant and serene,
Without these envious, dusky clouds
That make a veil between ?

'When shall that long-expected day
Of sacred vision be,
When my impatient soul shall make
A near approach to Thee ?'

The fervour of Mrs. Rowe's poetry might be instanced in a free but fine version of the 63d Psalm, beginning :

'O God, my first, my last, my steadfast choice,
My boundless bliss, the strength of all my joys.'

Through ranks of interposing death
 To his embrace I'd fly,
 And to enjoy his blissful smiles
 Would be content to die.¹

Ralph Thoresby enters into his diary for September 10th, 1724, that he had been 'visited by that noted poet, Mr. [Samuel] Wesley² (1666-1735). Some mention is at all events due to the father of John and Charles Wesley, in his character as a writer of sacred poetry. Though his father and grandfather had been successively vicars of Charmouth, he was brought up, during his boyhood, in a Nonconformist academy. He afterwards became a staunch High Churchman, a friend of Robert Nelson³ and other leading men of that party, an active promoter of the newly-founded Church Societies,⁴ and somewhat over-eager in his opposition to Dissenters.⁵ He declined an Irish bishopric, and became rector, first of South Ormsby, and afterwards of Epworth, both in Lincolnshire. His son Samuel, elder brother of John and Charles, in a poem entitled *The Parish Priest*, published in 1736, the year after his father's death, has left an affectionate and reverential tribute to his memory:—

A parish priest, not of the pilgrim kind,⁶
 But fix'd and faithful to the post assign'd ;
 Through various scenes with equal virtue trod,
 True to his oath, his order, and his God.

His looks the tenour of his soul express,
 An easy, unaffected cheerfulness,
 Steadfast not stiff, and awful not austere,
 Tho' courteous, reverend, and tho' smooth, sincere,
 In converse free, for every subject fit,
 The coolest reason joined to keenest wit.⁷

¹ *Works*, etc. i. 131.

² R. Thoresby's *Diary*, ii. 413

³ C. F. Secretan's *Life of Nelson*, 101.

⁴ G. G. Perry, *Hist. of the Church of England*, iii. 91.

⁵ Letter of S. Wesley to Hearne, *Reliq. Hearnianæ*, 40.

⁶ This almost seems to hint at his brother, who had just started for Georgia.

⁷ *Poems on Several Occasions*, by S. Wesley, Master of Blundell's School, Tiverton, etc., 1736, pp. 66-72.

He tells that he was 'a guardian angel to the sick and poor, that there was not a Dissenter or a Papist in his parish, that he refused to read King James's Declaration, though expecting to be deprived for it, and that he was an indefatigable searcher after truth.'¹ This worthy clergyman was a voluminous writer of sacred poetry. His principal work was an heroic poem, in ten books upon *The Life of Christ*, published in 1693.² It was received at the time with much applause. Nahum Tate bowed from the laureate throne, upon which he had just ascended, and feigned with proud humility that his own glories would by comparison grow dim :

Even we, the tribe who thought ourselves inspired,
Like glimmering stars in night's dull reign admired,
Like stars, a numerous but a feeble host,
Are gladly in your morning lustre lost.³

Luke Milbourne, also a translator of the Psalms, was no less effusive in his praise. But Pope makes Milbourne chief flamen in his empire of dulness, and puts into his mouth the dictum that 'Dulness is sacred in a sound divine.'⁴ Perhaps, therefore, the praises of Milbourne and of Nahum Tate may not be altogether inconsistent with an opinion that Samuel Wesley's sacred heroics are tedious and prosaic. The book, however, brought its author for the time into considerable note. Poetry was just then, with few exceptions, at a very low ebb; and encomiums were often freely lavished upon verses which would by no means satisfy a higher standard of poetical taste. And independently of its merits, whatever they might be, as a composition, a synoptical view of the Gospels, in a new form, and amply furnished with Scripture references, worked out by a man of no mean talent, was sure to deserve and obtain much respectful attention. It may be added that the work was brought out in very handsome form, in

¹ *Poems on Several Occasions*, by S. Wesley, Dedication.

² *The Life of Christ*, by S. Wesley: an Heroic Poem, 1693.

³ Prefixed, with other complimentary verses, to the poem in the edition referred to.

⁴ Pope's *Dunciad*, ii. 352.

folio, illustrated with sixty admirable copperplates. In 1704 he published and dedicated to Queen Anne a metrical *History of the Old and New Testaments*, also richly adorned with engravings. The poem which he described as 'the last effort of a retiring muse'¹ was an elegy, written in 1715, upon the death of his revered friend, Robert Nelson.

Samuel Wesley, the younger, died in 1739 only four years after his father. After leaving Christ Church he was second master for twenty years at his old school of Westminster. At the time of his death he was headmaster of the Grammar School at Tiverton. He shared the poetical tastes common to his two brothers, and published in 1736 a collection of poems upon a variety of secular and sacred subjects.² His *Battle of the Sexes*, founded upon one of Addison's papers in the *Guardian*, is that by which he was best known. It is called by Alexander Chalmers 'a noble allegoric poem.'³ What he wrote was sometimes humorous, but always pure and healthy in tone. Contemporary authors would, many of them, have done well to remember his homely advice—

If e'er to writing you pretend,
Your utmost aid and study bend
The paths of virtue to befriend,
 However mean your ditty ;
That while your verse the reader draws
To Reason and Religion's laws,
None e'er hereafter may have cause
 To curse your being witty.⁴

The few hymns he wrote are not very noteworthy, though two or three of them, occasionally to be found in selections, contain some verses which would have been quite worthy of his brother Charles.

Sir Richard Blackmore (1651-1729) was the favourite butt for the satire of the wits and poets of his day. He

¹ Prefixed to some editions of Nelson's *Practice of True Devotion*.

² *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1736.

³ Al. Chalmers's edition of *The Guardian*, note to No. 152.

⁴ From *Advice to One who was about to Write : Poems*, etc.

was a very worthy man, most anxious to promote the interests of religion and virtue. But he was afflicted with the *cacoethes scribendi*, and was unhappily possessed with the idea that his lucubrations would be more effective and popular if they took a metrical form. All the spare moments of the estimable knight, as he drove from one patient to another, appear to have been dedicated to the composition of verses either for his next epic in ten books or for his version of the Psalms, or for his forthcoming volume of didactic poetry upon sacred and philosophical subjects. Effusions written, as Dryden said, 'to the rumbling of his chariot wheels,' and bearing for the most part scanty marks of revision, were very frequently a legitimate mark for the ridicule with which Dryden, Wycherley, Philips, Gay, Swift, Pope, and a host of others, overwhelmed each new production as it appeared from the press.

Yet Blackmore had many admirers, and among them were some whose opinions are always worthy of respect. Addison, at the conclusion of one of his papers on Milton, called special attention to the poem (published in 1712) on *Creation*. 'The work,' he said, 'was undertaken with so good an intention, and is executed with so great a mastery, that it deserves to be looked upon as one of the most useful and noble productions in our English verse.'¹ Dr. Johnson said of this same poem, that 'if he had written nothing else it would have transmitted him to posterity among the first favourites of the English muse.'² Locke praised him; and Dr. Watts thought that the success achieved by him had triumphantly confuted all theories of the impracticability of a worthy treatment in English poetry of Christian subjects.³ Molineux, a friend of Locke, even went so far as to declare that 'all our English poets except Milton have been ballad-makers in comparison with him.'⁴ It may be added that his first epic, that of *Prince*

¹ *Spectator*, No. 339.

² Johnson's *Lives*, ii. 257.

³ I. Watts' Pref. to *Horæ Lyricæ*.

⁴ Hearne's *Reliquiæ*, iii. 163.

Arthur, was decidedly popular, passing in two years through three editions.

No doubt the comparative popularity which Blackmore attained is one among many signs of the decadence of poetical taste which had set in soon after the middle of the seventeenth century. His style is almost always heavy and careless. Sometimes he becomes insufferably tedious and prosaic¹ to an extent which more than justified the keenest banter of his opponents. Nevertheless the wits did not do him justice. They had no wish to be fair to him. He had inveighed with all his might, not only against the immoralities of the stage, but against the general profanity and levity on serious or sacred subjects which so frequently disgraced the literature of his time. And, consequently, he made many enemies among a race of men than whom none were more skilled in barbing and polishing the epigrams which sufficed for years to come to preserve his name to ridicule. Meanwhile, his works were not unvalued by a different class of readers. The poems which proceeded from his pen supplied, with all their faults, a deficiency which could not be satisfied by the sharp-witted writers who held them up to scorn. From its earliest infancy poetry has ever been the favourite channel through which the diviner faculty in man endeavours to find utterance. All the best poetry in the world, and that which has most touched the heart of men, has been either suffused with a certain mystical and spiritual element, or, at all events,

¹ What gleam of poetic feeling could be anticipated in a writer who could drone as follows! (The passage comes from his *Paraphrase of Job*, chap. xiii.)

Since you are pleaséd oft to enumerate
God's wise and mighty works in this debate,
I the same method have observed, to show
That I his wonders know, no less than you.
I do not your prolix discourses want,
To prove those truths divine, I freely grant.

Sir R. Blackmore's *Paraphrases*, etc., ed. 1716, p. 56.

Some of his paraphrases, however, as that of the 103d Psalm, are by no means wanting in spirit.

has appealed to the deeper strings of our moral nature. It is untrue to the best sources of its inspiration if it is content for long together merely to sport, as it were, upon the surface of things; still more so if it becomes flippant, unspiritual, immoral. During the period that followed upon the Restoration, this had been notoriously the prevailing character of English verse. And therefore among the more sober-minded of the educated community there were numbers who were heartily ready to greet, with an applause much more than proportionate to its intrinsic worth, a more healthy strain. They had begun to awaken to the surpassing merits of the *Paradise Lost*; and, though the interval which separated a Milton from a Sir Richard Blackmore was wide beyond all comparison, they were all the better able to appreciate a more serious and reflective style of verse than they had of late been used to. They could welcome a very pedestrian muse in which they discerned sincerity and graver thought, in preference to one clad in the conventional garments and flaunting colours which had been fashionable. This may serve partly to explain the toleration that was extended to Blackmore's dulness.

His writings were also in harmony with the general tone of thought which was being gradually formed in reference to the graver subjects of human contemplation. Poetry, far superior to his in spiritual power and in imaginative ability, would have fallen flat upon the ears of a prosaic generation which preferred to discuss its relations to the infinite from an altogether argumentative and 'common sense' point of view. Moreover, it was an age very devoid of poetical originality. Some affected to follow the French style; some made Pindar their model; some Virgil and the epic poets; others imitated Horace. As for Blackmore, he set himself in his *Creation* to emulate Lucretius¹ in the character of a Christian philosopher. He wished, he

¹ Preface to his poem on *Creation*.

said, to make argument agreeable, and to adorn it with the harmony of numbers ;¹ but where his object was mainly to instruct and reason, the ornaments of poetic eloquence were not to be expected.

I think the following verses from the closing part of his paraphrase of the 103d Psalm may be excepted from the general condemnation of heaviness :—

And all ye spirits of celestial race,
 Who far mankind in strength surpass,
 Who, free from stain, and with pure ardour warm,
 Your Lord's high orders perfectly perform,
 Strike your blest harps, your voices raise ;
 With hallelujahs fill the skies around,
 Extol your God, and let your songs of praise
 From all your azure hills and crystal towers rebound !
 Let all His wide dominions bless the Lord,
 Let Him by every creature be adored !
 My soul, extend a vigorous wing ;
 Ardent to heaven direct thy flight,
 And, mingling rapture with the seraphs, sing
 Th' eternal triumphs, and exalt His might.²

Few names connected with the poetical literature of England in the eighteenth century are more familiar than that of Thomas Parnell (1679-1717). His story of *The Hermit* is as well known as anything in the English language. Nor is its popularity in any way undeserved. Hume, in his *Essay on Simplicity and Refinement*, said, in reference to this poem, that 'it is sufficient to run over Cowley once, but Parnell, after the fifteenth reading, is as fresh as at the first.'³ His poetry in general has always given pleasure by the melody of its diction, and its polished but unaffected gracefulness.⁴ Parnell was a clergyman, a man of

¹ Preface to his poem on *Creation*.

² Sir R. Blackmore's *Paraphrases*, 1716, p. 268.

³ Quoted in Mitford's *Life and Works of Parnell*, p. 54.

⁴ Campbell was a great admirer of Parnell. He praised the 'correct equable sweetness . . . the select choice of his expression, the clearness and keeping of his imagery, and the pensive dignity of his moral feeling : ' (*Essay on English Poets*, quoted by Cunningham in Johnson's *Lives*, ii. 93). 'The compass,' he elsewhere says, 'is not extensive, but its tone is peculiarly delightful : ' T. Campbell, *Specimens of English Poetry*, iv. 62.

warm, impulsive temperament ; too fond, it was said, of social indulgences ; but generous, benevolent, and a most delightful companion. He retained to the last the affectionate attachment of Pope, whose friendships were generally capricious and somewhat dangerous ; and his intimate acquaintance was much valued by other eminent men of literature, such as Addison and Steele, Swift and Arbuthnot. His works, which were all written between 1706 and his death in 1717, include a fair proportion of sacred poems. These—putting out of the question his uninteresting studies of Scripture characters—share in the sweet simplicity which gives the charm to his best verses on other subjects. They bear the stamp of his general character ; deficient in depth and fulness, but susceptible and ardent. His versification, smooth and easy as it is, is often injured by the too ready admission of seven-syllable lines among those of eight.

The following are a few verses from his *Way to Happiness* :—

For He forsook His own abode
To meet thee more than half the road.
He laid aside His radiant crown,
And love for mankind brought Him down
To thirst and hunger, pain and woe,
To wounds, to death itself below ;
And He, that suffered there alone
For all the world, despises none.
To bid the soul that's sick be clean,
To bring the soul to life again,
To comfort those that grieve for ill,
Is His peculiar goodness still.¹

Matthew Prior (1664-1721) paraphrased St. Paul's description of charity in smooth antithetical verses quite in the approved style of the period when he wrote, good in their way, but bearing to the original much the same relation as Pope's *Homer* to Homer himself. For example :—

Not soon provoked, she easily forgives,
And much she suffers as she much believes :

¹ Parnell's *Poems* : Anderson's *British Poets*, vol. vii. p. 59.

Soft peace she brings wherever she arrives ;
 She builds our quiet, as she forms our lives,
 Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
 And opens in each heart a little heaven.

His *Solomon on the Vanity of the World*, a poem in blank verse in three books, although the most studied and elaborate of all his productions, is very unreadable. His ode on the words, 'I Am that I Am,' written when he was quite a young man, is chiefly notable for the falsetto of its exaggerated intellectual humility—

Then down with all thy boasted volumes, down—
 Only reserve the sacred one :

words which would have come consistently from the mouth of one of the earlier race of Particular Baptists, but were very absurd and unreal as spoken by Prior. There is, however, real force and earnestness in his *Considerations on the 88th Psalm* :—

Heavy, O Lord, on me Thy judgments lie.
 Accurst I am, while God rejects my cry.
 O'erwhelm'd in darkness and despair I groan ;
 And every place is hell ; for God is gone.
 O Lord, arise, and let Thy beams control
 Those horrid clouds, that press my troubled soul.
 Save the poor wanderer from eternal night,
 Thou that art the God of light.

Downward I hasten to my destined place ;
 There none obtain Thy aid or sing Thy praise.
 Soon I shall lie in death's deep ocean drown'd :
 Is mercy there, or sweet forgiveness found ?
 O save me yet, while on the brink I stand ;
 Rebuke the storm, and waft my soul to land.
 O let her rest beneath Thy wing secure,
 Thou that art the God of power.

Behold the prodigal ! to Thee I come,
 To hail my Father, and to seek my home,
 No refuge could I find, nor friend abroad,
 Straying in vice, and destitute of God.
 O let Thy terrors and my anguish end !
 Be Thou my refuge, and be Thou my friend !
 Receive the son Thou didst so long reprove,
 Thou that art the God of love.¹

¹ Parnell's *Poems*, 389.

An *Ode to the Creator*, by John Hughes (1677-1720), one of the contributors to the *Spectator*, has sometimes been highly praised. But there is far too much in it of the grand, conventional style, too much straining after effect, too much self-consciousness on the part of the writer. It is very unequal in depth of thought and feeling to a poem from which he has evidently borrowed several of his ideas, that of Norris *On the Creation*. A similar remark may be made of *The Ecstasy*, the principal idea of which closely resembles that which the author just named has embodied in *The Elevation*. Both imagine the soul passing in rapturous contemplation through infinities of space upward to the presence of God. There is a stanza in Hughes not wanting in a certain kind of grandeur:—

And lo ! again the nations downward fly,
 And wide-stretch'd kingdoms perish from my eye.
 Heaven ! what bright visions now arise !
 What opening worlds my ravish'd sense surprise !
 I pass cærulean gulfs, and now behold
 New solid globes their weight, self-balanced, bear,
 • Unpropt amid the fluid air,
 And all around the central sun in circling eddies roll'd.

And now once more I downward cast my sight,
 When lo ! the earth, a larger moon, displays
 Far off, amid the heavens, her silver face,
 And to her sister moon by turns gives light !
 Her seas are shadowy spots, her land a milky white.¹

Compare this with Norris:—

Take wing, my soul, and upward bend thy flight
 To thy originary fields of light.
 Here's nothing, nothing here below
 That can deserve thy longer stay ;
 A secret whisper bids thee go
 To purer air, and beams of native day.
 Th' ambition of the tow'ring lark outvie
 And, like him, sing as thou dost upwards fly.
 How all things lessen which my soul before
 Did with the grovelling multitude adore !

¹ 'Ode to the Creator:' J. Hughes' *Poems*, Anderson, *British Poets*, vol. vii. p. 330.

Those pageant glories disappear
 Which charm and dazzle mortals' eyes :
 How do I in this higher sphere,
 How do I mortals with their joys despise !
 Pure uncorrupted element I breathe,
 And pity their gross atmosphere beneath.¹

Both are fine. But there is a spiritual power in the Christian Platonism of Norris, which is deficient in the more material conceptions of Hughes. To unite with the ideal notion of the ecstatic flight of the soul, 'a short view of the heavens according to the modern philosophy,' was a combination which needed a more masterly hand than his to treat successfully.

A Hymn to Darkness, by Yalden, a Jacobite clergyman of the earlier part of the eighteenth century, has sometimes been praised. It is, however, little more than an adaptation from a finer poem by Norris.

The following verses by Elizabeth Thomas (1675-1730), the *Corinna* of Dryden, are of some interest, both in themselves and from the circumstances under which they were written. She had been brought up a rigid Calvinist. But reflection on the inscrutable mysteries of predestination and free-will perplexed and distressed her. When Burnet's *Exposition of the Articles* was in the press, in the last year of the seventeenth century, she waited eagerly for its publication, hoping to find in it some solution of her difficulties. It was with great disappointment that she found there little more than an impartial statement of different opinions. The lines here quoted, which she very often afterwards repeated to herself to confirm and tranquillise her faith, were thereupon written as the expression of a resignation to which she only attained after much mental struggle and many self-reasonings :—

Ah ! strive no more to know what fate
 Is preordained for thee :
 'Tis vain in this my mortal state,—
 For Heaven's inscrutable decree
 Will only be revealed in vast Eternity.

¹ J. Norris's *Poems*, 101.

Then, O my soul !
 Remember thy celestial birth,
 And live to Heaven while here on earth :
 Thy God is infinitely true—
 All justice, yet all mercy too.
 To Him, then, through thy Saviour pray
 For grace to guide thee on thy way,
 And give thee will to do.
 But humbly, for the rest, my soul !
 Let Hope and Faith the limits be
 Of thy presumptuous curiosity.¹

The hymns which Joseph Addison (1672-1719) wrote are marked alike by the pure and tranquil tone of his piety, and by the polished simplicity of his style. On either of these accounts, however, they have sometimes been thought unsatisfactory by one or another class of readers. Although elevation, and even fervour of religious feeling, is by no means wanting in them, they have sometimes been complained of,¹ as by Wesley and his followers, as deficient in what they have called 'unction.' On the other ground, the simplicity of their language often seemed like mere plainness to tastes which had been used to a more adorned and lyrical style of poetry. To be properly appreciated, they should be read as when they first appeared, during the summer and autumn of 1712, in the Saturday numbers of the *Spectator*. The delightful little homilies by which they were introduced, and of which they formed a part, throw a clearer light both upon their general character, and upon the impression they left upon the public mind. In the first,³ headed by the familiar lines from Horace—

Si fractus illabatur orbis,
 Impavidum ferient ruinæ—

Addison discourses to his readers on the fearless and cheerful confidence with which a good man, amid the cares and accidents of life, reposes in the love and

¹ Dyce's *British Poetesses*, 156.

² Cf. C. B. Pearson in *Oxford Essays* (1858), p. 142.

³ *Spectator*, No. 441.

wisdom of an Almighty helper. The hope, the patience, the manful spirit, which such trust inspires, is truly its own reward, independently of the duty of faith and the supernatural blessing which accompanies it. Above all, 'When the soul is hovering in the last moments of its separation, when it is just entering on another state of existence, to converse with scenes and objects and companions that are altogether new,—what can support her under such tremblings of thought, such fears, such anxiety, such apprehensions, but the casting of all her cares upon Him who first gave her being, who has conducted her through one stage of it, and will always be with her, to guide and comfort her in her progress through eternity?' And then remarking how beautifully this reliance upon God is represented by David in the 23rd Psalm, he concludes the paper by his well-known version of it, 'The Lord my pasture shall prepare.'

The second¹ is upon gratitude—no difficult virtue, but one in which every generous mind feels pleasure. But if so, it should exalt the soul to rapture, when employed upon the great object of all gratitude, the Giver of all our blessings. Greek and Latin poets constantly employed their talents in celebrating the praises of their deities; yet 'our idea of the Supreme Being is infinitely more great and noble than what could possibly enter into the heart of a heathen.' The Jews have set us a magnificent example of divine poetry; he could wish the Christian world would follow it. He then gives his readers the hymn beginning, 'When all Thy mercies, O my God!'

The third² is upon the means to be used for the strengthening of faith. His first recommendation is, that when by reading a discourse a person is thoroughly convinced of the truth of any doctrine, and the reasonableness of belief in it, he should never afterwards suffer himself to call it in question. It is an axiom in all science not to keep re-examining principles or argu-

¹ *Spectator*, No. 453.

² *Id.* No. 465.

ments, upon the truth of which we have once been satisfied; in religion it is a necessary rule to prevent perpetual vacillation and perplexity. When Latimer grew old he could no longer trust his memory for reasons, but was wisely content to repeat before his questioners the articles of the faith in which he had long before made up his mind to live and die. He advises, however, secondly, that they who are competent to do so should always keep in memory, ready at hand, the arguments that had appeared strongest to them. Thirdly, he dwells upon the mutual strength which faith and the active practice of morality derive from one another. Fourthly, and above all, he insists upon the power of habitual adoration. 'The devout man does not only believe, but feels there is a Deity. He has actual sensations of Him.' Lastly he discourses on the value of retirement, and of the contemplations of God in the power and wisdom of His works. After citing, in reference to this, a remarkable passage from Aristotle, he repeats the Psalmist's words, 'The heavens declare the glory of God,' and concludes with his hymn, beginning 'The spacious firmament on high.'¹

In the fourth,² alluding to a previous paper, in which greatness had been spoken of as a principal element in stirring the imagination, he remarks how often his imagination had been kindled, and ideas of the glorious majesty of God suggested to him, by the vastness and grandeur of the sea, even in a calm, still more when heaving with a tempest. He had read many accounts in the old poets of storms at sea, but none, to his mind, were equal in sublimity to that in the Psalm which tells of those who see the works of the Lord and his wonders on the deep. Nor did he speak without experience.

¹ Dr. Johnson was exceedingly fond of this hymn, and used to repeat it with a face beaming with enthusiasm. Hartley Coleridge liked it the least of Addison's hymns. 'I cannot away,' he said, 'with the "spangles" and the "shining frame." They remind me of tambour work. Perhaps if I had never read the Psalm, I might think the verses fine.'—*Essays and Marginalia*, ii. 71.

² *Spectator*, No. 489.

He had felt the blessing of faith and prayer amid the terrors of a great storm. The hymn that follows—‘How are Thy servants blessed, O Lord,’ ‘made by a gentleman at the conclusion of his travels,’ was the expression of his own devout gratitude on the occasion when he narrowly escaped from shipwreck off the Coast of Liguria.

The last¹ of the five papers, in which Addison clothed a part of his meditations in sacred verse, is shaped in the form of a letter from the worthy clergyman who had been represented as one of that circle of intimate friends of which the ‘Spectator’ himself, Sir Roger de Coverley, and Will Honeycomb were principal members. He has been, he says, and still is seriously ill, and his thoughts are often employed in meditating on the great change to which he feels that he may be drawing near. He quotes, at length, a striking passage from Sherlock’s *Treatise on Death*; and then, dwelling in a few impressive words on his Christian faith being his one only support, he adds the hymn which he had composed during his sickness, ‘When rising from the bed of death.’

It will be readily understood that the effect and popularity of Addison’s hymns were immensely enhanced by the manner in which they appeared. Dr. Drake, in his edition of *The English Essayists of the Last Century*, quotes the remark of a contemporary writer, that ‘all the pulpit discourses of a year scarce produced half the good as flowed from the *Spectator* of one day.’ Extreme as this over-statement is—as the suppression of all preaching for a few months would have quickly shown—no doubt there was much truth in it, so far as regarded a very great number of the readers of the *Spectator*. We are told by Budgell that 20,000 numbers were sometimes sold in one day; and as each paper passed on an average through several hands, the circulation must be considered as something wholly un-

¹ *Spectator*, No. 513.

paralleled in that age. Thoughts upon religion as well as upon morality, treated in a popular and attractive form, were brought into the homes and to the hearts of thousands who had long been comparative strangers to such reflections. There cannot be the least doubt that Addison's hymns, introduced as they were so aptly, and in terms so well fitted to appeal to the deeper feelings of Englishmen, clung to the memory of admiring readers to a greater extent than could have been expected from their intrinsic merit.

That merit, however, is by no means inconsiderable. They were never meant for congregational singing, and though some of them are often found in collections intended for this purpose, they are, with an exception,¹ out of place there. But there is none the less a deep vein in them of pure and devout piety. Mr. George Macdonald, while acknowledging the charm which he finds in that hymn, especially of 'The spacious firmament on high,' fancies nevertheless that he sees in it 'a sign of the poetic times: a flatness of spirit, arising from the evanishment of the mystical element, begins to result in a worship of power.' The hymn, he adds, is good, yet 'like the loveliness of the red and lowering west, it gives sign of a grey and cheerless dawn, under whose dreariness the child will first doubt if his father loves him, and next doubt if he has a father at all, and is not a merc foundling that nature has lifted from her path.'² There would have been more force in these remarks, suggestive as they are, if Addison had written no other hymns than that which Mr. Macdonald has mainly in his mind. It is true that in all his writings there is a certain sobriety and reserve in his treatment of devotional subjects which not unfrequently gives almost an appearance of frigidity. Thus, God is nearly always spoken of as 'the Supreme Being.' This was owing

¹ Some verses from 'When all Thy mercies' make an excellent hymn, which may yet become quite popular in public worship.

² *England's Antiphon*, 279.

partly to the general character of the papers among which they appeared, but in great measure also to the tone of Addison's mind. And yet it is perfectly clear that he was as strongly persuaded of the reality of that immediate intuition of God on the part of the believer, which is the root principle of all mysticism, and of a direct Divine influence upon the soul, as those who have expressed the same belief in the most rapturous terms of enthusiasm.¹ The poetical motto, which is intended to sound the keynote of the Essay in which the last of his hymns is introduced, is the line from Virgil—

Afflata est numine quando
Jam propiore Dei,

with Dryden's translation of it,

When all the god came rushing on her soul.

Nor could the sense of a direct contact of the spirit of man with Deity be more earnestly expressed than in those two fine lines in which he called to mind his communion with a higher Power in an hour of great peril:—

Whilst in the confidence of prayer,
My soul took hold on Thee.

A passing reference is due to the famous soliloquy in *Cato*. It may rank with sacred poetry, as worthily as the comparative purification of the stage which Addison's influence effected is worthy to be classed among his best deeds as a Christian moralist.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was only to a very limited extent a writer of sacred poetry in the stricter meaning of the expression. 'Vital spark of heavenly flame,' the ambition of village choirs in old days,² was written in 1712. He had commented in a letter to Steele³ on the well-known *Animula, vagula*, etc., of Hadrian, and was requested in return to compose an ode upon them, in two or three stanzas, which might

¹ Cp. Al. Knox, *Remains*, iii. 343.

² C. B. Pearson in *Oxford Essays* (1858), p. 161. ³ *Spectator*, No. 532.

be set to music.¹ Pope complied, borrowing largely from the *Thought of Death*, by Flatman, a barrister, poet, and painter, who had died in 1688, the year Pope was born.² The verses from which the original idea was taken had been curiously characteristic of the dying emperor, the conflicting elements in whose varied character—'his earnestness and his levity, his zeal for knowledge and frivolity in appreciating it, his patient endurance and restless excitability'³—are all reflected in the lines with which he beguiled the later moments of a painful and lingering malady. Pope's ode cannot be called even a free paraphrase of the words by which it was suggested; it is simply a rendering of the general idea in a Christian sense. Yet it retains a good deal of the artificial tone which was perhaps almost inevitable in transferring, even with great alterations, to a Christian, in his most solemn hour, words so deeply stamped with the thought and special character of the dying Roman. It is, however, by no means unworthy of the repute it gained.

The sacred eclogue, entitled the *Messiah*, appeared first in the *Spectator* for May 14, 1712. More authors than one⁴ have remarked upon what has been aptly called its 'flamboyant' style, by which it contrasts most unfavourably with the sublime simplicity of Isaiah. Wordsworth refers to it as a special example of 'what is usually called poetic diction,' as compared with the genuine language of poetry.⁵

Pope's rendering of St. Francis Xavier's prayer comes with a sort of incongruity in the middle of his poems. It is as follows:—

Thou art my God, sole object of my love—
Not for the hope of endless joys above;

¹ Miller's *On Hymns*, quoted in F. Saunders's *Evenings with the Sacred Poets*, 290. ² *Id.*

³ C. Merivale's *Hist. of the Romans under the Empire* (1862), vii. 490.

⁴ F. Saunders's *Evenings*, etc., 291; G. Macdonald's *England's Antiphon*, 285.

⁵ W. Wordsworth, Appendix to *Poems on Poetic Diction*, v. 193, 1850.

Not for the fear of endless pains below,
Which they who love Thee not must undergo.

For me and such as me, Thou deign'st to bear
An ignominious cross, the nails, the spear ;
A thorny crown transpierced Thy sacred brow,
While bloody sweats from every member flow.

For me in tortures Thou resign'dst Thy breath,
Embraced me on the Cross, and saved me by Thy death.
And can these sufferings fail my heart to move ?
What but Thyself can now deserve my love ?

Such as then was, and is, Thy love to me,
Such is, and shall be, still my love to Thee,
To Thee, Redeemer ! mercy's sacred spring,
My God, my Father, Maker, and my King !

He appears to have had the first verse of it in mind when he wrote in *The Universal Prayer*—

What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do—
This, teach me more than hell to shun,
That more than heaven pursue.

The verse and the sentiment which it contains is a noble one. Nevertheless the transition is as strong as it is characteristic, from the fervid personal devotion of the great Spanish missionary to the measured 'What conscience dictates' of the renowned eighteenth century poet.

Pope wrote little sacred verse ; but his special aim was to be a writer of ethical poetry,¹ with an ethical system based upon the strongest foundations of religion. The design of the *Essay on Man* approached very nearly to that of a sacred poem. Milton, in the solemn prelude to his great work, implores the illumining aid of the Holy Spirit—

That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.²

¹ 'Pope's predilection for ethical poetry grew on him. . . . In his last illness he compared himself to Socrates, dispensing his morality among his friends just as he was dying.'—J. Conington (on the poetry of Pope), *Oxford Essays* (1858), p. 47.

² *Paradise Lost*, i. 24.

Pope echoes these words, and quotes the last line as the express purpose of his own undertaking.¹ Somerville, in his enthusiastic encomium upon the *Essay*, can hardly be said to have overstated the aspirations of the writer of it :—

Be it thy task to set the wanderer right,
 Point out her way in her ærial flight ;
 Her noble mien, her honours lost, restore,
 And bid her deeply think and proudly soar.
 Thy theme sublime and easy verse will prove
 Her high descent and mission from above.
 Let others now translate ; thy abler pen
 Shall vindicate the ways of God to men ;
 In virtue's cause shall gloriously prevail,
 When the bench frowns in vain, and pulpits fail,
 Made wise by thee, whose happy style conveys
 The purest morals in the softest lays,
 As angels once, so now we mortals bold
 Shall climb the ladder Jacob viewed of old ;
 Thy kind reforming muse shall lead the way
 To the bright regions of eternal day.²

The opinion of the clever hunting squire by whom these lines were written may not in itself be sufficient to establish that Pope had proposed to himself any such lofty object ; but it clearly shows that the *Essay* was regarded by some intelligent readers of his time as worthily accomplishing the high purpose which the author of it had laid down—the vindication of a Divine providence overruling all human affairs.

It is not within the scope of this chapter to enter closely into the real character of the *Essay on Man*. There is the less reason for doing so, as the subject has been ably discussed by some of the best writers of our day. It must not, however, be passed over entirely.

Pope's *Essay* met the taste of the age. The principles of natural religion were being discussed by men of all views in every educated circle—it may be rather said, in every place of public resort where men conversed and reasoned. Fundamental questions relating

¹ *Essay on Man*, canto 16.

² W. Somerville's *Poems* : 'To the Author of the *Essay on Man*.'

to the nature of the Divine attributes, the origin and cause of evil, the objects of human society, were exciting profound attention among all who advanced any pretensions to serious thought.¹ In the great controversy between Deists and the defenders of revealed religion they were being perpetually recurred to. A philosophical poem, therefore, on these subjects, proceeding from a poet whose talents were held in universal honour, was received with the most cordial welcome. But before the chorus of applause which greeted its first appearance had yet died away, the question was already asked, how far it redeemed the lofty promise of its exordium. Was not its tendency rather a downward than an upward one? Did not its conclusions lead rather to scepticism, or to fatalism, than to a secure and reasonable faith? Pope was startled and disturbed to find that such an interpretation could be put upon his poem, and gladly availed himself of the powerful championship of Warburton. The truth is, he had entered upon a task unfitted to his genius, and far too deep for him. He had intended, in a train of reasoning none the less philosophical for its poetical form, to grapple with difficulties which are as old as the reason of mankind, and, in doing so, to smooth the way of religion, and strengthen the foundations of morality. His labours had resulted in a poem, rich indeed in brilliant passages, and fascinating by the polished condensation of its periods; but essentially vague and superficial, and open to very different constructions, according as the mind of the reader filled up for itself the gaps and deficiencies in the thought of the writer. 'Pope,' says Taine, 'is a poet if read in fragments.'² Much the same may be said of his philosophy. Where each separate idea is stated so effectively, it is at first difficult to realise that the solidity of the whole reasoning does not in any way correspond with the pointed impressiveness of the details.

¹ See Pattison's Introduction to his ed. of the *Essay on Man*, p. 4.

² H. Taine's *Hist. de la Litt. Anglaise*, Bk. III. chap. vii. 4.

Yet the poem might have been a very noble one, if Pope had had the will and the power to carry out in a religious and meditative spirit the plan originally suggested to him. Bolingbroke seems to have pressed him to write an essay in verse upon the objects and destinies of human life, but to have advised that he should treat the subject not so much from an argumentative as from a poetical and imaginative point of view. 'The business,' he said, 'of the philosopher is to dilate, . . . to press, to prove, to convince: and that of the poet to hint, to touch his subject with short and spirited strokes, to warm the affections, and to speak to the heart.'¹ But Pope had far too much in common with his 'guide, philosopher, and friend' to carry out the project with success. Although a steady believer in the grand truths of Revelation,² yet, as Hazlitt remarks, 'he was in poetry what the sceptic was in religion.'³ He was critical and wholly unimpassioned; he lacked enthusiasm; there is no depth of feeling; no grandeur of sentiment; no imaginative power in anything he ever wrote. His special talents were great, but they were not of the kind which the task proposed to him specially demanded. The sound common sense, the keen observation of manners and character, the epigrammatic wit, the finished style, the harmonious flow of numbers, were all insufficient for such an undertaking. To all appearance he scarcely knew in what consisted the less obvious difficulties of his subject, what fires of world-old controversies lay smouldering under the ground over which he lightly trod, or what unsuspected conclusions might be drawn from the argument by which, with satisfaction to himself, he established the optimism of nature. His poem, even in its religious aspect, must not be unduly disparaged. There must have been very considerable merits in a work which was not only widely accept-

¹ 'Bolingbroke to Swift,' quoted by J. Conington, in *Oxford Essays*, (1858), p. 44.

² *Q. Rev.* xxxii. p. 310.

³ W. Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets*, 94.

able at a time when a too prudential system of religion generally prevailed, but which Kant and Dugald Stewart praised,¹ and which Toplady, most Calvinistic of the Evangelicals, quoted with the utmost approbation.² Only it was insufficient,³ like much else that Pope wrote, both on its theoretic and on its emotional side.⁴ Before the end of the eighteenth century, the time had come when this was felt, not only by those who had been brought up in that more meditative school of thought, of which men like Coleridge and Wordsworth were representatives, but by thousands who could have given little reason for the distaste into which Pope's poems had fallen, except the practical one that they were not what they wanted. 'People still go to see Pope's house at Twickenham,' said Chateaubriand, of the years 1792-1800, and pick sprays of the weeping-willow which he planted; but his renown, like his willow, is a good deal decayed.'⁵ In our day his merits and his defects alike are probably far more justly appreciated than they were either in his own age, or in that which immediately preceded our own.

Gay wrote one or two short poems on semi-sacred subjects, a *Night Contemplation* and a *Thought on Eternity*; but they are scarcely worthy of further notice. They are written stiffly. He was far more at home in writing fables to pleasant, easy verse.

The elegy on Addison by Thomas Tickell (1686-1740) has been very highly praised by Dr. Johnson, Lord Macaulay, and others. The following are a few lines from it on the disembodied spirit:—

In what new region, to the just assign'd,
What new employment please th' unbody'd mind?

¹ Pattison, 11.

² Toplady's *Works*, 1825: 'Christian and Philos. Necessity Asserted,' vol. vi. p. 84.

³ Yet a writer in the *Quarterly Review* remarks fairly enough, 'For the contradictions and semi-sophistries of these striking essays the amazing difficulties of the subject should be rather held accountable than the poet.'
—*Quarterly Review*, July 1862, 154.

⁴ Pattison, 9.

⁵ *Essai sur la Litt. Angl.*, ii. 273.

A wingéd virtue, through th' eternal sky,
 From world to world unwearied does he fly?
 Or curious trace the long laborious maze
 Of heaven's decrees where wondering angels gaze.
 Does he delight to hear bold seraphs tell
 How Michael battled and the dragon fell;
 Or, mix'd with milder cherubim, to glow
 In hymns of love, not ill essayed below?
 Or dost thou warn poor mortals left behind,
 A task well suited to thy gentle mind?

William Broome (1687-1745), a clergyman in the eastern counties, left a few poems on Scriptural subjects, which may be found with his other works in the collections of English poetry. There are lines in his *Thoughts on the Death of my dear Friend, Elijah Fenton*, which would well deserve to be quoted, if the whole piece had not been obviously framed upon the general model of Tickell's elegy. In truth, he was too much of an imitator ever to emerge from the lower ranks of the minor poets. His paraphrase, however, of Habakkuk iii. is by no means wanting in vigour. The following verses form part of it:—

But why, ah! why, O Sion, reigns
 Wide-wasting havock o'er thy plains?
 Ah me! destruction is abroad!
 Vengeance is loose, and wrath from God!
 See! hosts of spoilers seize their prey!
 See! slaughter marks in blood his way!
 See! how embattled Babylon
 Like an unruly deluge rushes on!

Yet though the fig-tree should no burthen bear,
 Though figs delude the promise of the year;
 Yet though the olive should not yield her oil,
 Nor the parch'd glebe reward the peasant's toil;
 Though the tired ox beneath his labours fall,
 And herds in millions perish from the stall,
 Yet shall my grateful strings
 For ever praise Thy name,
 For ever Thee proclaim,
 Thee everlasting God, the mighty King of kings.¹

¹ *British Poets*, vol. viii. p. 752.

Aaron Hill (1685-1750) was a man of much study, varied accomplishments, and multitudinous employments, among which was the managership of Drury Lane Theatre. His poetry, though much praised by almost all literary contemporaries,¹ has not maintained the repute it once possessed. No doubt it shows much original power, but it is often somewhat affected, and sometimes turgid. Sceptical in many of his opinions, he was yet by no means wanting in religious feeling. He not unfrequently chose Scriptural subjects. As Prior had written a long poem on Solomon, and Parnell on Moses and David, so he wrote an epic in ten books, and in varied metres, on Gideon. His verses on the Judgment Day, which may be compared with those of Pomfret, Prior, and Watts, are very much wanting in real solemnity, but have something of the wild fantastic grandeur which characterises Martin's pictures. The version of David's elegy on Saul and Jonathan is good, and keeps close to the original; others, however, of his paraphrases, as of the 104th Psalm, and of the Song of Moses, have too much straining after effect, too much that reminds of stage action, to be pleasing. He also rendered into verse part of the Sermon on the Mount, an attempt which could hardly be so successful as to escape an air of being, if not irreverent, at all events out of place. His best verses are contained in that which is also his most sceptical poem, *The Religion of Reason*. It exhibits a man in the midst of doubt, in any case 'undoubting God,' and waiting in suspense:—

Until at last,
Death opening Truth's barr'd gate, 'tis time to see
God's meanings—in the light His presence lends.²

Christopher Pitt (1699-1748), who used to be well known as the translator of Virgil's *Æneid*, and whom

¹ As by Bolingbroke, Pope, Chesterfield, Thomson, Richardson, Mallet, Savage, etc.

² Hill's Poems, *British Poets*, viii. 731. Cf. Pope in the *Essay on Man*:
Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore.

Hervey calls 'the famous Mr. Pitt of New College,'¹ was the author of some paraphrases of part of the Book of Job, and of some of the Psalms.

They have no claim to particular notice ; and I quote four lines simply to illustrate that characteristic bane of eighteenth century verses, the aspiring to the artificial graces of 'poetic diction :'²—

To Thee my muse shall consecrate her lays,
And every note shall labour in Thy praise ;
The hallow'd theme shall teach me how to sing,
Swell on the lyre, and tremble on the string.³

But it is full time to recur to the opening years of the century, and remark on the condition of congregational hymnody at that time.

The New Version was in most churches first beginning to supplant the old. It had been allowed 'by the Court at Kensington'³—the only authority upon which it rests—in 1696. Nahum Tate (1652-1715), a year or two after, succeeded Shadwell as Court Poet. His personal character was not of a kind to do great credit either to his Laureate office, or to his yet higher function as chief hymnist to the Church of England. 'He was a good-natured fuddling companion,' says Southey, quoting from Oldys, 'and his latter days were spent in the Mint as a refuge from his creditors.'⁴ He wrote some dramas of no great note, and was an accomplice with Shadwell in 'improving upon' *King Lear* and others of Shakespeare's plays ; an offence, of which it must be said in extenuation, that Otway, Davenant, and Dryden, had done the same.⁵ Nicholas Brady (1659-1716), his associate in versifying the Psalms, had been an active promoter of the Revolution, and was basking in royal favour as chaplain to the King and Queen. He was also rector of the two benefices of Clapham and Richmond.

¹ 'Meditation among the Tombs,' *Works*, vol. vi. p. 267.

² Pitt's Poems, *British Poets*, vol. viii. p. 812.

³ C. B. Pearson, in *Oxford Essays* (1858), p. 121.

⁴ Southey, *Later English Poets*, i. 173. ⁵ *Qu. Rev.* xxxv. 186-7.

It was not without a long struggle, which lasted in fact well into the present century, that Sternhold and Hopkins were at length fairly superseded, either by the New Version or by the later hymns. Their composition was supported not only by the strong conservatism of the church, but by the deliberate authority of many men of ability and weight. Bishop Bull greatly preferred it to the one that had recently come in; and his voice was constantly heard by his family very early in the morning or late at night, singing the familiar Psalms.¹ Bishop Beveridge was quite of the same opinion. He thought it purer and plainer English, and that it kept nearer to the text.² Hearne spoke with disgust of the 'intolerable alterations' that had been made, especially in the change of fine English Saxon words for new-fangled phrases.³ Bishop Horsley also defended it as a just and dignified rendering of the Psalms.⁴ And in country places more especially, where few could read, it was no light matter to set aside words which, wedded to their own tunes, had been known by rote for what—going back as it did to the earlier years of the Reformation—must have seemed like time immemorial. For a long time, therefore, yet to come, a great number, perhaps the bulk of rustic congregations, continued well satisfied with the psalmody they had learnt from their fathers; and of many a pious village home it might be said in Shenstone's words:—

Here oft the dame, on Sabbath's decent eye,
Hymnéd such Psalms as Sternhold forth did mete;
If winter 'twere, she to her hearth did cleave,
But in her garden found a summer seat;
Sweet melody! to hear her then repeat
How Israel's sons, beneath a foreign king,
While taunting foeman did a song entreat,

¹ R. Nelson's *Life of Bull*, p. 61.

² *Defence of the Book of Psalms*, etc., 1710, quoted in Nelson's *Life of Bull*, p. 62.

³ *Reliquiæ Hearnianæ* (Bliss), Oct. 21st, 1723.

⁴ C. B. Pearson, *Oxford Essays*, (1858), p. 124.

All, for the nonce, untuning every string,
Uphang their useless lyres—small heart had they to sing.¹

Yet notwithstanding use and association, and all else that could be said in favour of the Old Version, it was evidently full time that there should be some great improvement in church psalmody. This had sunk to a very low ebb, and it was long before it began to revive. The Old Version, with the exception of that of the 100th Psalm, which was not by Sternhold and Hopkins at all, nor by their regular coadjutors, but by Kethe, an exile with Knox at Geneva in 1554,² has very few real merits, and these, such as they are, not of a kind which society in the time of Queen Anne, or of the Georges, would readily appreciate. Among town congregations, therefore, it had fallen into general contempt. Robert Nelson, while reprobating such a pretext, says that not only were there very few who could be prevailed upon to join in psalmody, but that 'the generality of those who are otherwise very serious, excuse themselves from the bad poetry of the Old Version.'³ The 'dids,' and 'ekes' and 'ayes,'⁴ and other obsolete words and phrases, gave great offence⁵ to a generation which prided itself upon improved and correct language. Wesley called it 'scandalous doggerel';⁶ Gay ridiculed Blackmore's version by saying that

Sternhold himself he outSternholded.⁷

Watts thought it one chief cause of the 'entire neglect' into which congregational singing had fallen;⁸ although said he in another place, some have got to think that there is danger in anything but 'a dull hymn or two at

¹ Shenstone's *The Schoolmistress*, written 1741.

² Saunders's *Evenings with the Sacred Poets*, 275.

³ Nelson's *Life of Bishop Bull* (1712), p. 62.

⁴ *Spectator*, No. 204.

⁵ Nelson's *Life of Bishop Bull*.

⁶ Quoted by Pearson in *Oxford Essays*, p. 140.

⁷ Gay's *Poems*, 'Verses to be placed under the picture of England's Archpoet.'

⁸ 'Essay on the Improvement of Psalmody,' *Works*, vol. ix. p. 3.

church in tunes of equal dulness,' and that anything 'that arises a degree or two above Mr. Sternhold is too airy for worship.'¹ The decline of psalmody, wrote Romaine in 1775, 'happened when vital religion began to decay among us, more than a century ago. It was a gradual decay, and went on till at last there was a general complaint against Sternhold and Hopkins. Their translation was treated as poor flat stuff. The wits ridiculed it; the profane blasphemed it. Good men did not defend it. Then it fell into such contempt that people were ready to receive anything in its room.'²

It can scarcely be doubted that the New Version was, upon the whole, a decided improvement upon the older one. It has been much decried; but if psalms only were to be used in Church to the exclusion of other hymns, it must form a large proportion of every selection. Versions and paraphrases of Psalms were produced in surprising abundance throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the Review just referred to a number of them are mentioned, and in some instances quoted. The list, including those of a somewhat earlier date, contains very great and very little names: Archbishop Parker, Sir Philip Sydney, Lord Bacon, Milton, George Herbert, Sandys, Bishop Hall, Bishop King, Patrick, Rouse, Wither, Sir John Denham, Addison, Ford, Milbourne, Blackmore, Miles Smyth, Goodridge, Barton, Woodford, Watts, Merrick, Mason.³ To these may be added, in the seventeenth century, King James I., and in the eighteenth, a host of additional names, including Doddridge, Toplady, the three Wesleys, Elizabeth Rowe, Walter Harte, Smart, Darby, Christopher Pitt, Romaine, Bishop Horne. If the list were to include all who had now and then paraphrased a Psalm or two, almost the greater part of the minor poets must be added. Watts, writing in 1707, said that he had seen 'above twenty versions of

¹ Preface to his *Lyric Poems*.

² Romaine's *Essays on Psalmody* (1775), p. 104.

³ *Quarterly Review*, vols. xxvi.-xxxii.

the Psalter by persons of richer and meaner talents.'¹ A modern writer tells us that 'since the Reformation there have been at least sixty-five musical versions of the whole book of Psalms, besides legions of less ambitious attempts.'² Some of those above enumerated, especially that by George Sandys, are no doubt very superior in poetical merit to the renderings of Tate and Brady. But superior poetical merit is only one of many qualifications for congregational psalmody, and it was not without fair grounds of reason that the New Version, although only 'allowed' by authority, much as Wither's³ and Blackmore's⁴ were, should have firmly established itself, while its rivals all passed into greater or less obscurity.

The New Version, however, did not do much towards a revival of congregational singing. 'Psalmody,' wrote Secker in 1741, 'hath declined of late within most of our memories, very unhappily.'⁵ And again, as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1766:—'Nor will it be a small benefit, if in the course of your liturgical instructions you can persuade the bulk of your congregations to join in the decent use of psalmody, as their forefathers did, instead of the present shameful neglect of it by almost all, and the conceited abuse of it by a few.'⁶ Indeed, the abuses and negligences which very commonly prevailed in the manner of conducting the singing, were quite as great hindrances to a solemn and instructive style of church music as any deficiencies in the metrical versions which were employed.

In fact, congregational singing had, in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, fallen, through various reasons, into a very discreditable condition, both in the English

¹ 'An Inquiry into the Right Way of fitting the Book of Psalms for Christian worship,' *Works*, vol. ix. p. 27.

² *Fraser's Magazine* (1860), vol. lxii. p. 312.

³ *Oxford Essays* (1858), p. 141.

⁴ *Life of Blackmore*, in Anderson's ed. of *British Poets*, vol. vii. p. 584.

⁵ Second Charge as Bishop of Oxford.—Secker's *Eight Charges*, p. 65.

⁶ Third Canterbury Charge, *id.* 319.

Church and among Dissenting communities; and reform of some kind or another was ardently desired by all who took any intelligent interest in this important part of public worship. 'In this situation,' writes an earnest champion of psalm-singing in contradistinction to what he called 'human compositions,' 'the hymn-makers find the Church, and they are suffered to thrust out the Psalms to make way for their own compositions, of which they have supplied us with a vast variety, collection upon collection, and in use too, new hymns starting up daily, appendix added to appendix, sung in many congregations, yea, admired by very high professors to such a degree that the Psalms are become quite obsolete, and the singing of them is now almost as despicable as it was some time among the profane. I know,' he adds, 'that this is a sore place, and I would touch it gently, as gently as I can with any hope of doing good. The value of poems above psalms is become so great, and the singing of men's words, so as quite to cast out the word of God, is become so universal, except in the Church of England, that one scarce dare speak upon the subject. . . . I blame nobody for singing human compositions. My complaint is against preferring men's poems to the good word of God, and preferring them to it in the Church. I have no quarrel with Dr. Watts, or with any living or dead versifier. I would not have all their poems burnt. My concern is to see Christian congregations shut out divinely inspired Psalms, and take in Dr. Watts's flights of fancy, as if the words of a poet were better than those of a prophet.'¹

These words of a good man introduce us to a controversy that has long ago worn itself out, but which

¹ Romaine's *Essay on Psalmody*, pp. 105-6. In a later edition (1775) of this work, Romaine expunged his severe animadversions on modern hymns. 'We no longer,' said Toplady, 'read of Watts's hymns being Watts's whims.'—(Toplady to Lady Huntingdon, *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, ii. 66.)—The passage is, however, left, both as representing what was for a long time Romaine's own opinion and also a very common feeling among Churchmen.

once interested and disturbed the minds of many worthy Christian people—the question whether any hymns but those of David, and such others as are taken directly from Scripture, could properly be sung in the worship of the Church. There were some strait Nonconformists who objected to any kind of psalmody. The only Scriptural singing, they said, was from the heart. A strong party among the Baptists did not overcome their scruples on this point till after the middle of the century.¹ Of course there was no such feeling as this in the English Church. And yet the *Defences of Church Music*, published by Dodwell,² by Dr. Bisse,³ and by G. Payne,⁴ and some expressions in the *Spectator*,⁵ seem to show that, owing probably to the very unsatisfactory condition into which congregational singing had fallen, there were many who would willingly have dispensed altogether with the musical part of the service. The extract, however, quoted from Romaine is but one instance among numberless others of a frequent opinion, which may perhaps be traced in every age of the Church until the present one. The hymns of the early Church were many; and some very beautiful ones were composed by some of the most illustrious among its saints. But Chrysostom and others tell us that the Psalms constituted the special, if not the exclusive, hymnody of Christian worship.⁶ The use of other hymns was specially condemned by a canon of the Council of Laodicea in the fourth century,⁷ and was made by St. Augustine a point of accusation against the Donatists.⁸

¹ Ivimey's *Hist.* ii. 373, and Marlow's *Discourse against Singing*, quoted in Skeats's *Hist. of the Free Churches*, 92.

² Dodwell characteristically dwelt on the power of sacred music in repelling and disabling evil spirits: Brokesby's *Life*, 359.

³ Nichols's *Lit. Anecd.* i. 120.

⁴ 'Defence of Church Music:' Sermon at the Anniversary Meeting of the Three Choirs.

⁵ *Spectator*, No. 630.

⁶ Felix Bovet, *Histoire du Psautier*, 14, and Appendix, 207.

⁷ The 59th. See *Id.*

⁸ Augustine, Ep. 19; in *id.*

The canon of Laodicea was repeated twelve centuries later in a decree of the Council of Braganza in 1563.¹ However certain it might be that Christian churches would not consent to be deprived of the public use of their rich and ever-increasing inheritance of sacred song, there was evidently something of a scarcely licensed irregularity in the use of these later hymns. A similar feeling existed to some extent in the Reformed Churches. The improvement of congregational singing was a special object with Wickliffe² and later reformers. Yet it was only in Germany that the ferment of religious feeling found any general vent in popular hymns. It may seem strange that translations of them were not largely introduced into England. But the foreign Protestant churches with which the English reformers were at one time brought into close intercourse, were chiefly Calvinistic, and Calvin was by no means inclined to permit the Psalms to be in the smallest degree supplanted in the churches over which he exercised his dictatorship. He would not absolutely exclude other hymns; 'but,' said he, 'you may search far and near, but you will not find better hymns than those of Holy Scripture.'³

The popular hymns, therefore, of the eighteenth century—'collection upon collection, appendix upon appendix'—were altogether a new phenomenon, if not in the Christian Church in general, yet at all events in England. They were caught up at once by large masses of the people; but it cannot be wondered at that they were regarded by many with great suspicion, and often vehemently resisted. It is perfectly needless to recall the arguments by which they were supported or opposed. They maintained their ground, and have fairly won the day. Religion in England owes no insignificant debt to the hymns which the last century

¹ Augustine, Ep. 19.

² Fraser's *Magazine* (Sept. 1860), p. 300.

³ Calvin's Preface to the Liturgy, quoted by Bovet, p. 207.

produced in such copious abundance. The dissertations by which Watts, Toplady, and others prefaced their hymns, with the object of showing by careful arguments, derived alike from history and reason, that hymns other than those taken from Scripture might lawfully and properly be used in the public services of the Church, have no other interest now, except as memorials of past controversy.

It may be said to be the peculiar privilege of hymn-writers, as of the composers of sacred verse in general, that to a great extent they write, not for any one society of Christians, but for the Church at large. Men whose theological views contrast most strongly meet on common ground when they express in verse the deeper aspirations of the heart, and the voice of Christian praise. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), like many others to whom we owe some excellent hymns, was a Dissenter. His father, a deacon of the Independents, had suffered imprisonment for his opinions at a time when toleration was scarcely yet known. Nonconformity, which at the beginning of the eighteenth century was at about its lowest ebb, may well cherish his memory with gratitude, not only because of his hymns, but because 'his scholarship and his acquaintance with men of letters did much to redeem Dissent from the charge of narrowness and littleness,'¹ and still more, because in days of inertness and indifference he strenuously maintained the better traditions of the old Puritanism. He was a link also between the clergymen whose services had been unhappily lost to the English Church through the Act of Uniformity, and the pious revivalists whose energies failed at length to find scope within her borders in the last century. He had been the intimate friend of John Howe; forty years later he became the friend and adviser of George Whitefield.²

His *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* were published in

¹ H. S. Skeats's *Hist. of the Free Churches*, p. 256.

² *Id.* p. 257.

1707. 'Give us something better, young man,' had been the reply,¹ when he complained of the want of good hymns; and he had set to work to attempt some remedy for the defect. His first hymn, published as a sample of what was to come, was upon Revelation v. 9 (a text with which his book was afterwards headed), and was entitled, with a want of religious modesty and taste which was his occasional fault, *A New Song to the Lamb that was Slain*.²

Watts's psalms and hymns are of very unequal merit. In the first place, he wrote far too many. Among four hundred hymns, and an almost corresponding bulk of verses in his adaptations of the Psalms, besides his *Lyric Poems*, there could not fail to be a great deal that might have been advantageously altered or omitted. But in any case his sacred poetry would have abounded in faults. The strong and narrow dogma of the school of religious thought to which he belonged is sometimes expressed with most repellent harshness. Watts held a most dismal view of human nature. There are passages in his writings which show that he occasionally recoiled from following out his Calvinism to its ultimate consequences. But in his eyes the world was nothing but a dreadful ruin, 'wherein lie millions of rebels against their Creator, under condemnation to misery and death, who are at the same time sick of a mortal distemper, and disordered in their minds even to distraction. . . . Only here and there one attends to the proclamation of grace, and complies with the proposals of peace.'³ The sufferings of mankind—and he drew a dreadful and exaggerated picture of them—he regarded not as trials, not as wholesome chastisement, but as an imputed curse. 'And,' added he, 'it is most

¹ F. Saunders's *Evenings with the Sacred Poets*, p. 283.

² So also in its opening verse:—

Prepare new honours for His name,
And songs before unknown.

³ Watts's *Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*, 89, 90; quoted in J. Wesley's *Works*, ix. 375.

abundant goodness that mankind have any comforts left, and that their miseries are not doubled.’¹ Even children, tender as he was to them, he regarded with a sort of compassionate shudder. ‘Cast a glance,’ he cried, ‘at the sports of children from five to fifteen years of age. What toys and fooleries are these! Would a race of wise and holy beings waste so many years of early life on such wretched trifles?’² As for the world, it is ‘base as the dirt beneath my feet, and mischievous as hell.’³ It need hardly be added that the terrors of a future state of punishment lose nothing in horror and hopelessness in Watts’s descriptions.

There are other blemishes in Watts’s hymns. He often used expressions which grate acutely upon the ear of educated readers; and whenever he abandoned the simple language of devotion, and attempted to decorate sacred subjects with poetical ornaments after the manner of the incomparable Mr. Cowley,⁴ his language was apt to become strained, florid, and affected.

Yet, notwithstanding the faults which occasionally disfigure them, his hymns were a true benefaction to the religion of the country. Doddridge, in a letter to Watts, dated April 5, 1731, gives a striking testimony to the impression they were capable of producing. He had been preaching to a large assembly of plain country people. After the sermon ‘we sang,’ he writes, ‘one of your hymns, which, if I remember right, was the 140th of the Second Book, and in that part of the worship I had the satisfaction to observe tears in the eyes of several of the people; and after the service was over some of them told me they were not able to sing, so deeply were their minds affected. . . . They were most of them poor people who work for their living; yet on the mention of your name I found they had read several of your books with great delight, and that your psalms

¹ Watts’s *Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*, p. 73.

² *Id.* p. 80.

³ *Id.* ii. 10.

⁴ Watts’s Preface to the *Lyric Poems*.

and hymns were almost their daily entertainment.¹
The hymn in question was the following one:—

Give me the wings of faith, to rise
Within the veil, and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
And bright their glories be.

Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears ;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.

I ask them whence their vict'ry came.
They with united breath
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.

They marked the footsteps that He trod,
His zeal inspired their breast :
And following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest.

Our glorious Leader claims our praise
For His own pattern given,
While the long cloud of witnesses
Show the same path to heaven.²

A hymn-writer who can produce such instances of popular appreciation has fulfilled one of the chief conditions of a successful hymn-writer. But Watts has received very high praise from cultivated critics. James Montgomery, while acknowledging that his hymns are often inferior in execution, ranks him, in somewhat exaggerated language, as second to David.³ Dr. Johnson, who held the strange opinion that no devotional subjects could be treated satisfactorily in verse, limited his praise to this, that 'Watts had done better than others what no man had done well.'⁴ They at once attained a great reputation, chiefly no doubt among Dissenters,⁵ but also among Churchmen, and in America

¹ *Corresp. and Diary of Philip Doddridge*, iii. 74.

² *Hymns*, Bk. ii. 140.

³ Preface to the *Christian Psalmist*, quoted in *Oxford Essays*, p. 151.

⁴ *Lives of the Poets* (Cunningham), vol. iii. p. 255.

⁵ J. Newton's *Apologia*, Letter i. ; *Works*, p. 881.

as well as in England. Rippon, who published his once well-known Selection towards the latter part of the century, even made in his preface a sort of apology for not leaving Watts's hymns in sole possession of the field. Great as their fame was, 'it might not,' he said, 'be improper to introduce others, . . . not intended directly or indirectly to set aside Watts, but because many supplementary ones were wanted.'¹ His psalms were scarcely less popular; and copies of them were sold by thousands from the first date of their appearance in 1718. They were not simply metrical versions in the usual sense of the word, but 'imitated in the language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian state and worship.'² Such adaptations are apt to be not very natural; and in one case, where the 75th Psalm is 'applied to the glorious Revolution by King William, or the happy accession of King George, the mixture of ideas becomes positively grotesque. Many are decidedly inferior to the New Version: others, however, are of great merit.

Many of Watts's psalms and hymns are very well known, as they deserve to be. Among the former are the 72nd, second part, 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,' the 84th, 'Lord of the worlds above,' the 90th, 'O God, our help in ages past,' and the 117th, 'From all that dwell below the skies.' His paraphrase of the 100th, 'Sing to the Lord,' is a favourite hymn in its greatly improved form as altered by Charles Wesley into 'Before Jehovah's awful throne.' Its substance, however, was left unchanged. The 146th is memorable from an interesting association with Wesley's life. He expired while faintly endeavouring³ to repeat the following lines:—

I'll praise my Maker with my breath ;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers :

¹ Rippon's *Selection of Hymns*, 1787, Preface.

² Title to *The Psalms*.

³ *Oxford Essays* (1858), p. 150; Saunders, p. 286.

My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.

Among his hymns, some of the best known are, 'Come, let us join our cheerful songs,'¹ 'Not all the blood,'² 'When I survey the wondrous Cross,'³ 'Come Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,'⁴ 'When I can read my title clear,'⁵ 'I give immortal praise,'⁶ 'This is the day the Lord hath made,' and, above all, 'There is a land of pure delight.'⁷ This last hymn is said to have been suggested by the charming landscape which met his eyes as he looked over the Southampton Water.⁸ The beautiful hymn, 'How bright these glorious spirits shine,' is an improvement by Cameron on Watts's 40th, 'What happy men or angels these.'

Watts's songs for children may some of them excite a smile, and in other instances are tinged oppressively with the gloom of a part of his theology. But, as a whole, they well deserve the favour they have gained. Their homely simplicity commends itself to children, and clings to their memories. They are likely long to outlive many verses which are far superior to them as compositions, and which might be thought more attractive to the young. But among the moral songs there is one of great beauty—that well-known comparison of a Christian's death to a summer sunset. William Wilberforce⁹ speaks of it with special admiration. So do Toplady,¹⁰ Southey,¹¹ and others; and all readers, young and old, will agree with their opinion.

Among them also is the cradle hymn beginning 'Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber.' Like many of Watts's hymns there are lines in it which might well be

¹ Bk. i. 62.² Bk. ii. 142.³ Bk. iii. 7.⁴ Bk. ii. 34. Not to be confused with a better-known hymn, with the same beginning, by Simon Browne.⁵ Bk. ii. 110.⁶ Bk. iii. 38.⁷ Bk. ii. 56.⁸ Saunders, p. 284.⁹ *Memoirs*, v. 289; quoted by R. A. Wilmot, *Lives of S. Poets*, ii. 137.¹⁰ Toplady's *Works*, vi. 165.¹¹ Southey's *Specimens of the Later Poets*, vol. ii. p. 96.

spared. But, as a whole, it is quite equal to George Withers's 'Sweet baby, sleep!' and Mr. Palgrave justly says of it that 'few child-pictures have been drawn in words and colours of more perfect tenderness.'

The religious feeling in the *Lyric Poems* is very devout, and they contain many fine lines. They are animate with the profoundest sense of the greatness of God, and with the most earnest desire to know and love Him better. I quote from them with the more pleasure, because, on reperusing them after a lapse of many years, I find that in the Essay of which, in the main, this chapter is a reprint, I spoke more slightly of these poems than they at all deserve:—

FROM 'SELF-CONSECRATION.'

Change me, O God ; my flesh shall be
An instrument of song to Thee,
And Thou the notes inspire.

FROM 'THE FAREWELL.'

Come, heaven, and fill my vast desires,
My soul pursues the sovereign good ;
She was all made of heavenly fires,
Nor can she live on meaner food.

FROM 'HAPPY FRAILTY.'

My soul all felt the glory come,
And breathed her native air,
Then she remember'd heaven her home,
And she a prisoner here.

The following is of a clearer vision of God gained in sickness and pain :—

Oft have I sat in secret sighs
To feel my flesh decay,
Then groan'd aloud with frightened eyes,
To view the tottering clay.

But I forbid my sorrows now,
Nor does the flesh complain ;
Diseases bring their profit too,
The joy o'ercomes the pain.

My cheerful soul now all the day
 Sits waiting here and sings ;
 Looks through the ruins of her clay
 And practises her wings.

Faith almost changes into sight,
 While from afar she spies
 Her fair inheritance in sight
 Above created skies.

Had but the prison walls been strong,
 And firm, without a flaw,
 In darkness she had dwelt too long,
 And less of glory saw.

But now the everlasting hills
 Through every chink appear,
 And something of the joy she feels
 While she 's a prisoner here.

The shines of heaven rush sweetly in
 At all the gaping flaws :
 Visions of endless bliss are seen,
 And native air she draws.

O may these walls stand tottering still,
 The breaches never close,
 If I must here in darkness dwell,
 And all this glory lose.

Or rather let this flesh decay,
 The ruins wider grow,
 Till, glad to see th' enlargéd way,
 I stretch my pinion through.

Among his *Miscellaneous Thoughts* in prose there are some poetical pieces of much merit. Such are those entitled *The Sacred Concert of Praise*, *The Midnight Elevation*, and especially the poem upon *God concealed in Nature*, which closes the short essay on *Searching after God*.

The hymns of Philip Doddridge (1702-1750) were published in 1755, nearly half a century later than those of Watts. They were composed, however, at an earlier date, and this seems the natural place for mention of them. Nothing need here be said of his personal history, except only that he was one of the true worthies of the Christian Church. Like Watts, he was a Dis-

sender, and steadily refused offers of preferment in the English Church. But he would have been glad if terms of comprehension could have been arranged, and engaged in correspondence upon the subject with several of the bishops.

He was a copious hymn-writer, his published ones being three hundred and seventy-four in number. As a whole, they are by no means equal to those of Watts, or of many subsequent authors. It would be very difficult to find one out of all the number which could be ranked with any propriety as a first-class hymn. There is a staid gravity in them, and a sober piety which ensures respect, and gives them some devotional value. And they have few decided faults. But they are never likely to delight and animate as some hymns have the power of doing. They contain few fine verses. There is very little spring and rush in them. They are occasionally not unimpassioned, but even then there is some appearance of effort in them. Doddridge was very careless of his rhymes, and had little ear for melody. There is a want of music in his hymns. They are often prosaic, and, as a rule, too didactic. They lose in general character from a cause which doubtless added much to their immediate interest when first sung. It was his habit to compose hymns framed upon the substance of his sermons, to be sung line by line by his congregation, while the words he had preached were yet fresh in their memory.¹ Hymns written under such circumstances were likely to retain the traces of their origin, and to show too much of the preacher.

Two of Doddridge's hymns are particularly well known from their inclusion among those which, until lately, were printed at the end of our prayer-books. One of these is the morning hymn for Christmas Day, 'High let us swell our tuneful notes ;'² the other is the familiar sacramental hymn, 'My God, and is Thy table spread.'³

¹ Job Orton's Preface to *Doddridge's Hymns*.

² Hymn 201.

³ Hymn 171.

But neither of them has any special claim to the distinction thus conferred. The Christmas hymn is by no means a striking one, and, notwithstanding the position of vantage which it so long occupied, has never attained any great popularity. His best hymn, and one which is rarely omitted in any collection, is 'Hark, the glad sound.'¹ That upon the subject of Mary's choice, 'Beset with snares on every hand,'² is also good. Among other hymns by which he is best known are those commencing, 'Ye servants of the Lord,'³ 'O God of Jacob, by whose hand,' 'Fountain of good, to own Thy love,' 'Lord of the Sabbath, hear our vows,'⁴ 'Ye golden lamps of heaven, farewell,'⁵ 'Eternal source of every joy,'⁶ 'Grace, 'tis a charming sound,'⁷ and 'Awake my soul, stretch every nerve.'⁸ The 295th, 'O ye immortal throng,' is also a notable hymn upon the subject, 'Christ seen of angels.' The 304th is closed by two graceful lines—

I'll drop my burden at his feet
And bear a song away.

A fine stanza occurs in the 305th—

O Love beyond the stretch of thought !
What matchless wonders hath it wrought !
My faith, while she the grace declares,
Trembles beneath the load she bears.

His 295th hymn, upon the text, 'having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better,' though not adapted for congregational use, is one of much beauty, and has a personal interest of its own. It was written, he tells us in his diary, immediately upon awakening from a memorable dream in which his spirit seemed to have departed from him, and to have soared, with a sense of unutterable joy, into regions of the infinite.⁹ The hymn¹⁰ bears traces of the strong emotion under which it was composed.

¹ Hymn 203.

² *Id.* 207.

³ *Id.* 210.

⁴ *Id.* 310.

⁵ *Id.* 119.

⁶ *Id.* 43.

⁷ *Id.* 286.

⁸ *Id.* 296.

⁹ *Doddridge's Correspondence*, iv. 357 (note).

¹⁰ It begins, 'While on the verge of life I stand.'

Among the hymns appended 'for use on particular occasions,' are two of his best. One is 'On recovering from sickness, during which much of the divine favour had been experienced.'¹ The other is 'an evening hymn, to be used when composing one's-self to sleep.' It is too long to be quoted at length, but the following is a part:—

What though downy slumbers flee,
 Strangers to my couch and me;
 Sleepless, well I know to rest,
 Lodged within my Father's breast.
 While the empress of the night
 Scatters mild her silver light;
 While the vivid planets stray
 Various thro' their mystic way;
 While the stars unnumber'd roll
 Round the ever constant pole;
 Far above the spangled skies
 All my soul to God shall rise;
 Midst the silence of the night
 Mingling with those angels bright
 Whose harmonious voices raise
 Ceaseless love and ceaseless praise;
 Through the throng his gentle ear
 Shall my tuneless accents hear:
 From on high doth he impart
 Secret comfort to my heart.²

Doddridge's *Hymns for the Young* never attained much note. George III. as a child was fond of them. 'I must tell you,' writes Dr. Ayscough, his tutor, 'Prince George, to his honour and my shame, had learned several pages in your little book of verses, without any directions from me.'³

The motto of the Doddridges—an old Devonshire family—is *Dum vivimus, vivamus*. The Doctor's epigram upon it is well known:—

'Live while you live,' the epicure would say,
 And seize the pleasures of the present day.
 'Live while you live,' the sacred preacher cries,
 And give to God each moment as it flies.
 Lord, in my life let both united be:
 I live in pleasure, while I live to thee.

¹ Hymn 364.

² *Id.* 363.

³ *Doddridge's Correspondence*, vi. 375.

Among the earlier hymn-writers of the eighteenth century comes another eminent Nonconformist. Simon Browne (1680-1732) had distinguished himself by some spirited answers to Woolston and Tindal; and was appointed in consequence to a post, occupied after him by Samuel Chandler and Dr. Lardner,—a lectureship at the Old Jewry, established by leading Dissenters of different denominations, for the setting forth of the evidences of natural and revealed religion. His hymns, some of which have great merit, were published in 1720. That beginning ‘Come, holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,’ is well known, as slightly altered from the original, in modern hymnaries. Two other good compositions of this author will be found in Sir Roundell Palmer’s *Book of Praise*, one on the Lord’s Day, beginning ‘Welcome, sweet day, of days the best;’ the other upon ‘God our happiness.’¹ Some of Simon Browne’s hymns are very far inferior to his best. He is sometimes extremely bald and prosaic, as when he ends a stanza—

That I may never more forget
The whole, or any single debt;

or again—

Faith is the cogent evidence
Of things unseen by mortal eyes.²

In the Baptist communion there was a succession of able ministers of the name of Stennett. Two of them were well-known hymn-writers. Samuel, who will be mentioned later, was grandson of Joseph Stennett (1663-1731), from whose writings I take the following lines:—

MARY MAGDALEN.

A blessed day to me! my Lord’s come hither,
And He and I shall sup together.
But how shall I
Dare cast an eye,
Or boldly look Him in the face,
Who all my secret sins doth trace?

¹ *The Book of Praise*, cclvi. ; also in Rogers’s *Lyra Britannica*, etc.

² From the 72nd in Dr. Patrick’s Collection, 1786.

When to adore Him
 Angels before Him
 About His throne in myriads hover ;
 Their faces with respect they cover.
 Yet, though I fear Him,
 I must draw near Him.
 Fear checks me, but my soul shall soon remove
 All the dividing bars by a resolvéd love.¹

The period that elapsed between Watts and the Wesleys was less favourable to hymn-writing than to secular poetry of a semi-devotional and meditative character.

James Thomson (1700-1748) published his *Seasons* at intervals between 1726 and 1730. His poetry was of a sort quite new to the age. It seemed at first as if there were small likelihood of its being appreciated. The publisher, when at last one was found to undertake the work, thought for some time he had cause to regret a bargain which had, however, cost him little. But by degrees it found admirers, and before long had attained a wide popularity. The thoughtful and poetical observation of natural objects had been for a long time so strangely neglected, that readers of literature, sated with the artificial style, and with a poetry which ever savoured of city life, turned with delight to Thomson's pages, and found in them a freshness which had all the zest of a new discovery. He was probably all the more admired for not being too much out of sympathy with his age.² A 'bard of nature,' as Thomson was speedily called, can do much to further and quicken an intelligent perception of outward phenomena, but he cannot do much towards originating a taste that has hitherto scarcely existed. Readers wondered and admired ; but the passages they chiefly admired were not those which Wordsworth, for example, and the lovers of Wordsworth's poetry, would most appreciate. Thomson was more popular than he would otherwise have been, because, in close combination with lines which show a

¹ *Works of the late Joseph Stennett, 1732, vol. iv. p. 277.*

² Leslie Stephen, *History of Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 360.

keenly observant eye for natural beauty, he was accustomed to add commonplaces and rhapsodies upon love, simplicity, integrity,¹ or the like; such as might have occurred in any of the favourite poets of the time. These, remarks Wordsworth, or one or other of the stories he has interwoven in his narrative, are the places at which a well-worn copy of the *Seasons* was wont to open, and which were considered the choice pieces for selection in poetical extracts.²

The love of nature which Thomson, in spite of imperfect appreciation, did so much to foster, blends very naturally with religious feeling. In truth, descriptive poetry, however exquisite of its kind, is without its greatest charm if it fails to bring 'the solemn beating heart of nature'³ into some sort of communion with the higher and more spiritual faculties of the human soul. The perception of a spiritual aspect in nature may take many different forms according to the mind of the observer. It may be definitely religious, or it may be philosophical or mystical, or the animating principle may be a pure moral sentiment pervading the thought. It may exhibit itself in a reverential sense of the power or the wisdom or the love manifested in the order of creation. It may consist in a search for final causes, as where Sir Thomas Browne writes:—'The wisdom of God receives small honour from those vulgar heads that rudely stare about, and with a gross rusticity admire His works. . . . Every essence hath its final cause, and some positive end both of its essence and operation. This is the cause I grope after in the works of nature; in this hangs the providence of God. To raise so beauteous a structure as the world and the creatures thereof, was but His art; but their sundry and divided operations, with their predestinated ends, are from the treasury of his wisdom.'⁴ It may be a feeling of

¹ L. Stephen's *History of Thought*, etc. 360.

² Wordsworth's *Poetical Works*, supplementary Essay to Preface.

³ E. B. Browning's *Poems*, 'A Sea-side Walk.'

⁴ *Religio Medici*, ii. 18.

parable and hidden allegories concealed in material phenomena ; or it may be a sense of conjectured unity and mysterious sympathies between the energies that work in nature and in the soul of man ; or thoughts of correspondences between external influences and inward emotions—material powers and human destinies ; or a grateful recognition of properties given to hill and wood, and sea and sky, to tranquillise and soothe the spirit ; or, on the other hand, the subjective principle may chiefly consist in the regretful feeling of an utter absence of sympathy between the inward and outward world, a sort of recoil from calm forces which seem utterly alien to our cares and joys.

All sights are alike to Thy brightness !
What if Thou waken the birds to their song, dost Thou waken
no sorrow ?¹

Or it may be an oppressive realisation of the contrast between the blunders and sins of man, and the order and harmony which surrounds him. Or it may be simply an imaginative power by which in numberless ways natural objects are made suggestive of things that touch more closely our higher human interests.

In Thomson's poem on the *Seasons*, the presence of the religious element is unmistakable. It is not obtruded on the reader, but it evidently pervades the whole. If it had simply consisted in a feeling of the majesty and power of the Creator, as displayed in His works, it would have been no more than is noticeable in a great deal of the sacred poetry of the age in which he lived. It is remarkable, for instance, how many paraphrases were produced during the first half of the eighteenth century upon those psalms and chapters in the Book of Job, and other parts of Scripture, in which the general burden of the hymns is 'All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.' Religious feeling, unsettled by the great controversy of the age, was perhaps more than usually disposed to fall back upon thoughts

¹ C. Kingsley, *Andromeda*, 204.

of creative wisdom and almighty power. It will be remembered there was very little theoretical Atheism in that age, and what there was scarcely ever ventured to make itself heard. And Deism, while it dissociated theology from history, while it made the idea of God more and more an impersonal abstraction, and removed Him, as it were, to an ever-increasing distance from the ways and works of men, left the thought of Divine Creation comparatively inviolate.

Thomson's theology, so far as it appears in his poems—for this subject, as treated by him, did not bring him into contact with distinctively Christian doctrine—was not unaffected by the vague and impersonal ideas which so often characterised the religious philosophy of the period. The thought of God in nature does, indeed, perpetually recur. But there are passages where the poet appears, at first sight, to speak as if the Being whom he worshipped were a remote abstraction, synonymous, or nearly so, with the natural forces by which He works. For example:—

O nature ! all sufficient ! over all !
Enrich me with the knowledge of thy works.¹

Or again—

Nature ! great parent ! whose unceasing hand
Rolls round the seasons of the changeful year—
How mighty, how majestic are thy works !²

The opening of the *Hymns of the Seasons* has something of the same character:—

These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God.³

Such words, taken by themselves, might seem like the expression of a pantheistic creed which deified universal nature. The inference, however, would not be correct. It is obvious, both in the course of the noble hymn in question, and from other passages in his works, that

¹ *Autumn.*

² *Winter.*

³ *Hymn of the Seasons.*

there was no real confusion in the poet's mind between nature and the Creator, before Whose unseen presence he reverently adored. That feeling of the presence of God in all His works had with him a life and reality which contrasted very strongly with the dry unsubstantial abstractions of the Deists. He could not think of God without thinking also of His works; he could not muse with delight upon the beauty and the wonders he saw around him without meditating as well, not upon the power only, but on the love of their Creator. Universal nature was as rich, to his eyes, in hope, as it was in full and varied life. He looked upon it as a progressive scale—'life rising still on life in higher tone'—a Jacob's ladder, mounting

up from unfeeling mould
To seraphs burning round the Almighty's throne.¹

This thought was continually present in Thomson's profounder reflections, and evidently suggested to his mind a solution of many difficulties, enabling him to look forward to a divine future, to which only the faint approaches were at present visible. Like most of the writers of his time, he had been much influenced by Pope. He has adopted Pope's optimism almost in his words, but in a far less crude and more imaginative form. A candid and close observer, he did not attempt to shut his eyes to, nor to gloss over, the manifold imperfections of the present state of existence. But when he considered

The mighty chain of beings, lessening down
From Infinite Perfection to the brink
Of dreary nothing,²

it seemed to him that, though we cannot penetrate the cloud which veils the will of Providence, it may be well concluded that this 'infancy of being'

cannot prove
The final issue of the works of God
By boundless love and perfect wisdom form'd
And ever rising with the rising mind.³

¹ *Castle of Indolence*, canto ii.

² *Summer*.

³ *Id.*

Keble himself had not an intenser feeling that it was no mere poet's dream—

Which bids us see in heaven and earth,
 In all fair things around,
 Strong yearnings for a blest new birth
 With sinless glories crown'd ;
 Which bids us hear, at each sweet pause
 From care, and want, and toil,
 When dewy eve her curtain draws
 Over the day's turmoil,
 In the low chant of wakeful birds,
 In the deep weltering flood,
 In whispering leaves, these solemn words,
 'God made us all for good.'¹

To Thomson's thought nature was full of promise, 'awaiting renovation,'²—a 'second birth,' when awakening nature should

hear

The new creating word, and start to life
 In every heightened form, from pain and death
 For ever free.³

The Great Shepherd reigns,
 And His unsuffering Kingdom yet shall come.⁴

Man and nature, glorified spirits and spirits of men who 'through stormy life toil tempest-beaten,'⁵ were all, in his mind, component elements of the one vast order, one progressive scheme. Mankind may thwart their own great destiny. To them, therefore, in his allegorical poem, he cries—

Heavens ! can you then thus waste, in shameful wise,
 Your few important days of trial here ?
 Heirs of Eternity ! y-born to rise
 Through endless states of being, still more near
 To bliss approaching, and perfection clear,
 Can you renounce a fortune so sublime,
 Such glorious hopes, your backward steps to steer,
 And roll, with vilest brutes, through mud and slime ?
 No ! no ! your heaven-touch'd heart disdains the sordid
 crime !⁶

¹ *Christian Year*, Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

² *Autumn*.

⁴ *Hymn of the Seasons*.

⁶ *Castle of Indolence*, canto ii.

³ *Winter*.

⁵ *Summer*.

But God's order, in man or nature, now or hereafter, he perfectly trusted in, as ever and wholly good:—

Since God is ever present, ever felt,
 In the void waste, as in the city full ;
 And where He vital breathes, there must be joy.
 When ev'n at last the solemn hour should come,
 And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,
 I cheerful will obey ; there, with new powers,
 Will rising wonders sing : I cannot go
 Where universal Love not smiles around,
 Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their suns ;
 From seeming evil still educing good,
 And better thence again, and better still
 In infinite progression. But I lose
 Myself in Him—in Light ineffable.
 Come then, expressive Silence, muse His praise.¹

The works of Edward Young (1681-1765) are about as strong a contrast to those of Thomson as can be imagined. Transition from one to the other is almost like passing from a bright morning on a breezy down to the seclusion of a churchyard at midnight, or to the heavy air and hushed stillness of a shaded sick-room. The *Seasons* beam with day ; the *Night Thoughts* do indeed sparkle, but it is with the lustre of jewels upon black drapery flashing back the lamplight. The general merit and defects of *Night Thoughts* are well known. It obtained a very wide circulation, and was one of the few English books that won fame and appreciation in France. Nor was its popularity undeserved. Every page bears the stamp of originality, talent, and thought. Even its most glaring faults are many of them such as none but a clever man would fall into. It is no ordinary writer that could overload a poem with such surplusage of varied argument, such a surfeit of epigram and antithesis, such superabundance of skilful rhetoric. He is sometimes extravagant, sometimes enigmatical, sometimes affected ; he is often tedious, oftener laboured ; he is uneven in the extreme : passages which rise into sublimity are followed by others which sink into utter

¹ *Hymn of the Seasons.*

bathos ; but the impression of intellectual and literary power is never lost sight of.

Young's remarkable poem has two great faults which run through it from beginning to end. The first is a morbid gloom, which caused Warburton, at its first appearance, to scout it as a 'dismal rhapsody.'¹ The other is that it is artificial. Such forced effort after force, however successful it may often be in the immediate effect produced, leaves behind it an unsatisfactory feeling of unreality. There is no sufficient reason to charge the poet with being insincere. He was an ambitious man, whose temper, naturally melancholic, had been crossed by disappointment. He thought he had been overlooked, and that he was entitled to honours and preferment which had been held back from him. Adulation of the great—too common an offence in those days to be accounted as odious as it deserves to be—seems to have been the worst point in his character. In other respects he appears to have deserved the high esteem in which he was held by those who knew him best. But his wit and cleverness, of the possession of which he was fully conscious, were a snare to him as a writer on sacred subjects. He was impressed in all sincerity with the solemnity of the thoughts which his theme suggested to him ; but he could not refrain from dressing them out with an art under which their genuineness was disguised.

It is of course impossible within the limits of this chapter to enter into any sort of analysis of a poem which, amid much that is tedious, abounds in striking reflections—not unfrequently disfigured midway by some ill-sorted phrase—upon the problems of man's existence, his hopes, responsibilities, and fears, and the awe and mystery of which the universe is full. A few passages only can be quoted.

Early in the *First Night*, there occur some pointed verses on the strange microcosm of human nature, which

¹ Warburton to Doddridge : *Doddridge's Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 198.

afford also a good example of the exaggerated antithetical style to which Young was prone :—

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
 How complicate, how wonderful is man !
 How passing wonder He who made him such !
 Who centred in our make such strange extremes !
 From different natures marvellously mixed,
 Connection exquisite of distant worlds !
 Distinguish'd link in being's endless chain,
 Midway from nothing to the Deity !¹
 A beam æthereal, sullied and absorb'd !
 Though sullied and dishonour'd, still divine !
 Dim miniature of greatness absolute !
 An heir of glory, a frail child of dust !
 Helpless immortal ! insect infinite !
 A worm ! a god ! I tremble at myself
 And at myself am lost ! At home a stranger,
 Thought wanders up and down, surprised, aghast,
 And wondering at her own.²

The following three lines are very beautiful :—

Talk they of morals ? O thou bleeding Love !
 Thou maker of new morals to mankind !
 The grand morality is love of Thee.³

He thus conceives of a future beatified state of soul and intellect :—

How great
 To mingle interests, converse amities,
 With all the sons of reason, scatter'd wide
 Through habitable space, wherever born,
 Howe'er endow'd ! To live free citizens
 Of universal nature ! To lay hold
 By more than feeble faith on the Supreme !
 To call heaven's rich, unfathomable mines
 (Mines, which support archangels in their State)
 Our own ! To rise in science, as in bliss,
 Initiate in the secrets of the skies !
 To read Creation ; read its mighty plan
 In the bare bosom of the Deity !
 The plan and execution to collate !
 To see, before each glance of piercing thought,
 All cloud, all shadow, blown remote ; and leave
 No mystery but that of Love divine,

¹ Young was very rarely anything but original, but in these two lines he has borrowed from a previously quoted passage of Thomson.

² *Night 1.*

³ *Id. IV.*

Which lifts us on the seraph's flaming wing
From earth's 'aceldama,' this field of blood,
Of inward anguish, and of onward ill.¹

With Young should be mentioned Robert Blair (1699-1746), a poet of somewhat similar temperament. His poem entitled *The Grave*, published in 1762, is undoubtedly a work of no ordinary character. It is rather grim and grisly, like his spectres; but it shows much imaginative power, and is full of vigour and animation. Without being a sacred poem, its tone is thoroughly religious. Besides a charming incidental picture of summer in the country—the more attractive by contrast with its surroundings—there are some striking passages in it. Such is that which describes death coming with sudden horror upon one

Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnished for that world to come.²

There are also some fine lines upon sin as compared with other evils, beginning—

What havoc hast thou made, foul master, sin !
Greatest and first of ills.—The fruitful parent
Of woes of all dimensions ! But for thee
Sorrow had never been. All-noxious thing
Of vilest nature ! Other sorts of evils
Are hardly circumscribed, and have their bounds.
The fierce volcano, from his burning entrails
That belches molten stone and globes of fire,
Involved in pitchy clouds of smoke and stench,
Mars the adjacent fields for some leagues round,
And there it stops.—The big swol'n inundation,
Of mischief more diffusive, raving loud,
Buries whole tracts of country, threatening more ;
But that too has its shore it cannot pass,
More dreadful far than those sin has laid waste,
Not here and there a country, but a world.³

A third passage pictures the tranquil death of a good man. The opening lines are :—

Sure the last end
Of the good man is peace ! How calm his exit !
Night-dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary, worn-out winds expire so soft.⁴

¹ *Night* vi. ² *The Grave*, 350-69.

³ *Id.* 601.

⁴ *Id.* 706.

Mark Akenside (1721-1770) was another of those didactic writers on semi-religious subjects in whom the eighteenth century was prolific. His *Pleasures of Imagination* was published in the first instance in 1744, but was rewritten in his later years, and appeared in a very altered form in 1772, soon after his death. It is well described by Jeffrey as 'a sort of classical and philosophical rapture, which no elegance of language could easily have rendered popular, but which had merits of no vulgar order for those who could study it.'¹ It is, indeed, difficult reading. Not from any fault in thought or style: the versification flows musically; Aikin calls it 'perhaps the most perfect specimen of blank verse that the language affords.'² But it is tedious, because the reader does not easily perceive what the writer is aiming at. It is a defect which was mainly owing to the nature of his subject. The religious and ethical philosophy of the day was so divorced from history, and so vague and abstract in its nature, that a writer who wished to embody it in poetry,³ and represent it to the eye by imagery, was tempted to have recourse to hollow allegorical figures—personifications of ideas and qualities, which may adorn, but are certainly very apt to perplex, the argument. Akenside was an admirer of Shaftesbury's writings, and his *Pleasures of Imagination* is, to a great extent, a poetical exposition of that philosophy. A reflective and, in his way, a devout and religious man, imbued also with the loftier ideas of Plato, he escaped the levity of Shaftesbury, and was chiefly attracted by his speculations on the connection of beauty with truth and goodness, the operation of the imaginative upon the moral faculties, and the relations of pleasure with virtue.

In the following lines Akenside is perhaps at his best:—

¹ Francis (Lord) Jeffrey's *Contributions to the Edin. Review*, 166.

² J. Aikin's *Letters on English Poetry*, 161.

³ See some remarks of Leslie Stephen, *Hist. of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 365-6.

For, from the birth
 Of mortal man, the Sovereign Maker said,
 That not in humble nor in brief delight,
 Not in the fading echoes of renown,
 Power's purple robes, nor Pleasure's flowing cup,
 The soul should find enjoyment ; but, from these
 Turning disdainful to an equal good,
 Though all the ascent of things enlarge her view,
 Till every bound at length should disappear,
 And infinite perfection close the scene.

Call now to mind what high capacious powers
 Lie folded up in man ; how far beyond
 The praise of mortals may the eternal growth
 Of nature to perfection half divine
 Expand the blooming soul ! what pity then,
 Should sloth's unkindly fogs depress to earth
 The tender blossom, choke the streams of life,
 And blast her spring !¹

William Hamilton (1704-1754) was an ardent Jacobite, who joined the Pretender in the movement of 1745. His *Contemplation*, which was published two or three years previous to that date, contains some pleasing lines. In 1746, after the defeat of Prestonpans, when he was wandering among the hills and moors in constant and imminent peril, he wrote some touching verses, of which the following is a part. It is a soliloquy with himself :—

Now in this sad and dismal hour
 Of multiplied distress,
 Has any former thought the power
 To make thy sorrows less ?

When all around thee cruel snares
 Threaten thy destined breath,
 And every sharp reflection bears
 Want, exile, chains or death,

Can ought that's past in youth's fond reign
 Thy pleasing vein restore ?
 Lives beauty's gay and festive train
 In memory's soft store ?

¹ *Pleasures of Imagination*, i. 212-31.

Or does the muse? 'Tis said her art
Can fiercest pangs appease—
Can she to thy poor trembling heart
Now speak the words of peace?

Yet she was wont at early dawn
To whisper thee repose,
Nor was her friendly aid withdrawn
At grateful evening's close.

Friendship, 'tis true, its sacred might
May mitigate thy doom ;
As lightning shot across the night
A moment gilds the gloom.

O God ! Thy providence alone
Can work a wonder here,
Can change to gladness every moan
And banish all my fear.

Thy arm, all powerful to save,
May every doubt destroy ;
And from the horrors of the grave
New raise to life and joy.

From this, as from a copious spring,
Pure consolation flows ;
Makes the faint heart 'mid sufferings sing,
And midst despair repose.

Yet from its creature gracious Heaven,
Most merciful and just,
Asks but, for life and safety given,
Our faith and humble trust.¹

Walter Harte (1700-1773), Vice-Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford, afterwards tutor to Lord Chesterfield's son, and finally Canon of Windsor, was the writer of some devotional poetry which has little in common with the general character of his age. He had been brought up among the best traditions of the Nonjurors. His father, whose memory he affectionately celebrates in a poem entitled *Macarius, or the Christian Confessor*, was a man who had been held in most deserved honour for his piety, his learning, and the self-denying simplicity of his life. He had energetically remonstrated with Judge Jeffreys in behalf of the victims of Monmouth's rebellion ;

¹ *A Soliloquy*, 1746.

and that truculent barbarian, if he did not relent at his intercessions, at all events respected the intercessor, for whom he obtained, unasked, a prebendary stall at Bristol. Ken and Kettlewell, Nelson, Dodwell, and Hooper were his friends. In Queen Anne's time, Lord Chancellor Harcourt showed his esteem for the stout-hearted Non-juror by offering him a bishopric. He declined it however, and died in seclusion in 1735. Walter Harte was a student and theologian of much the same type as his father, devoting himself especially to early patristic literature.

Harte published various sermons, translations, poetical miscellanies, and a carefully written history of Gustavus Adolphus. But his *Divine Poems* were what he considered his principal work. They appeared in 1767. He was inclined to call them *Emblems*, after the example of Quarles, of whom he was an admirer. Chesterfield, on the other hand, who had a supreme contempt for that poet, wanted him to name them *Moral Tales*. Harte compromised the matter by calling them *Parables, Fables, Emblematic Visions, etc.* They sometimes give an idea of being rather laboured, and of being overburdened by the patristic allusions which he cites or refers to in the foot-notes. But his poetry is by no means of a commonplace order. In his *Vision* of Thomas à Kempis¹ he has occasionally succeeded in rendering into fit verse some of the apophthegms of the *Imitatio Christi*. For example:—

With prayers thy evening close, thy morn begin ;
But heaven's true Sabbath is to rest from sin.

Or again—

Most would buy heaven without a price or loss ;
They like the paradise, but shun the cross.

His best poem is the *Meditation on Christ's Death and Passion: An Emblem*. It is headed with the motto—

Respice dum transis, quia sis mihi causa doloris.

¹ *British Poets*, vol. ix. pp. 857-60.

Part of it is as follows :—

Haste not so fast on worldly cares employ'd ;
 Thy bleeding Saviour asks a short delay :
 What trifling bliss is still to be enjoy'd ?
 What change of folly wings thee on thy way ?
 Look back a moment, pause a while, and stay.
 For Thee thy God assumed the human frame ;
 For Thee the guiltless pains and anguish tried ;
 Thy passions (sin excepted) His became :
 Like thee He suffer'd, hunger'd, wept, and died.

From this one prospect draw thy sole relief,
 Here learn submission, passive duties learn ;
 Here drink the calm oblivion of thy grief ;
 Eschew each danger, every good discern,
 And the true wages of thy virtue earn.
 Reflect, O man, on such stupendous love,
 Such sympathy divine, and tender care :
 Beseech the Paraclete thine heart to move,
 And offer up to heaven thy silent prayer.

Thomas Gray was born in 1716 and died in 1771. Keble has remarked of his *Elegy* (1751), that, to the shame of the eighteenth century, it is about the only specimen of 'the indirect, and perhaps the more effective, species of sacred poetry, produced in that age, which has obtained any celebrity.'¹ Its popularity was immediate ; in a very short time it passed through eleven editions. It may, in fact, be fairly said of it, that from the time of its first appearance it has always been one of the best-known poems in the whole range of English literature. Dr. Johnson, who did not at all appreciate Gray's other poetry, and has done him, for the most part, very scanty justice, had only commendation for the *Elegy*. 'Had Gray,' said he, 'written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him.'²

Gray was not the founder of a school of poetry in the sense that Cowley, or Dryden and Pope had been. His poetical works were few, and a good deal that he wrote was received with a sort of blank wonder, as if it were simply unintelligible. But he did much to refine and

¹ *Quart. Rev.* xxxii. 231.

² *Lives of the Poets*, iii. 427.

elevate taste. He was called 'Gothic' in a sense that implied disparagement. In reality, the infusion of ideas derived from the Northern Sagas had a decidedly beneficial effect upon our literature, as having a freshness and a vigour in them which had for some time been wanting. Cowper used to maintain that Gray was the only sublime poet since Shakespeare.¹ At all events, there was in his work a simple dignity, an unaffected energy, which was peculiarly refreshing by contrast with the artificial graces and pomposities which had been too much in vogue. It has been said, with truth, that Gray was among the first Englishmen who showed any capacity for the appreciation of mountain scenery. In more than one way he was representative of a new tone of thought which, at the middle of the eighteenth century, was steadily but slowly gaining ground among cultivated men. Thirty or forty years earlier, the character of Gray's genius would have been so strikingly exceptional as to seem almost an anachronism. His writings mark with tolerable accuracy the termination of a period in poetical literature. For a long time previously there had scarcely been a poet in whom the influence of Pope, or at least of the style of thought and writing of which Pope was the most brilliant representative, could not be distinctly traced. Gray was the first writer of poetry in that age who wholly emancipated himself from it. One distinguishing quality, however, they had in common. Not Pope even could outvie Gray in the polished finish of his verses.

It is only by a certain latitude of interpretation that Gray can be included among writers of sacred poetry. Yet there is great religious beauty in the last verse of the *Elegy*:—

No further seek his merits to disclose,
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode—
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose),
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

¹ Cowper to J. Hill: quoted in Wilmott's *Lives of Sacred Poets*, 205.

The name of Gray naturally suggests that of his brother poet and intimate friend and biographer. William Mason (1725-1797) was an opulent clergyman, Fellow of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and afterwards Rector of Aston, in Derbyshire, and Prebendary of York—a man of many accomplishments, skilled in music and painting, keenly alive to the sublime and picturesque, and gifted with a most poetical imagination. Without possessing anything like the erudition of his friend Gray, he was yet a competent scholar, and was particularly well read in old English and Italian poetry. In politics he was an enthusiastic Liberal. In theology he was orthodox. An active-minded and conscientious man, he did not allow his multifarious tastes to interfere with the duties of his callings. He was charitable and hospitable; and a genial spirit of religion, traceable throughout all his life and works, shed a special brightness over all his later years.

Mason's sacred poetry is varied in kind. His Sunday morning and evening hymns, written for use in York Cathedral, are tolerably well known. The former begins:—

Again returns the day of holy rest
Which, when he made the world, Jehovah blest;
When, like His own, He bade our labours cease
And all be piety, and all be peace.

The latter:—

Soon will the evening star with silver ray,
Shed its mild lustre on this sacred day;
Resume we then, ere sleep and silence reign,
The rites that holiness and heaven ordain.¹

Among his earlier odes, published in 1756, there is a fine paraphrase of the 'proverb against the King of Babylon' in the 14th chapter of Isaiah. It is entitled *The Fate of Tyranny*. No paraphrase can vie with the sublimity of the simple text; and in Mason's style there is generally some tendency to overload grand

¹ *Works of W. Mason*, ii. 467.

conceptions with a too great profusion of ornament. But there is certainly much grandeur in the following rendering of the passage beginning at the 7th verse ('The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing,' etc.). It should be compared while read with the original:—

I

2

He falls; and earth again is free,
Hark! at the call of liberty,
All nature lifts the choral song.
The fir-trees on the mountain's head,
Rejoice through all their pomp of shade;
The lordly cedars nod on sacred Lebanon:
'Tyrant,' they cry, 'since thy fell force is broke,
Our proud heads pierce the skies, nor fear the woodman's
stroke.'

3

Hell, from her gulph profound,
Rouses at thine approach; and all around
The dreadful notes of preparation sound.
See, at the awful call,
Her shadowy heroes all,
Ev'n mighty kings, the heirs of empire wide,
Rising, with solemn state, and slow,
From their sable thrones below,
Meet and insult thy pride.
What, dost thou join our ghostly train,
A flitting shadow, light and vain?
Where is thy pomp, thy festive throng,
Thy revel dance, and wanton song?
Proud king! corruption fastens on thy breast;
And calls her crawling brood, and bids them share the
feast.

II

I

O Lucifer! thou radiant star;
Son of the morn; whose rosy car
Flamed foremost in the van of day:
How art thou fall'n, thou king of light!
How fall'n from thy meridian height!
Who saidst, 'The distant poles shall hear me and obey.
High o'er the stars my sapphire throne shall glow,
And as Jehovah's self my voice the heavens shall bow.'

2

He spake, he died. Distain'd with gore,
 Beside yon yawning cavern hoar,
 See where his livid corse is laid.
 The aged pilgrim passing by
 Surveys him long with dubious eye ;
 And muses on his fate and shakes his reverend head.
 Just Heav'ns ! is thus thy pride imperial gone ?
 Is this poor heap of dust the king of Babylon ?

3

Is this the man whose nod
 Made the earth tremble : whose terrific nod
 Levell'd her loftiest cities ? Where he trod
 Famine pursued and frown'd ;
 Till nature, groaning round,
 Saw her rich realms transform'd to deserts dry ;
 While at his crowded prison's gate,
 Grasping the keys of fate,
 Stood stern captivity.
 Vain man ! behold thy righteous doom ;
 Behold each neighb'ring monarch's tomb,
 The trophied arch, the breathing bust ;
 The laurel shades their sacred dust ;
 While thou, vile outcast on this hostile plain,
 Moulder'st, a vulgar corse, among the vulgar slain.¹

Mason continued to write poetry in his old age. If it had somewhat lost in vigour, it gained in a deeper tone of serene and thankful piety. The following are the closing lines of his *Religio Clerici*, written in 1796:—

Father, Redeemer, Comforter divine !
 This humble offering to Thy equal shrine
 Here thy unworthy servant grateful pays,
 Of undivided thanks, united praise,
 For all those mercies which at birth began,
 And ceaseless flowed through life's long lengthen'd span—
 Propt my frail frame through all the varied scene,
 With health enough for many a day serene ;
 Enough of science clearly to discern
 How few important truths the wisest learn ;
 Enough of art ingenuous to employ
 The vacant hours when graver studies cloy ;
 Enough of wealth to serve each honest end,
 The poor to succour, or assist a friend ;

¹ *Works of W. Mason*, ii. 46-8.

Enough of faith in Scripture to descry
That the sure hope of immortality,
Which only can the fear of death remove,
Flows from the fountain of Redeeming Love.¹

At the risk of quoting at disproportionate length from the writings of this poet, the sonnet must be added which he wrote on his last birthday, February 23d, 1797, only a few weeks before his death:—

Again the year on easy wheels has roll'd,
To bear me to the term of seventy-two.
Yet still my eyes can seize the distant blue
Of yon wild Peak, and still my footsteps bold,
Unpropp'd by staff, support me to behold
How Nature, to her Maker's mandates true,
Calls Spring's impartial heralds to the view,
The snowdrop pale, the crocus spiked with gold ;
And still (thank Heav'n) if I not falsely deem,
My lyre, yet vocal, freely can afford
Strains not discordant to each moral theme
Fair Truth inspires, and aids me to record
(Best of poetic palms !) my faith supreme
In Thee, my God, my Saviour, and my Lord !²

It has been before observed that Dr. Johnson (1709-1785) did not believe in the capabilities of devotional verse. For his own part, he possessed few of the more essential qualifications of a poet. 'His poems are the plain and sensible effusions of a mind never hurried beyond itself, to which the use of rhyme adds no beauty, and from which the use of prose would detract no force.'³ He rests for his fame upon other qualities than those which demand enthusiasm and imaginative power. Nevertheless, the closing lines of his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, published 1749, are well worthy of being quoted:—

Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervour for a healthful mind
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd ;

¹ *Works of W. Mason*, 450.

² *Id.* ii. 131.

³ Anderson's *Life of Johnson*, *British Poets*, vol. xi. p. 822.

For love, which scarce collective man can fill ;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind nature's signal of retreat :
These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,
These goods He grants, who grants the power to gain ;
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.¹

Oliver Goldsmith (1729-1774) was not a writer of sacred poetry. But the pure religious tone that runs through the *Deserted Village*, and the graceful picture it contains of simple unassuming piety place it on the same high level with Gray's *Elegy*. Poems such as these could scarcely fail to have a purifying and elevating influence upon the taste of those who read and appreciated them. William Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, published in 1751, is a work of somewhat the same order, although its author was so afraid of the subject not being considered dignified enough for poetry, that he has a little disguised, under a certain air of caricature, its genuine simplicity and pathos. A few lines from it are quoted in a preceding page.²

Samuel Boyse (1708-1749) was one of those unhappy men in whom good impulses, joined to a weak and ill-regulated disposition, makes life a sad alternation of better purposes, relapse, and poignant repentance. He lived in want, and died a pauper. In 1741 he published a poem upon the *Attributes of Deity*, which Fielding has called 'a very noble one,' of which Pope said that it contained lines which he would willingly have owned, and which James Hervey spoke of in the warmest terms of admiration. This poem passed through a third edition in 1752. Its tone is devotional ; its language an easy-flowing imitation of the *Essay on Man*. But, notwithstanding contemporary praise, it certainly does not rise above a very ordinary level, and whatever there is of 'noble' in it is owing simply to the intrinsic grandeur of its subject, and not to any special thought or capacity on the part of its author.

¹ *British Poets*, vol. xi. p. 843.

² *Ante*, p. 340.

William Thompson, Rector of Hampton Poyle, published in 1746 a religious poem in five books on *Sickness*. It is found in the Collection of English Poets, but is not very noteworthy.

Christopher Smart (1722-1771)¹ was a writer of very considerable genius. At Cambridge, where he held a fellowship at Pembroke Hall, he five times took the Seatonian prize for a poetical essay upon a sacred subject, and his poems are among the best of that series. There is a want of carefulness and accuracy about them, but much talent, and the glow of warm religious feeling. After Smart had left Cambridge, where he had become very embarrassed in his circumstances, he gained a precarious living in London by literary work, and gained there the friendship and pity of Johnson, Goldsmith, Garrick, and other distinguished men. A strong predisposition to insanity will excuse the fits of reckless extravagance to which he was apt to give way. He composed what was generally considered his finest poem, *The Song of David*, whilst under confinement as a lunatic, indenting the lines with a key upon the wainscot.

He sung of God, the mighty source
Of all things, the stupendous force
On which all things depend :
From whose right arm, beneath whose eyes,
All period, power, and enterprise
Commence, and reign, and end.
The world, the clustering spheres He made,
The glorious light, the soothing shade,
Dale, champaign, grove, and hill ;
The multitudinous abyss
Where Secrecy remains in bliss,
And Wisdom hides her skill.
Tell them ' I am,' Jehovah said
To Moses, while Earth heard in dread,
And smitten to the heart,
At once above, beneath, around,
All nature, without voice or sound,
Replied, ' O Lord, Thou art.'² etc.

¹ *British Poets*, vol. xi.

² The poem, published in pamphlet form, is now scarce, but may be read in full in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*.

Amid all his failings, to whatever extent he was responsible for them, he was always keenly sensitive to the emotions whether of friendship or religion. He would often entreat his friends to pray with him and for him, and his religious poems were often written upon his knees. The following verses are from the closing part of his hymn on recovery from illness, a poem full of earnestness, and containing many beautiful lines:—

Ye strengthened feet, forth to his altar move ;
 Quicken, ye new-strung nerves, th' enraptured lyre ;
 Ye heaven-directed eyes, o'erflow with love ;
 Glow, glow, my soul, with pure seraphic fire ;
 Deeds, thoughts, and words, no more his mandate break,
 But to his endless glory work, conceive, and speak.
 O penitence ! to virtue near allied,
 Thou canst new joys e'en to the blest impart ;
 The listening angels lay their harps aside
 To hear the music of thy contrite heart ;
 And heaven itself wears a more radiant face,
 When Charity presents thee to the throne of grace.

John Byrom¹ (1691-1763), was an able man, a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Jacobite in politics, warmly attached to the Church of England, yet not so as to be blind to her deficiencies. He had many sympathies in common with the Methodists ; but found teaching far more entirely congenial to his mind in the writings of William Law and the French and German mystics. The doctrines most completely repugnant to him were those of Calvinism, and views such as were held by James Hervey and others on justification and imputed merit. For the rest, he was an earnest, truth-loving man, who thought much for himself on all matters connected with religion, and had little in common with the most prevalent phases of theological thought. As a versifier, he has embodied many sound and suggestive reflections in wretched doggerel, using rhyme as a mere convenience of form. When, however, he set himself to write poetry instead of metrical essays, he showed a

¹ Chalmers's *English Poets*, vol. xv.

power and depth of feeling which place him among the foremost writers of sacred verse in the last century. The following is entitled

THE DESPONDING SOUL'S WISH.

My spirit longeth for Thee
 Within my troubled breast ;
 Although I be unworthy
 Of so Divine a guest.

Of so Divine a guest
 Unworthy though I be ;
 Yet has my heart no rest
 Unless it come from Thee.

Unless it come from Thee
 In vain I look around ;
 In all that I can see,
 No rest is to be found.

No rest is to be found
 But in Thy blesséd love ;
 O let my wish be crown'd,
 And send it from above.

Another is entitled

THE SOUL'S TENDENCY TOWARDS ITS TRUE CENTRE

Stones towards the earth descend ;
 Rivers to the ocean roll ;
 Every motion has some end ;
 What is thine, beloved soul ?

Mine is, where my Saviour is ;
 There with Him I hope to dwell :
 Jesu is the central bliss ;
 Love the force that doth impel.

Truly thou hast answer'd right :
 Now may Heaven's attractive grace
 Toward the source of thy delight
 Speed along thy quickening pace

Thank Thee for thy generous care ;
 Heaven, that did the wish inspire
 Through thy instrumental prayer,
 Plumes the wings of my desire.

Now methinks, aloft I fly ;
 Now with angels bear a part :
 Glory be to God on high,
 Peace to every Christian heart.

Perhaps, however, the most striking part of John Byrom's poetry is to be found in the series of religious epigrams under the heading 'Miscellaneous Pieces.' Three of them must be quoted:—

Let thy repentance be without delay.
If thou defer it to another day,
Thou must repent for one day more of sin,
While a day less remains to do it in.

If gold be offered thee, thou dost not say,
'To-morrow I will take it, not to-day :'
Salvation offered, why art thou so cool,
To let thyself become to-morrow's fool ?

Faith, Hope, and Love were question'd what they thought
Of future glory, which religion taught :
Now Faith believed it firmly to be true,
And Hope expected so to find it too ;
Love answer'd, smiling with a conscious glow,
'Believe? expect? I *know* it to be true.'

His congregational hymns are some of them very indifferent. Yet sometimes, as in that beginning 'The Lord is my Shepherd, His goodness my song,'¹ there is a swing of words which may cause them to linger in the ear. He was the author of one well-known hymn, the Christmas carol beginning, 'Christians, awake, salute the happy morn.'

John Gambold (1711-1777) is entitled to rank among the best writers of English religious poetry in the eighteenth century. He lived in the century, but he was not of it. His heart was far away among the earlier fathers of the Christian Church, so that those about him were struck by what seemed to them a curious but agreeable strangeness in his thought and conversation, as in one who was living not among the moderns, but with Polycarp or Ignatius or the primitive mystics. He held for some time the living of Stanton Harcourt, in Oxfordshire. But the English Church of that era was far from satisfying his ideas of what a Church should be. He dearly loved its Liturgy; he preferred

¹ In J. Patrick's *Collection of Psalms*, 1786.

no other ecclesiastical order; he had no dislike to its worship. Only 'he longed for intimate fellowship with a little flock, whose great concern was to build up one another in faith.' He thought he had discovered this in the community of the Moravian Brethren at Herrnhutt. So he threw up his English benefice and joined them, and in time became one of their bishops, never, however, ceasing to regard himself as a member of the English Church. The following is from his sacred tragedy of *Ignatius*:—

Philo.—

Will God

E'en yet between his helpless servants stand
And a black day?

Agathopus.—

A glorious day, O Philo,

When persecution lowers! I call it sunshine,
Which quickens the dull bosom of the Church
To bold productions and a bloom of virtues.

Yes, such a worthy juncture I much long for,
When Christian zeal, benumb'd and dead through ease,
Glow with young life, feels the more copious flow
Of ghostly aids; and, as the dangers rise,
Heightens its pulse and fills up all its greatness.
Then is the time of crowns, of grants profuse,
Complete remission, open Paradise,
With power to intercede for common souls;
For generous motives of intenser duty,
Which while the sufferer sees, serene and glad,
He thanks the impious hand that help'd him forward.¹

James Merrick (1720-1769), a fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, was spoken of by Bishop Lowth as 'one of the best of men, and most eminent of scholars.' His talents were early in development. At the age of fourteen he published the *Messiah, a Divine Essay*, and while he was still a boy at school had translated Tryphiodorus, and was carrying on a correspondence with Reimarus, the learned professor of philosophy at Hamburg.² He is best known by his paraphrases of the Canticles and Psalms.³ Their fault is that they are too

¹ *Ignatius*, act i. sc. 1.

² Southey's *Later English Poets*, ii. 391.

³ J. Merrick's *Poems on Sacred Subjects*, 1763. *The Psalms Translated and Paraphrased*, 1765. His version was introduced into many parish churches, but was found to be not very well adapted for congregational use.

smooth, too elegant. They are sorely wanting in the nerve and majesty of the original, although, considered by themselves, they have much beauty.

From the 23d Psalm :—

Lo, my Shepherd is divine,
Care shall never more be mine ;
In His pastures free and large
He shall tend His happy charge.

When I faint with summer heat,
He shall lead my weary feet
To the streams that still and slow
O'er the verdant meadows flow.

Till my latest hour draw near
I will trust my Shepherd's care ;
To my succour He will come
And conduct me safely home.¹

From one of his hymns :—

Lord, let Thy fear within us dwell,
Thy love our footsteps guide :
That love will all vain love expel,
That fear all fear besides.

Not what we wish, but what we want,
Oh let Thy grace supply :
The good unasked in mercy grant,
The ills, though asked, deny.²

That extraordinary youth, Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770), whose boyish productions caused such stir in the literary world, and whose unhappy death has always seemed so piteous, must not be passed over without some short mention. It is useless to conjecture what might have been the ultimate character of this child of impulse. His proud, fiery genius, so restless as scarcely to allow even of the most necessary minimum of sleep,³ struggling without any audible murmur against neglect,

¹ *Poems on Sacred Subjects*, by J. Merrick, 1763, 13.

² In Godfrey Thring's *Church of England Hymn-Book*, No. 281.

³ A friend, who shared his room, said that he never went to bed till very late, often not till three or four, and always got up with him at five or six.—Anderson's *Life of Chatterton* (*Brit. Poets*, vol. xi. p. 308)

indigence, and starvation, was sometimes tempted to defiant rebellion against God's will. Yet his life was pure, temperate, and amiable; and the pathetic religious feelings which he has expressed in some of his verses might encourage the hope that the licentious impieties, to which in certain moods he gave utterance, were transient workings of an evil power which would have succumbed in later years to holier influences.

The following four verses are from *The Resignation*:—

O God, whose justice shakes the sky;
Whose eye this atom globe surveys;
To Thee, my only rock, I fly,
Thy mercy in Thy justice praise.

The mystic mazes of Thy will,
The shadows of celestial light,
Are past the power of human skill—
But what th' Eternal acts is right.

O teach me, in the trying hour,
When anguish swells the dewy tear,
To still my sorrows, own Thy power,
Thy goodness love, Thy justice fear.

The gloomy mantle of the night,
Which on my sinking spirit steals,
Will vanish at the morning light,
Which God, my East, my Sun, reveals.¹

Dr. Johnson, remarking one day (May 15, 1784) that he had been dining at Mrs. Garrick's, with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney, added that three such women were not to be found; except Mrs. Lennox, he did not know where he could find a fourth.² The Mrs. Elizabeth Carter there mentioned was undoubtedly one of the most talented women in the last century. Garrick, in his epilogue to *The Inflexible Captive*, spoke of her with admiration as one—

Who, rich in knowledge, knows no pride,
Can boast ten tongues, and yet not satisfied.³

¹ *Brit. Poets*, vol. xi. p. 399.

² Boswell's *Johnson*, iv. 244.

³ Hannah More's *Works*, xi. 384.

We find from a Russian review, written in May 1759, that the fame of her extensive linguistic acquirements in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, Spanish, and German had reached that country.¹ She published, when scarcely over twenty, a volume on Sight and Colour according to the Newtonian philosophy, contributed some papers to the *Rambler*, etc., translated Arrian and Epictetus, and was also well skilled in most feminine accomplishments. She was born at Deal, where her father was Rector, in 1717, and died in 1816. In her poems, written at various intervals between 1735 and 1795, and published in two volumes, there is no pretension to deep thought or great imaginative power, but a good deal of tranquil beauty. She constantly alludes to the calm of night or of evening, as if it had a special fascination for her. A feeling congenial with it pervades her verses, and gives them a subdued tone which is rather monotonous. There breathes throughout them all a gentle religious sentiment. An elegy, written something after the manner of Gray, beginning 'Silent and cool the dews of evening pale,' is one of the most pleasing of her compositions.

Nothing has been said hitherto of that great burst of hymnody to which the Methodist and Evangelical revival gave rise. Among these writers of hymns Charles Wesley stands of course pre-eminent. The number he wrote is something amazing. In more than forty different publications, exclusive of mere selections from former works, he sent out into the world, between 1738 and 1785, 4100 hymns, and upwards of two thousand more were left at his death in manuscript.² Many of these must be placed in the highest order of devotional poetry. A widespread and passionate movement of feeling, of whatever kind it may be, rarely fails of evoking a poetical expression corresponding to it. But, as Isaac Taylor has observed, it certainly seems a remark-

¹ Quoted in Mrs. Carter's *Life and Works*, ii. 417.

² *Lyra Britannica*, C. Wesley.

able providence that 'when myriads of uncultured and lately ferocious spirits were to be reclaimed, a gift of song such as that of Charles Wesley should have been conferred upon one of the company employed in the work.'¹ Without it, Methodism could scarcely have been the power that it was. When the voice of the great popular preachers no longer rang in the ear, and the ardent feeling they had stimulated was fading away, the hymns remained in the hands of the awakened hearers,—hymns differing almost in kind from any they had known before. 'It may be affirmed,' adds the author just quoted, 'that there is no principal element of Christianity, no main article of belief, as professed by Protestant churches,—that there is no moral or ethical sentiment, peculiarly characteristic of the Gospel,—no height or depth of feeling proper to the spiritual life, that does not find itself emphatically and pointedly and clearly conveyed in some stanzas of Charles Wesley's hymns.'² John Wesley had no idea of their simply constituting a part of Christian worship, as songs of adoration and praise. He expressly called them 'a body of experimental and practical divinity.'³ They formed a sort of supplemental Liturgy, thoroughly consonant, as a whole, in tone and spirit to the familiar prayers which were heard in the parish churches (for the Wesleys—and Charles even more than his brother—were Churchmen to the backbone), but specially adapted to keep alive the new spiritual impulse which had produced such great effects. Personal and experimental, like the Psalms of David, they were also penetrated with the most vivid Christian feeling; and if a few of them displayed a warmth of ardour which exceeded the ordinary bounds of sober religion, and disqualified them for being properly used in congregational worship, such incongruity would be less apparent in the more excited atmosphere of the class meeting. As appropriate to

¹ *Wesley and Methodism*, 90.

² *Id.* 91.

³ John Wesley's Preface to edition of 1779.

peculiar cases, words could scarcely be too glowing for those who felt that in very truth a new and heavenly life, of which they had before known nothing, had indeed been born anew in them. And Charles Wesley's hymns rarely offend by anything like the sentimentality and overwrought effusiveness which Watts sometimes permitted himself, and which were common in some of the Moravian ones. Very objectionable rhapsodies found their way into some of the Methodist hymn-books; but John Wesley, especially in his later years, was very careful to expunge these, so far as he could bring them under his censorship. In this, as in many other ways, Methodism owed not a little to the sound practical sense which never for long together forsook him. It owed scarcely less to the cultivated ear and refined taste which chastened the devout outpourings of his brother's poetic talent.

Southey has remarked of Wesley's hymns, that probably no poems have been so much treasured in the memory, or so frequently quoted on a death-bed.¹ As long as time lasts, many of them are sure to hold an honoured place as a part of the heritage of the Christian Church. 'Jesus! Lover of my Soul,' is perhaps the favourite among them all. This exquisite hymn fully deserves the admiration it has universally obtained. John Wesley thought that the funeral hymn 'Come, let us join our friends above' was the sweetest of all that his brother wrote.² Popular opinion is quite at one with him as to its merits. It is probably in almost all collections, but is less known by its first line than by some which follow, as for instance the verses beginning 'One family, we dwell in Him.' Another which he was particularly fond of, and 'which Watts, with great nobility of spirit, said was worth all the verses which he himself had ever written,'³ is the sacred poem (for it is that rather than a hymn) upon the wrestling of Jacob

¹ Referred to in *Oxford Essays*, 1858, p. 126.

² Saunders, 321.

³ *Id.* 322.

with the Angel, 'Come, O thou traveller unknown. Among his best-known hymns may be mentioned also, 'Forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go,'—verses full of pure and sober piety,—'O Love divine, how sweet thou art!' 'Hark, the herald angels sing,'¹ 'Thou Judge of quick and dead,' 'The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord,' 'O for a thousand tongues to sing,' 'Rejoice, the Lord is King,' 'Christ, whose glory fills the skies,' 'Hail, the day that sees Him rise,' 'Spirit of Truth,' 'O for a heart to praise my God,' 'Soldier of Christ, arise.' Among other hymns must be mentioned the one containing the beautiful verses:—

Take my soul and body's powers ;
 Take my memory, mind, and will,
 All my goods, and all my hours,
 All I know and all I feel,
 All I think or speak or do ;
 Take my heart ;—but make it new.

O my God, Thine own I am :
 Let me give me back thine own ;
 Freedom, friends, and health, and fame,
 Consecrate to Thee alone ;
 Thine to live, thrice happy I !
 Happier still if Thine I die !²

A simple and very pretty hymn for children begins, 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.' The last seven, which are also among the best, of its fourteen stanzas may be found in Lord Selborne's *Book of Praise*.³ It is a great recommendation to the hymns of both Wesleys, that although they are often mystical in tone, and appeal persistently to the feelings, they are thoroughly practical, never losing sight of active Christian morality.

The doctrine of progress to perfection has a large part in these hymns. It may be too sanguine a creed, and one that rests on insufficient foundations ; it may

¹ C. Wesley's own words, however, were—

Hark, how all the welkin rings,
 Glory to the King of kings !

² *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 636.

³ No. cclxxxviii., 'Lamb of God, I look to Thee.'

be liable to the danger of encouraging self-delusion and presumption ; but at all events, it is a tenet that contains many elements of a truly noble faith. However varied according to different minds the possible ideal may be towards which we should aspire to advance, the hope of a near approximation to it through the aid of a Divine grace—a hope too from which none are absolutely excluded—seems strongly adapted both to encourage nobler conceptions of what human nature can be enabled to do, and to elicit a more trustful and loving dependence upon the Power without whose support all such aspirations are vain.¹ But, without entering into the doctrinal question, it is at all events historically evident that the theory of Christian perfection exercised an immense influence on the minds both of John and Charles Wesley, and that it gives a marked general character to their hymns. Thus we find such lines as these:—

Lord, I believe a rest remains
To all Thy people known ;
A rest where pure enjoyment reigns,
And Thou art loved alone ;—

A rest where all our soul's desire
Is fix'd on things above ;
Where doubt, and pain, and fear expire,
Cast out by perfect love.²

John Wesley was careful, however, to add, in his preface to the hymns of 1742, that perfection does not exempt from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand necessary infirmities, nor did it dispense from any of the ordinances.

Some of the most beautiful of Charles Wesley's

¹ The Wesleyan tenet, starting from a wholly individual point of view, may be compared with the no less invigorating opinion of a possible progress towards ultimate perfection on the part of the human race, as entertained by Wesley's contemporaries, W. Worthington (*Essays on Redemption*, 47) and Bishop Law (*Considerations on Religion*, advert. and pp. 205-22).

² Last hymn in vol. of 1741 : quoted in J. Wesley's 'Plain Account of Christian Perfection,' *Works*, vol. xi. p. 382.

hymns, considered as devotional poems for private use, are noticeable for the quietist or semi-mystical tone of piety which pervades them. Such is the hymn beginning 'Christ, my hidden Life, appear.'¹

Charles Wesley must not be passed without a reference to the last lines written to his dictation as he lay in extreme feebleness, a short time before his death :—

Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart :
Oh, could I catch a smile from Thee,
And drop into Eternity !²

John Wesley contributed some original hymns, but they are not distinguished from those which his brother wrote, and, with a few exceptions, it is not known which they are. All the translations from the German, twenty-nine in number, are his, as well as two from the French, and one from the Spanish. Some of these translations are very beautiful. Such, for instance, is the stanza which Richard Cobden is said to have repeated with his last breath :—

Thee will I love, my joy, my Crown,
Thee will I love, my Lord, my God :
Thee will I love beneath Thy frown
Or smile, Thy sceptre, or Thy rod :
What though my heart and flesh decay ?
Thee shall I love in endless day.³

Such, again, is that from Paul Gerhardt, beginning :—

Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands :
To His sure truth and tender care,
Who earth and heaven commands ;⁴

or that from the German of Johan Scheffler, which begins and ends with the verse :—

O God, of good the unfathom'd sea !
Who would not give his heart to Thee ?
Who would not love Thee with his might ?

¹ Lord Selborne's *Book of Praise*, ccllvii.

² F. Saunders's *Evenings*, etc., 323.

³ S. W. Christopher's *Hymn Writers and their Hymns*, 16.

⁴ *Book of Praise*, cccvii.

O Jesu, Lover of mankind !
 Who would not his whole soul and mind
 With all his strength to Thee unite ?¹

Among his original hymns is a very fine one written upon the death of Whitefield, beginning—

Servant of God, well done !
 Thy glorious warfare 's past !
 The battle fought, the race is run,
 And thou art crown'd at last.²

Among other Methodist writers must be mentioned first of all William Williams (1727-1791). He was a clergyman of the Church of England, and adhered to its communion.³ Relinquishing the cure to which he had been ordained, he spent fifty years as an itinerant preacher in the Principality. The two hymns by which he is best known in England are, 'Guide me, O thou Great Jehovah,' and 'O'er those gloomy hills of darkness. The latter is a fine missionary hymn: and both are from the Welsh, translated either by himself or by William Evans.⁴

Robert Seagrave, a Cambridge graduate, who joined the Methodist movement at an early stage, published his *Hymns for Christian Worship* in 1742. Many of them are very indifferent, but there is one good hymn entitled *The Pilgrim's Song* ('Rise my soul, and stretch thy wings').

John Cennick (1717-1755) and William Hammond (d. 1783) were both Methodists for a time, and afterwards Moravians. The former published his hymns in 1741-4. There is much beauty in one or two of them, as:—

Children of the heavenly King,
 As ye journey, sweetly sing :
 Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,
 Glorious in His works and ways.

¹ C. Rogers's *Lyra Britannica*, p. 624.

² C. B. Pearson, *Oxford Essays*, 1858, p. 149.

³ H. S. Skeats' *Hist. of the Free Churches*, p. 406.

⁴ C. Rogers's *Lyra Brit.* p. 630.

We are travelling home to God,
 In the way our fathers trod ;
 They are happy now, and we
 Soon their happiness shall see.¹

Hammond was one of the Cambridge Methodists, and a man of some scholarship. His hymns, published in 1745, are some of them much wanting in dignity. His best are perhaps the one beginning—

Awake, and sing the song
 Of Moses and the Lamb,
 Wake every heart and every tongue
 To praise the Saviour's Name.

Sing of His dying love ;
 Sing of His rising power ;
 Sing how he intercedes above
 For those whose sins He bore.

Sing, till we feel our hearts
 Ascending with our tongues ;
 Sing, till the love of sin departs,
 And Grace inspires our songs.²

Thomas Olivers (1725-99) was a shoemaker by trade, who had been converted from a dissolute life³ by the preaching of Whitefield. As an assistant to Wesley, he was indefatigable in the itinerant ministry, travelling it is said no less than 100,000 miles on horseback in twenty-five years. He afterwards held a fixed appointment in Wesley's printing-office. He was the author of a very fine hymn or sacred poem, entitled *The God of Abraham*. A musical service, by which he had been much impressed, at the Jewish Synagogue in Westminster, suggested it to him, and he obtained the ancient melody from Leoni, the presiding Rabbi.⁴ Montgomery considered that there was not in our language 'a lyric of more majestic style, more elevated thought, or more glorious imagery.'⁵ It is said to have

¹ *Book of Praise*, cxxvi.

² *Id.* cxxvii.

³ See a curious conversation with Toplady : *Toplady's Works*, vi. 172.

⁴ *Lyra Brit.*, note 670 ; *Saunders's Evenings*, etc. 328.

⁵ Quoted by *Saunders, id.*

had some influence in giving Henry Martyn an impulse to missionary work.¹ The following are three stanzas of it:—

The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above ;
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love !
Jehovah ! Great I Am !
By earth and heaven confest ;
I bow and bless the sacred name,
For ever blest !

The God, who reigns on high,
The great Archangels sing ;
And 'Holy, holy, holy,' cry,
'Almighty King !
Who was, and is, the same,
And evermore shall be !
Jehovah ! Father ! Great I Am !
We worship Thee.'

The whole triumphant host
Give thanks to God on high ;
'Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost !'
They ever cry :
Hail ! Abraham's God and mine !
I join the heavenly lays ;
All might and majesty are Thine,
And endless praise !²

Olivers's hymn, 'Lo! He comes with clouds descending,' may be found in the *Book of Praise* side by side³ with the finer and better-known version from Thomas of Celano, beginning with the same words, which Madan compiled out of an amalgamation of the compositions of Charles Wesley and Cennick.

John Bakewell (1721-1819) was another friend and coadjutor of the Wesleys, as also of Toplady and others of the Evangelical party. The hymn by which he is most known is the one beginning 'Hail, Thou once despised Jesus.'⁴

¹ Saunders's *Evenings with the Sacred Poets*.

² *Lyra Brit.* 450 ; *Book of Praise*, ccccx. ³ *Book of Praise*, xc., xci.

⁴ *Lyra Brit.* 29 ; *Book of Praise*, lxxi.

John Berridge (1716-1793) was Vicar of Everton, and one of the most popular of the Methodist preachers. He did not, however, dissociate himself from the English Church. Like Rowland Hill, who looked up to him as a friend and valued counsellor, he was a man of eccentric temperament, but of profound piety and indefatigable zeal. His *Sion's Songs* were published in 1785. Many of them are only versions of older compositions; one, for instance, of his best—

Jesus, cast a look on me ;
Give me sweet simplicity¹—

is altered from a hymn of Charles Wesley. Among those of which he was the sole author, the best is one which begins, 'O happy saints who dwell in light.'²

Commander Kempenfelt (1718-1782), of the 'Royal George,' was an associate of Whitefield and the Wesleys and a hymn-writer, as it appears, under the name of 'Philotheorus.' Three of his hymns are given in the *Lyra Britannica*. The most striking of them is entitled *The Alarm*, and begins—

Hark ! 'tis the trump of God
Sounds through the realms abroad,
Time is no more !³

Rowland Hill (1744-1833) was not what may be called a Methodist Churchman quite in the sense that the Wesleys, William Williams, Berridge, and others were. He was an ardent Calvinist, vehemently opposed to Wesley,⁴ and holding opinions similar to those maintained by Whitefield among the Methodists, and Toplady among the Evangelicals. Notwithstanding the strong opposition which his Methodism excited, his attachment to the Church of England remained for a long time unabated. In 1773, three years after the time when he had been spoken of as Whitefield's probable successor, he was ordained to the curacy of

¹ *Lyra Brit.* 56 ; *Book of Praise*, cc.

² *Lyra Brit.* 57, and note 664 ; *Book of Praise*, cxiii.

³ *Lyra Brit.* 349.

⁴ Toplady's *Works*, vi. 172.

Kingston in Somersetshire. He commenced itinerant preaching within a year afterwards, but it was not until 1780 that he contemplated the necessity of exercising his ministry outside the pale of the national church.¹ To the last he never considered himself as altogether dis severed from it; but outliving as he did, by more than a generation, the final breach between it and Methodism which followed upon John Wesley's death, he could scarcely be regarded throughout all the latter years of his life as other than a Nonconformist. It was the misfortune, or the fault, of the Church of England that there was no provision in it for such men as he, although he was one of whom any church might have been proud. The independent and ambiguous position which he assumed, as theoretically a Churchman, and practically a Dissenter—'a Dissenter within the Church, a Churchman among Dissenters'²—was one that could not be recognised without such an extension in the system of the National Church as seems even yet unlikely to be carried out, and was still more unlikely then. The impressive, witty, and warm-hearted preacher of the Surrey Chapel could do something to lower the 'walls of partition,'³ to remove prejudices, and to habituate his congregation not to the order only, but in a great degree to the spirit also of the English liturgy. He could not do much more for a Church from which he had received such ill usage, but from which he never altogether withdrew his attachment.

One of Rowland Hill's best hymns—'We sing His love who once was slain'—was published in 1774, at the end of a sermon for the poor.⁴ The fine hymn, 'Lo! round the throne a glorious band,' is mainly his. His *Divine Hymns for Children* were designed as an appendix to those of Dr. Watts,⁵ to which he was accustomed to attribute the strong religious impressions

¹ V. J. Charles, *Life and Sayings of Rowland Hill*, 34.

² *Cabinet Annual Register* for 1833, quoted in *id.* 76. ³ *Id.* 60.

⁴ Josiah Miller, *Our Hymns*, 241.

⁵ Preface to his *Divine Hymns*, second ed. 1794.

he had received while he was yet quite a child.¹ They were corrected by Cowper, and published in 1790. A Christmas hymn, the 39th, is perhaps the best, but they are all rather heavy, and not likely to be very attractive to the young. A hymn of some merit, beginning 'Exalted high at God's right hand,'² appeared in a collection published by him in 1783.

The impulse excited by the Methodist revival gave rise to many hymn-writers in the ranks of Dissent. It must be sufficient to mention some of the principal ones.

Robert Robinson (1735-1790) had been moved to a religious life by the preaching of Whitefield. A Calvinistic Methodist at first, he passed through various phases of Baptist, Congregational, and Unitarian opinion.³ The two hymns by which he is best known are, 'Come, thou fount of every blessing,'⁴ and a Christmas hymn of much beauty, beginning, 'Mighty God, while angels bless Thee.'⁵ To these may be added a third, assigned to him in Rippon's Selection, 'Christ the Lord is risen to-day.'⁶

Joseph Hart (1712-1768) published, in 1759, a book of original hymns which he prefaced with a remarkable sketch of his own spiritual experiences.⁷ He tells how he was stirred in the midst of a licentious life by the preaching of Whitefield and the Moravians; how afterwards he entertained horrible ideas of liberty, and plunged into wild Antinomianism; and he gives a strange account, which might have been penned by Bunyan, of a fierce struggle between good and evil raging in an impassioned and hitherto uncontrolled nature, which has suddenly awakened to an intense

¹ Charlesworth, *Life of Rev. Rowland Hill*, p. 5.

² *Book of Praise*, cxii.; *Lyra Brit.* 309.

³ *Lyra Brit.*, 479; Saunders, 349.

⁴ *Lyra Brit.* appendix, 671-2, and 680.

⁵ *Id.* 480.

⁶ J. Rippon, *Selection of Hymns* (1st ed. 1787), cxli: it is given in the *Book of Praise* (lix.) and elsewhere, as Charles Wesley's.

⁷ *Hymns composed on Various Subjects*, by J. Hart, containing a brief and summary account of the author. 1759.

perception of awful spiritual realities.¹ His hymns are sometimes, as might be expected, too personal, and occasionally they are too didactic. Moreover, they often assume the utter vileness of an 'unconverted' nature. But some of them glow with warmth and simple earnestness.

He was the author of a good hymn, 'Come, Holy Spirit, come; let Thy bright beams arise,'² which is sometimes called the Methodist version of the *Veni Creator*. Another of his hymns is, 'Spirit of Truth, Thy grace impart.'³ Joseph Hart was, however, not a Methodist, but an Independent, a community among whom his memory is much honoured.⁴

The poems and hymns of Anne Steele (1717-1778) were published by her in 1760, in two volumes, under the name of *Theodosia*. She was the daughter of a Baptist minister, of whose uncle Burnet once said, when a clergyman complained that his parishioners left their parish church to hear him, 'Go, and preach better than Henry Steele, and the people will return.'⁵ She bore with exemplary patience a life of much physical suffering; and her hymns, in some of which there is a good deal of subdued and plaintive beauty, bear the traces of it. Among the best are, 'Come, weary souls, with sin distress'd,'⁶ 'Father, whate'er of earthly bliss,'⁷ 'Far from these narrow scenes of night,'⁸ 'Father of mercies, in Thy word,'⁹ and 'O Thou whose tender mercy hears.'¹⁰

Samuel Stennett (1727-1795) was a Baptist minister, a very worthy man, held in much respect by George III.,¹¹ as also by Romaine, Toplady, and other leading Evangelicals.¹² Thirty-four original hymns were

¹ *Hymns composed on Various Subjects*, pref. vi. xv. and hymn 27.

² *Lyra Brit.* 273; *Book of Praise*, xcvi.

³ Thring, 239.

⁴ Saunders's *Evenings with Sacred Poets*, 295.

⁵ Saunders, 340.

⁶ Rippon, cxvii.; Schaff's *Christ in Song*.

⁷ Saunders, 340.

⁸ *Book of Praise*, clx.

⁹ *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 531.

¹⁰ *Lyra Brit.* 523; *Book of Praise*, cccxxxvi.

¹¹ *Lyra Brit.* 526.

¹² H. S. Skeats's *Hist. of Free Churches*, 447.

attached to his theological works, and he contributed some to Rippon's Selection.

Samuel Medley (1738-1799)—a midshipman at one time, but afterwards a Baptist minister—published, at different dates, a very considerable number of hymns.¹ Perhaps his best is one which may be found in the *Book of Praise* (cli.), beginning, 'Dearest of names, our Lord, our King.'

The well-known hymn 'All hail, the power of Jesu's name' is by Edward Perronet, who published his *Occasional Verses* in 1785. He was a son of the vicar of Shoreham, associated with the Wesleys for some time, but afterwards became the minister of a thoroughly Dissenting congregation.²

Dr. T. Gibbons, a Congregationalist, published his *Hymns adapted to Divine Worship* in 1784. He is the author of the following hymn for a time of trouble:—

To Thee, my God, whose presence fills
The earth, and seas, and skies,
To Thee, whose Name, whose heart is Love,
With all my powers I rise.

Troubles in long succession roll,
Wave rushes upon wave ;
Pity, O pity my distress !
Thy child, Thy suppliant; save !

O bid the roaring tempest cease ;
Or give me strength to bear
Whate'er Thy holy will appoints,
And save me from despair !

To Thee, my God, alone I look,
On Thee alone confide ;
Thou never hast deceived the soul
That on Thy grace relied.

Though oft Thy ways are wrapt in clouds
Mysterious and unknown,
Truth, Righteousness, and Mercy stand
The pillars of Thy throne.³

¹ *Lyra Brit.* 397.

² *Id.* 459.

³ *Lyra Brit.* 236 ; *Book of Praise*, cccxciv.

There were many other Nonconformist writers of hymns in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Among them may be mentioned Christian Gregor¹ and other Moravian translators of German hymns; Benjamin Wallin, a Baptist, who published his *Evangelical Hymns and Songs* in 1750;² Darracott, a pupil and friend of Doddridge;³ John Needham, a Baptist, whose *Devotional and Moral Hymns* appeared in 1768;⁴ James Allen (1734-1804), among whose *Christian Songs* is a tolerably well-known hymn entitled 'Worthy the Lamb.'⁵ While at Cambridge he attached himself to Ingham, the most thorough High Churchman of the early Methodists, but afterwards became a member of the small sect called the Sandemanians. Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795) was a profuse writer of hymns which attain a respectable, but not a high level. Robert Hale edited, in 1817, as many as six hundred of them.⁶ James Boden, George Burder, and Jehoida Brewer were Congregationalist hymn writers of no great note. Two missionary hymns, 'Arm of the Lord, awake,' and 'Bright as the sun's meridian blaze,' and some general hymns of more than average merit, were published towards the end of the century by W. Shrubsole, who appears to have been a Nonconformist.⁷ John Fawcett and John Ryland were Baptists. The former—one of the many who owed their first strong religious impressions to Whitefield's preaching—published a volume of hymns, among which is, 'Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing,'⁸ in 1782.⁹ The latter was an Orientalist of some distinction, and an active promoter of missionary effort. He wrote some good hymns, especially one beginning 'Sovereign Ruler of the Skies,' upon the text, 'My times are in Thy hand.'¹⁰ The *Walworth Hymns*, 1792, were by Joseph Swain, also a

¹ Ph. Schaff's *Christ in Song*.

² *Lyra Brit.* 571.

³ Doddridge's *Works*, iv. 522.

⁴ *Lyra Brit.* 437.

⁵ *Id.* 20.

⁶ *Id.* 53. Several of his occur in Rippon's Collection.

⁷ *Id.* 502-5, 680, and Thring, 59.

⁸ Thring, 95.

⁹ *Id.* 225.

¹⁰ *Id.* 488; *Book of Praise*, ccx. ccxi.

Baptist¹ Ottwell Heginbotham, a Congregationalist, published some hymns in the last year of the century.² The best is, perhaps, 'Thou boundless source of every good.'³ Henry Moore, a pupil of Doddridge, was the author of some sacred poems of considerable merit, which did not, however, appear till after his death in 1802, when they were edited by Dr. Aikin.⁴

Among the friends and coadjutors of the Countess of Huntingdon—herself a writer of hymns—were two clergymen who remained to the last, notwithstanding many discouragements, true to the Church of England. One of them was Walter Shirley,⁵ her cousin (1725-1786). Each of his three brothers succeeded in turn to the earldom of Ferrers. He held the living of Loughrea, county Galway, and was a Calvinistic Evangelical preacher of great note both in England and Ireland. His well-known 'Sweet the moments, rich in blessing' was published in 1774 in Lady Huntingdon's hymn-book. The still more popular, 'Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing' appeared the same year in the collections of Conyers and Harris.

The other was Thomas Haweis (1732-1820), a strong Calvinist, one of the Countess's chaplains,⁶ and rector, for fifty-six years, of Aldwinkle, in Northamptonshire. His *Carmina Christo* was published in 1792, with a preface in which he lamented the wretched condition of psalmody in the English Church, spoke of his reverence and admiration for the Book of Common Prayer, and said what he thought hymn-writers ought to aim at: 'I have wished, I fear, rather than have attained, to be pathetic without pomp, pointed without affectation, to speak the language of simplicity without meanness, and to be childlike without being childish.'⁷ His best-known hymn is that beginning—

¹ *Thring*, 534.

² *Id.* 297, 669.

³ *Id.* 451.

⁴ *Lyra Brit.* 422; *Book of Praise*, ccclxii.; Aikin's *Letters*, 295.

⁵ *Lyra Britannica*, 673.

⁶ He was a principal founder of the London Missionary Society, Miller, *Our Hymns*.

⁷ *Carmina Christo*, Preface.

O Thou from whom all goodness flows,
I lift my heart to Thee.

Among them are some upon the chief festivals of the Church, and many which take a midway position between hymns and metrical versions of the Psalms. They all show much genuine fervour of feeling, but, as a whole, are not very noteworthy.

Among those of the Evangelical party in the Church of England who had no direct connection with the movement which the Wesleys and Whitefield had set on foot, Toplady, Romaine, Newton, and Cowper are all well known as hymn writers. Augustus Toplady, Vicar, first of Blagdon, afterwards of Broadhembury, died in 1778, when he was only thirty-eight years old. He was a man of learning and talent, and gifted, it is said, with a fire and vivacity which made his preaching and conversation peculiarly impressive. A Calvinist of the most pronounced type, and holding his own views with passionate vehemence, he looked upon John Wesley as little better than Antichrist.¹ According to him, free-will was 'the gangrene which had vitiated the moral state of the country,' and Wesley was its arch-priest. Neither spared the other. Such violence of mutual denunciation was a weak point in the history of two good men.

Toplady's celebrity as a hymn-writer would rest securely upon one only—that which Dr. Pusey has justly called 'the most deservedly popular hymn, perhaps the very favourite—very beautiful it is'²—'Rock of ages, cleft for me.' There is no hymn better known or more highly valued in the homes of the poor; and the most cultivated and refined intellect may well fail

¹ Thus we find Toplady writing of Wesley as follows:—'O that He, in whose hand the hearts of all men are, may make even this opposer of grace a monument of Almighty power to save! God is witness how earnestly I wish it may consist with the Divine will to touch the heart and open the eyes of that unhappy man. I hold it as much my duty to pray for his conversion as to expose the futility of his writings against the truths of the Gospel.'—Toplady to Taylor, Nov. 27, 1772, *Works*, vi. 158.

² Quoted in *Oxford Essays* (1858), 143.

to recall words on which it can repose so gladly in the hour when strength fails, and the unseen world is near. Next, perhaps, in beauty to this memorable hymn are two sacred poems, one entitled *The Dying Believer to his Soul* ('Deathless principle, arise'), the other a *Meditation written in Illness* ('When languor and disease invade'), both of them glowing throughout with 'the joy of believing.' His 'Christ, whose glory fills the skies,' is a good and well-known morning hymn. 'I saw, and lo! a countless throng,' a contemplation on Rev. vii. 9-17, is a fine ode. 'Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness,' is a variation from the German, in a stately measure, enriched with double rhymes.

Toplady's hymns have many faults. His rhymes are often extremely careless. In one hymn we find 'own' rhyming with 'begun'—'given' with 'heaven,'—'Saviour' with 'ever,'—'Creator' with 'nature,'—'seals' with 'dispels,' etc. Nor is this at all an exceptional example. He is apt to employ a variety of confused metaphors; sometimes he uses expressions which offend by their want of taste; and occasionally he does not scruple to use an Alexander Selkirk metre which is particularly disagreeable to the ear when adapted to sacred subjects. Apart from all question whether statements of peculiar dogmatic views are not prosaic and inappropriate as introduced into a hymn, what solemnity can there be in such a jingle as the following?—

A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,
My person and off'rings to bring.¹

But when Toplady was bent upon instilling the special opinions of that school of religious thought to which he belonged, he had little thought for metre, rhyme, or melody. It seems inconceivable that the author of 'Rock of ages' could also write the following:—

¹ Toplady's *Works*, vol. vi. hymn 9.

Imputatively guilty then
 Our Substitute was made,
 That we the blessings might obtain
 For which His blood was shed.¹

Many of his hymns are wholly disqualified for general use by his uncompromising Calvinism.

Reference has already been made to the indignation felt by William Romaine (1714-1795) that the Psalms of David should be in any way supplanted in Church use by what he called 'man's poetry,' 'human compositions.' Holding these views, the worthy Evangelical clergyman was of course not a hymn-writer. He was, however, very desirous that congregational psalmody should be improved; and hoped to contribute to this by a new version, in which each Sunday in the Church year should have suitable portions of the Psalms appropriated to it.² Consequently he did not versify the whole of every Psalm. His rendering contrasts strongly both in its best features and its defects with that of James Merrick. There is often a certain roughness and want of finish in it; often, on the other hand, a simplicity which is pleasing.³

John Newton (1725-1807) was a man of no ordinary experiences. A special interest is conferred on the *Olney Hymns* by the remembrance that the benevolent Evangelical clergyman, who was the author of the majority of them, had been in earlier years among the worst of those who were engaged in the infamous slave trade on the Guinea coast.⁴

Newton's preface to the *Olney Hymns*, published 1779, is very modest. His share in the work, he said, would have been far smaller had the original design

¹ Toplady's *Works*, hymn 13.

² *Psalms by Romaine and Cumberland, suited for every Sunday in the Year*, 1775.

³ The second part of the 22d Psalm (for use on Good Friday) is an excellent example of this.

⁴ It was a period, however, in which occasional fits of bitter remorse and excited religious feelings were succeeded by relapses into utter recklessness of profligate living.—J. Newton's *Authentic Narrative*, 1764.

been carried out. It had been a source of keen regret to him that his friend Cowper had been prevented, 'by a long and affecting indisposition,' from contributing a much larger proportion of the hymns. For his own part, he added, he was a versifier, not a poet. His hymns were only for plain people,—'Though I would not offend readers of taste by a wilful coarseness and negligence, I do not write professedly for them. If the Lord whom I serve has been pleased to favour me with that mediocrity of talent which may qualify me for usefulness to the weak and the poor of His flock, without quite disgusting persons of superior attainments, I have reason to be satisfied.'¹

He was certainly quite right in judging of himself that he was no poet. The great majority of his hymns are entirely deficient of anything that approaches to distinct poetical merit. Undoubtedly, even in this respect, there is a very wide interval between his best² and his worst. Some of the former are by no means unworthy of their place by the side of Cowper's; some of the latter descend, as poetical compositions, into the level of mere doggerel. Thus—to take a verse in which a mere incident of Bible history is referred to—we read in a hymn based upon the life of Joseph,—

Though greatly distressed before,
When charged with purloining the cup,
They now were confounded much more;
Not one of them dared to look up.³

When the subject treated is of a more sacred and solemn nature—as in the 9th hymn of the 3rd book—the use of language in which there is no sense of dignity of expression becomes more positively offensive. His best hymns are of course free from such fault. Among

¹ *Memoirs*, 523.

² The last two lines of his finest hymn are very melodious—in full harmony with the thought they express:

'And may the music of Thy Name
Refresh my soul in death.'

³ *Olney Hymns*, i. 21.

these, the familiar one beginning 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,'¹ takes the first place; next to it one scarcely less well known, 'Come, my soul, thy suit prepare.'² There are several others, some of which contain verses very indifferent in point of composition, but which have deservedly attained a good deal of popularity from the depth³ or tenderness of their religious feeling. Such are those beginning, 'One there is above all others;'⁴ 'Glorious things of Thee are spoken;'⁵ 'Time by moments steals away;'⁶ 'Safely through another week;'⁷ 'Now let us join with hearts and tongues;'⁸ a short hymn, too, should be mentioned which is often sung at the close of service, 'May the grace of Christ our Saviour.'⁹

Several of Newton's hymns are too entirely reflections on his own personal experiences to be at all adapted for general use. A similar remark may be made of the striking and well-known meditation, admissible only as a hymn for private use, beginning 'Tis a point I long to know.'¹⁰

Many of his more didactic poems upon Scripture incidents and parables have merit of their own, if they are regarded not as hymns, which they scarcely are, nor as poetical compositions, which they scarcely pretend to be, but as short spiritual tales in verse, which people of little education might read with interest as such. That he had some such idea in his mind is the more probable

¹ *Olney Hymns*, i. 57.

² *Id.* i. 31.

³ The following are the words of a writer whom the character of J. Newton had impressed with very high respect:—'So valuable are some of Newton's hymns, from their deep knowledge of the human heart, their experience of our wants, and their application to our need, that probably no hymns have ever been written which have given greater help to depressed and anxious minds.'—J. C. Colquhoun's *W. Wilberforce, his Friends and Times*, 91. The *Olney Hymns*, especially that by Newton beginning 'Why should I fear the darkest hour?' were a special solace to that pure and noble spirit, Augustus Hare, in his last days.—*Memorials of a Quiet Life*, ii. 32.

⁴ *Id.* i. 53.

⁵ *Id.* i. 60.

⁶ *Id.* ii. 3.

⁷ *Id.* ii. 40.

⁸ *Id.* iii. 39.

⁹ *Id.* iii. 101.

¹⁰ *Id.* i. 119.

from his having included among his hymns two or three sacred fables—the Loadstone, the Spider and the Bee, and the Tamed Lion.

It has been noticed as a remarkable and significant omission that, although a whole section of hymns is entitled ‘Ordinances,’ there is no mention whatever among them of the sacrament of baptism.¹

Cowper contributed sixty-eight of the Olney hymns, about a quarter of the whole collection. As a whole, they are by no means equal to much of his other poetry. The gloom, the narrowness, the austerity of his theology, are naturally more apparent in them than in poems where his religious ideas are less prominently expressed. On the other hand, there is in the best of them a plaintive tenderness, an elevation of sentiment, and a purity of tone, which are no less characteristic of the gentle and devout spirit of their author. Moreover, Cowper was not always bowed down with despondent fears about his spiritual state. The cloud which hung over him sometimes passed away and left him in the enjoyment of a calm and trustful happiness. In such a mood, he composed one of the most beautiful of all hymns that have ever been written. Each of the two writers had chosen the same text for their subject—‘Lovest thou Me?’ There was a singular contrast in the mode of handling it. Newton’s hymn took the form of an anxious argument with himself whether he did indeed love God or no, whether he were His or whether he were not. Cowper’s ‘Hark, my soul! it is the Lord’ is that which contains those exquisite verses—

Can a woman’s tender care
Cease toward the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee.

Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,

¹ C. B. Pearson, in *Oxford Essays* (1858), 145.

Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.

Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint ;
Yet I love Thee and adore :
O for grace to love Thee more !¹

Such, too, is the beautiful hymn beginning with the verse—

Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings ;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings ;
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it after rain.²

But the frequent tone of Cowper's hymns is that of one who feels himself ' tempest-tossed and half a wreck,' clinging with pathetic tenacity to a hope which often seems scarcely sufficient to save him from despair :—

The billows swell, the winds are high
Clouds overcast my wintry sky ;
Out of the depths to Thee I call—
My fears are great, my strength is small.³

He feels desolate in spirit and God-forsaken, lost in the night, and beset by mysterious enemies :—

My soul is sad and much dismayed ;
See, Lord, what legions of my foes,
With fierce Apollyon at their head,
My heavenly pilgrimage oppose !⁴

Powers of darkness are around him, and his soul is dark within. And yet—

I see, or think I see,
A glimm'ring from afar ;
A beam of day that shines for me,
To save me from despair.⁵

His best hymns are most of them in the minor key of prayerful submission to a sovereign Will, and of earnest

¹ *Olney Hymns*, i. 118.

³ *Id.* iii. 18.

⁴ *Id.* iii. 20.

² *Id.* iii. 48.

⁵ *Id.* iii. 8.

longing for deliverance from an innate sinfulness which might yet be too strong for him. Among these may be mentioned those beginning 'Oh for a closer walk with God ;'¹ 'God of my life, to Thee I call ;'² 'What various hindrances we meet ;'³ 'The billows swell ;'⁴ 'God moves in a mysterious way ;'⁵ 'There is a fountain ;'⁶ 'O Lord, my best desire fulfil,'⁷ and that in which he declared his purpose of retiring from a world which seemed to him crowded with spiritual dangers :—

Far from the world, O Lord, I flee
From strife and tumult far ;
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.⁸

Cowper's translations of the fervid but quietistic and somewhat unpracticable hymns of Madame Guyon arose out of a cause which forcibly exhibits the sad religious dejection which he could never for long together overcome. 'Ask no hymns,' he wrote, 'from a man suffering by despair as I do. I could not sing the Lord's song, banished as I am, not to a strange land, but to a remoteness from His presence, in comparison with which the distance from east to west is no distance, is vicinity and cohesion. I dare not, either in prose or verse, allow myself to express a frame of mind which I am conscious does not belong to me : least of all can I venture to use the language of absolute resignation, lest only counterfeiting, I should for that very reason be taken strictly at my word, and lose all my remaining comfort. Can there not be found among those translations of Madame Guyon somewhat that might serve the purpose? . . . I have no objection to giving the

¹ *Olney Hymns*, i. 3.

³ *Id.* ii. 60.

⁵ *Id.* iii. 15. 'The history of this hymn is remarkable. In an interval of derangement Cowper thought it was the Divine will that he should go to a certain part of the river Ouse and drown himself ; but the driver of the vehicle, missing his way, diverted him from his purpose, and thereupon were composed those memorable lines.'—Saunders, 346.

⁶ *Id.* i. 79

⁷ *Id.* iii. 19.

² *Id.* iii. 119.

⁴ *Id.* iii. 18.

⁸ *Id.* iii. 45.

graces of the foreigner an English dress, but insuperable ones to all false pretences and affected exhibitions of what I do not feel.'¹

Before passing from the hymnists of the latter part of the eighteenth century, a few others should yet be mentioned. Martin Madan and Mrs. Cowper were both cousins of William Cowper. To the former is owed the generally adopted variation from Charles Wesley and Cennick's, 'Lo! He comes with clouds descending.'² Robert Hawker (1754-1830), vicar of a parish in Plymouth, was author of two hymns quoted in the *Lyra Britannica*—one upon the name 'Abba, Father,' the other upon the word 'Amen.'³ Joseph Carlyle (1759-1805) was professor of Arabic in Cambridge, and vicar of Newcastle. He was the writer of 'Lord, when we bend before Thy throne.'⁴ Bishop Horne, best known by his Commentary, was the author of a few hymns; Bishop Lowth of some versions from the Psalms.⁵ The hymn, 'Jesus, and can it ever be,' was written in 1776 by Thomas Green of Ware, when he was only ten years old.⁶

John Newton's vicar and predecessor at Olney was Moses Brown, who is spoken of as 'an evangelical minister and a good man.'⁷ The vicarage of Olney was only £50 a year; and Moses Brown had a family of thirteen children. His pecuniary difficulties being, therefore, very great, he was glad to accept the chaplaincy of Morden College, Blackheath,⁸ and Newton succeeded to the parochial cure. He was at one time much disappointed at not becoming Poet Laureate.⁹ Certainly the tenure of this office did not, in the eighteenth century, imply any considerable poetical gift. Brown might have filled it quite as worthily as some who had

¹ H. Stebbing's *Life of Cowper*, ii.

² *Lyra Brit.* 648, 656, 675. *Book of Praise*, xc.

³ *Id.* 288.

⁵ *Oxford Essays*, 1858, 142.

⁷ Cecil's *Memoirs of J. Newton*, 41.

⁸ *Id.*, and James Hervey's *Works*, vi. 270.

⁹ M. Brown's *Sunday Thoughts*, fourth ed. 1781, part iii. 984-6.

⁴ *Id.* 126.

⁶ Saunders, 349.

held it before him. But he was only a very moderate poet. His poem on the Universe and his *Sunday Thoughts* received much praise, and the latter passed through at least four editions. But the circulation must have been almost entirely among a number of worthy people who cared little for the poetical in comparison with the religious merit of his poems. They were instructive and orthodox, mildly evangelistic, tolerant, except to Rome, suffused with a quiet appreciation of natural beauty, and appropriate, yet not too heavy, for Sunday reading. 'I hope,' wrote James Hervey, 'Divine Providence will give his *Sunday Thoughts* an extensive spread, and make them an instrument of diffusing the savour of true religion. Seldom, if ever, have I seen a treatise that presents the reader with so full yet concise a view, so agreeable yet striking a picture of true Christianity in its most important articles, and most distinguishing peculiarities. Though I am utterly unacquainted with the author' (they afterwards became intimate), 'I assure myself he is no novice in the sacred school.'¹ The *Sunday Thoughts* were first published in 1750: a fourth part, including some hymns, or *Night Songs*, was added in 1781.

Philip Skelton, an Irish clergyman who published his hymns in 1784. His *Song of Creation*, interesting in thought and finely expressed, may be found in Professor Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song*.

Cowper was for some time under the care of Dr. Nathaniel Cotton (1707-1788), who kept a private establishment of high repute for persons of deranged intellect. The poet used to speak of him with the utmost gratitude, as a physician whose humanity was equal to his skill, and who was as capable of administering to the spiritual as to the physical maladies of his patients.² He was a man also of some literary note. His *Visions in Verse*, published about 1751, attained a good deal of

¹ James Hervey's *Works*, vi. 47.

² Cowper's poem on 'Hope'; Cowper's *Letters*, July 4th, 1765; Cecil's *Memoirs of Newton*, 45; Chalmers's *Life of Cotton*, 5.

popularity, and deserved it, not as having any great poetical merit, but as embodying in smooth, easy-flowing measure the ideas of a sensible, benevolent, and religious mind. Each vision is a kind of allegory, in which some personified quality such as Pleasure, Health, Friendship, etc., is the principal character. Among Cotton's other poetical productions are a few hymns, one of which, beginning 'If solid happiness,' ends with this bright verse—

For conscience like a faithful friend,
Shall through the gloomy vale attend,
To aid our dying breath ;
And faith shall fix our thankful eye
Beyond the reach of death.¹

Hitherto, William Cowper (1731-1808) has only been spoken of here as one among the hymn-writers of the latter half of the eighteenth century. It would be beyond the limits of the subject to remark upon his general merits as a poet. But in all his principal writings the religious element is strongly marked. With two or three unimportant exceptions, all his poems date from a period when religious convictions had for a long time become altogether the controlling principle of his life. His genius was late in ripening. He was fifty years old before he was known as a poet.

The best and most characteristic features of Cowper's poetry are very closely related to the strong Christian feeling which actuated him. Without it, his writings might not have been deficient in sweetness and pathos ; but they would have been deprived of that which conferred upon them those higher qualities which made his poems a turning-point in eighteenth century literature. His thorough earnestness, his transparent simplicity of moral aim, his devoted love of all goodness, his shrinking aversion from all forms of evil, his lively sense of a divine purpose and significance in all created works—these principles, operating in a sensitive and poetical

¹ This hymn is not in Chalmers's edition. It is from Patrick's Collection, 1786.

temperament, were just what was wanted to give his poetry that simplicity, reality, and vigour which contrasts most favourably with the formalities and artificial graces which had been too popular before. It may be added that unaffected elevation of moral sentiment, such as that which in Cowper was based upon pure religious feeling, gives a beauty to poetry which is almost indispensable to its highest charm.

The defects of Cowper's theology are easily separable from the solid core of Christian love and faith to which they are attached. But, as was inevitable in a nature such as his, they have left a strong impress on his poetry. Cowper has condemned Puritanism in strong words as dark and sullen, as harsh, intolerant, and severe, without smile, sweetness, or grace. In his own mind, as it is reflected both in his poems and in his letters, there is constantly a tenderness, a gentle gaiety, a perception of humour, which is quite the reverse of Puritan moroseness. Yet he was continually falling into the same extreme which he has censured. His poetry is never so unattractive as where it is made expressive of the severe and confined views of life peculiar to the school of religious thought in which his ideas were moulded. He is often very intolerant and precise. His own home, were it not for the constitutional morbidness which religious fears aggravated, but had not occasioned, would have been a very Eden in the midst of a sinful world. And living as he did, a recluse, in the pure and harmless round of his occupations, amid the tranquil pleasures of his garden and the country, his books, his painting, his hares, his bird-cages, and his own delicate and refined thoughts, among friends who loved him, and among the poor, to whom he was enabled to be an almoner as well as a kind and compassionate friend, ever walking truly with his God, he was impatient that the world in general could not live after a like pattern, and had small indulgence for its sins, and scanty sympathy for its weaknesses. He thought with something like horror of the life of cities—

humming with a restless crowd,
 Sordid as active, ignorant as loud,
 Whose highest praise is that they live in vain,
 The dupes of pleasure, or the slaves of gain ;
 Where works of man are cluster'd close around,
 And works of God are hardly to be found.¹

There seemed to him something radically wrong in such conditions of existence for 'a creature formed for God alone and for heaven's high purposes,' and he used all his powers as a Christian satirist to inveigh against them. Cowper was not wanting in sound practical sense and masculine power of reflection. He could lash irreligion and vice with a force and purity of tone which cannot fail to carry with it the sympathy of the reader. When, however, he descends to pass sentence upon trivial follies, or to speak of pursuits and pleasures which are simply not congenial to himself, he often loses all sense of proportion, and becomes the mere bigot. The best and wisest of counsellors is listened to with impatience if he declaims against pleasures which become noxious only by unreasonable or immoderate use, if cards and dancing are denounced as crimes,² hunting as vulgarest brutality,³ and he who would play a game of chess is asked how he can 'waste attention at the checkered board,' and concentrate his mind upon a trivial game, 'as if eternity were hung in balance on his conduct of a pin?'⁴ Yet when the poet passed on to speak of those who devote themselves to grave studies of man or nature, he was even more than ever dazed by theological contempt, more than ever the zealot:—

I sum up half mankind
 And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
 And find the total of their hopes and fears
 Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay
 As if created only like the fly,
 That spreads his motley wings in the eye of noon,
 To sport their season and be seen no more.
 The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,
 And pregnant with discoveries new and rare.

¹ *Retirement.*

³ *Id. and Conversation.*

² *Progress of Error.*

⁴ *The Task*, book vi.

Then follow a score or two of lines in which he pours contempt upon the 'seeming wisdom,' the 'airy reveries,' the 'plausible amusements,' the idle labours of the historian, the geologist, the astronomer :—

And thus they spend
The little wick of life's poor, shallow lamp
In playing tricks with Nature, giving laws
To distant worlds, and trifling in their own.¹

Much in the same style of thought is his impassioned tirade against the pride of those who refuse to acknowledge that man is by nature so dead in sin as not to possess any native beams of rectitude, any inborn love of virtue.² It was unfortunate that a poet like Cowper, whose religious influence on cultivated minds might have been so considerable, should have imbibed the mischievous persuasion that, to enhance the blessings of divine grace and the preciousness of Christian morals, all other elements of human nature must be depreciated and disparaged.

Apart from this, the religious thought that enters into Cowper's general poetry is often exceedingly beautiful. However much, in his darker hours, he might doubt whether he had any right to its joy, he never doubted that a Christian's faith was as rich in happiness as in holiness. All nature glowed to such an one with more than earthly brightness :—

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free.

His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers : his to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who with filial confidence inspired
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, ' My Father made them all !'
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,

¹ *The Task*, book iii., and *Charity*, towards the middle.

² *Truth*, near the close.

Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
 With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
 That plann'd, and built, and still upholds, a world
 So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste
 His works. Admitted once to His embrace,
 Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before.
 Thine eye shall be instructed; and thine heart
 Made pure shall relish, with divine delight
 Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.¹

Happy who walks with Him! whom what he finds
 Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
 Or what he views of beautiful or grand
 In nature, from the broad majestic oak
 To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
 Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
 His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,
 Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
 Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.²

The poems of Hannah More (1744-1833) derive, no doubt, their chief value from the spirit that animates them. They are the verses of a refined and most benevolent woman, whose influence was great, and whose talents were exerted with a Christian-hearted purpose of doing good. Her poetical were almost as popular as her prose works. It is true their sale was in many instances very much promoted by the zeal of some good people, who believed that in the excited and anxious times which witnessed the outbreak of the French Revolution, her writings, full as they are of high principle, tact, and sound sense, were calculated to be of great service. In any case, they were widely read and much admired. Her poem, for instance, on *Sensibility*, although weighted rather than not by the *Sacred Dramas*, with which, in 1783, it was published, went through nineteen editions.³ *Sensibility*, in her meaning of the word, was a quickness of moral perception, especi-

¹ *The Task*, book v. near close.

² *Id.* vi.

³ *Hannah More's Memoirs*, by W. Roberts, i. 184.

ally to those simple but precious virtues of domestic life which Christian charity demands. The poem is chiefly addressed to girls growing up to womanhood. Yet it is not so much a poem as an essay written in pleasing verse.

The following sensible and characteristic lines occur in one of the *Solitary Musings*, of which the first line is, 'Lord, when dejected I appear:—

O wayward heart ! thine is the blame ;
 Though I may change, God is the same.
 Not feebler faith, nor colder prayer,
 My state and sentence shall declare ;
 Not nerves and feelings shall decide—
 By safer signs I shall be tried.
 Is the fixed tenor of my mind
 To Christ and righteousness inclined ?¹

Nor should her religious tales and ballads be passed over without notice. Many of them were adapted to popular tunes, and widely dispersed as tracts and broad-sheets. The following is a part of the conversation entitled *Turn the Carpet, or The Two Weavers* :—

Says John, Thou say'st the thing I mean,
 And now I hope to cure thy spleen ;
 The world, which clouds thy soul with doubt,
 Is but a carpet inside out.

As when we view these shreds and ends,
 We know not what the whole intends ;
 So when on earth things look but odd,
 They're working still some scheme of God.

No plan or pattern can we trace,
 All wants proportion, truth, and grace ;
 The motley mixture we deride,
 Nor see the beauteous upper side.

But when we reach that world of light,
 And view those works of God aright,
 Then shall we see the whole design,
 And own the Workman is divine.²

Some of Hannah More's best verses were written in 1788, upon the slave-trade. They were verses well calculated to stir the conscience of her readers. Espe-

¹ *Hannah More's Memoirs*, 41.

² *Hannah More's Works*, 17.

cially she inveighed against 'the proud philosophy,' which affected to deny to the negro race a common share in the powers of our joint humanity. And earnestly she pleaded against the iniquitous inconsistency of slavery in a land of liberty:—

Shall Britain, where the soul of freedom reigns,
Forge chains for others she herself disdains?
Forbid it, Heaven! O let the nations know
The liberty she tastes she will bestow.¹

There is much religious pathos in the following:—

And if some notions, vague and undefined,
Of future terrors have assail'd thy mind;
If such thy masters have presumed to teach—
As terrors only they are prone to preach—
(For should they paint Eternal Mercy's reign,
Where were th' oppressor's rod, the captive's chain?)
If then thy troubled soul has learn'd to dread
The dark unknown thy trembling footsteps tread—
On Him who made thee what thou art depend;
He who withholds the means accepts the end.
Thy mental night thy Saviour will not blame;
He died for those who never heard His name.
Not thine the reckoning dire of light abused,
Knowledge disgraced, and liberty misused.²

In fact, the better poetry of the age was all, greatly to its credit, on the side of freedom and humanity—prompt alike to animate Wilberforce in his exertions, and to console and encourage him under the partial failure which at first awaited his efforts. James Hurdis, in 1788, entreated his countrymen to put away from them a guilt which would surely bring righteous vengeance upon them.³ In 1792, Cowper addressed a noble sonnet to Wilberforce, bidding him not to be disheartened—

Friend of the poor, the wrong'd, the fetter-gall'd,
Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain.⁴

Mrs. Barbauld dedicated a poem to him on the same

¹ Hannah More's *Works*, xi. 119.

² *Id.* 117.

³ James Hurdis's *Poems*, iii. 92.

⁴ Cowper's *Poems: Sonnet to William Wilberforce.*

occasion.¹ James Montgomery not only wrote, but suffered imprisonment in the cause, through the offence which his unguarded vehemence had given.² Southey, in 1794, dedicated to the subject some of his early sonnets and lyrics—verses glowing with indignation.³ Coleridge, in the same year, denounced the wrath that must thunder from the Holy One—

where hideous Trade
Loud laughing packs his bales of human anguish.⁴

Campbell, in the last year of the century, wrote a fine apostrophe to Nature outraged by the wicked institution:—

Eternal Nature ! when thy giant hand
Had heaved the floods, and fixed the trembling land,
When life sprang startling at thy plastic call,
Endless her forms, and man the lord of all !
Say, was that lordly form inspired by thee
To wear eternal chains and bow the knee ?
Was man ordain'd the slave of man to toil,
Yoked with the brutes, and fetter'd to the soil ;
Weigh'd in a tyrant's balance with his gold ?
No ! Nature stamp'd us in a heavenly mould !
She bade no wretch his thankless labour urge,
Nor, trembling, take the pittance and the scourge !
No homeless Libyan, on the stormy deep,
To call upon his country's name and weep !⁵

James Hurdis (1763-1801), whose verses on slavery have been referred to, was a Fellow of Magdalen College, and curate of Burwash in Sussex ; afterwards vicar of Bishopstone, and Professor of Poetry at Oxford. His gentle refinement, his cultivated love of Nature, his bright unclouded piety, make him one of the most charming of eighteenth-century poets. He was not, in the stricter sense of the word, a writer of sacred poetry,

¹ Barbauld's *Works* (Aikin), i. 173 : *Epistle to W. Wilberforce*.

² *Memoirs of James Montgomery*, by J. Holland and Jas. Everett, 166, and pref. to *Poetical Works*, i. xxvii.

³ Southey's *Poetical Works : Poems concerning the Slave Trade* (1794), ii. 56.

⁴ S. T. Coleridge's *Poetical Works : Religious Musings*, i. 87.

⁵ *Pleasures of Hope*.

but a vein of pure Christian feeling runs through all he wrote; as when, musing on the resuscitation of all Nature in the spring, he exclaims—

But I shall live again,
And still on that sweet hope shall my soul feed.
A medicine it is, which with a touch
Heals all the pains of life; a precious balm,
Which makes the tooth of sorrow venomless,
And of her hornet sting so keen disarms
Cruel Adversity.¹

Anna Lætitia Barbauld² (1743-1825) might have been spoken of among the hymn-writers. Her hymns are only twelve in number, occupying a few pages at the end of her poetical works. But all of them are good of their kind, considered as devotional poems, not intended for congregational use. She published only those which she thought the best, acting, in this instance at least, on the excellent principle, 'I had rather it be asked of twenty pieces why they are not here, than of one why it is.'³ Four of them, one for Easter Sunday, one on 'Pious Friendship,' and those beginning, 'Praise to God, immortal praise,' and 'Awake, my soul! lift up thine eyes,' may be found in various selections.

Among her general poems there are several of a sacred character. The lines which conclude her poems, 'Life, I know not what thou art,' are worthy of Vaughan or Norris:—

Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;—
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear:

¹ James Hurdis's *Poems: The Village Curate*.

² Mrs. Barbauld was three years older than her brother Dr. Aikin. Their father was a dissenting clergyman, a friend of Doddridge. Mr. Barbauld's grandfather was a French Protestant who, as a boy, had been smuggled to England inside a cask. His father was an English clergyman. He himself had been intended for the same profession, but had imbibed Nonconformist principles in Dr. Aikin's school. Mrs. Barbauld's celebrity as a teacher is well known.—L. Aikin's *Memoirs*.

³ *Works of Anna L. Barbauld, with Memoir*, by Lucy Aikin, i. lx.

Then steal away, give little warning ;
 Choose thine own time ;
 Say not ' Good-night,' but in some brighter clime
 Bid me good-morning.¹

The earlier publications of George Crabbe (1756-1832) belong wholly to the eighteenth century. The *Candidate*, the *Library*, the *Village*, and the *Newspaper* appeared between 1780 and 1785. After that date, as if contented with the praise and popularity he had won, he retired into the seclusion of domestic and parochial life, so that when his *Village Register* was published twenty-two years afterwards, in 1807, he was welcomed almost as a new writer. In the character, also, as well as in the date of his poetry, he is a link between two periods. The influence of Pope, the grand model of eighteenth-century poets, upon his style of thought and versification is constantly visible and frequently acknowledged, especially in his earlier works. In simplicity, on the other hand, in minuteness of observation, in his love of Nature, and in thorough sympathy with the poor, he belonged rather to that newer school of poetry of which there were few traces until the last century was drawing near its close.

Crabbe's title to be ranked among authors of sacred poetry rests chiefly upon the Pilgrim's Song ' Pilgrim, burdened with thy sin,' etc.,² in *Sir Eustace Grey*, a poem written in 1804. He gained his literary successes as the Christian moralist, the keen-eyed but kindly censor of humble life. While he was yet a young medical practitioner struggling against adverse circumstances at Aldborough, his native place, he formed his purpose, and steadfastly kept to it :—

Be it my boast to please and to improve,
 To warm the soul to virtue and to love ;
 To paint the passions, and to teach mankind
 The greatest pleasures are the most refined ;

¹ Barbauld's *Works*, i. 262.

² G. Crabbe's *Poetical Works*, with his Letters, etc., by his Son, ii. 275.

The cheerful tale with fancy to rehearse,
And gild the moral with the charm of verse.¹

Among the fragments of sacred poetry which occur in his early note-books, and which were published by his son among his other works, there is one dated 1778, upon the Resurrection, suggested by early spring flowers, and the following short aspiration, as he wandered in the late evening along the 'sapphire banks' of the Suffolk coast:²—

The sober stillness of the night
That fills the silent air,
And all that breathes along the shore,
Invite to solemn prayer.

Vouchsafe to me that spirit, Lord,
Which points the sacred way,
And let thy creatures here below
Instruct me how to pray.³

To the majority of his contemporaries, the poetry of William Blake (1757-1827) was as unintelligible as his painting. He was simply pitied as a madman, or scorned as a visionary mystic. His admirers in a later age have done him ample justice. 'He was a poet,' writes one of his editors, 'who in his best things has hardly fallen short of the large utterances of the Elizabethan dramatists, the pastoral simplicity of Wordsworth, the subtlety and fire of Shelley, and the lyrical tenderness of Tennyson.'⁴ His simpler poems are many of them delightful. And the reader who will bear patiently with great faults—wild fancies of a disordered imagination, obscurities, enigmas, paradoxes, eccentricities of religious and moral belief, extravagances of expression, metrical irrégularities, and sometimes grammatical carelessness—will often find himself rewarded by a strain of poetry which in depth and sweetness may be said to exceed any that the eighteenth century has elsewhere produced. As a writer of sacred

¹ *The Wish*, *id.* ii. 310.

² *Id.* i. 11.

³ *Id.* ii. 313.

⁴ Preface to W. Blake's *Poetical Sketches*, ed. by R. H., 14.

poetry he had capacities of no ordinary kind. His words—

I am in God's presence night and day—
He never turns his face away—¹

were to him the expression of a reality as vividly impressed upon his conception as any outward object of sense could be to an ordinary mind. No one can read his poems without feeling convinced of this. He died in a very rapture of joy, composing and uttering almost to the very last 'songs to his Maker so sweetly, to the ears of his wife, that when she stood to hear him, he, looking upon her most affectionately, said, "My beloved, they are not mine, no, they are not mine."² None could be more persuaded than he was that death is in very truth the 'golden door' of life, re-opening inlets of spiritual perception³ among which the outward senses are the least and the most imperfect. In one of his poems he writes—

The door of death is made of gold,
That mortal eyes can not behold ;
But when the mortal eyes are closed,
And cold and pale the limbs reposed,
The soul awakes, and, wondering, sees
In her mild hand the golden keys.
The grave is heaven's golden gate,
And rich and poor around it wait.

One of the most beautiful of his *Songs of Innocence*, published in 1789, is that entitled *On Another's Sorrow*. Part of it runs thus :—

Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too ?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief ?
Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share ?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill'd ?

¹ From a MS. poem, quoted in Al. Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, 310.

² *Id.* 361.

³ Cf. A. C. Swinburne's *Life of Blake*, 242.

Can a mother sit and hear
 An infant groan, an infant fear?
 No, no; never can it be—
 Never, never can it be.

He doth give His joy to all;
 He becomes an infant small;
 He becomes a man of woe;
 He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
 And thy Maker is not by;
 Think not thou canst weep a tear,
 And thy Maker is not near.¹

His own heart was one that overflowed with wide sympathy; but most of all was he full of tenderness towards little children. The following, entitled *The Lamb*, may be quoted as an example:—

Little lamb, who made thee?
 Dost thou know who made thee?
 Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
 By the stream and o'er the mead;
 Gave thee clothing of delight,
 Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
 Gave thee such a tender voice,
 Making all the vales rejoice;
 Little lamb, who made thee?
 Dost thou know who made thee?
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee.
 He is called by thy name;
 For He calls Himself a Lamb:
 He is meek, and He is mild—
 He became a little child.
 He a child, and thou a lamb,
 We are called by His name.
 Little lamb, God bless thee,
 Little lamb, God bless thee!²

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, although only born in 1772, was chronologically an eighteenth century poet. 1797 has been very properly called his great poetical year; and most of his noblest verses, including many that were

¹ W. Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, 34.

² *Id.* 8.

not published till 1816, were composed before the close of the century. There could scarcely be a stronger illustration of the development of thought during the ninety years preceding, than the contrast between the poetry of Coleridge and that which flourished in the reign of Anne.

Coleridge's verse is deeply penetrated with religious feeling, though he rarely wrote upon what are commonly called sacred subjects. It was so even at the time of his greatest speculative perplexities, when (to use his own words) 'I found myself all afloat: doubts rushed in; broke upon me "from the fountains of the great deep," and "fell from the windows of heaven." The fontal truths of natural and revealed religion alike contributed to the flood; and it was long ere my ark touched on an Ararat and rested.'¹ His was a mind that could not be satisfied without probing to the foundations of religion and morals; and metaphysical difficulties, such as those which attended his meditations on personality in God as reconciled with infinity, sorely perplexed him. But, as he often has said, his difficulties were intellectual; in feeling he never lost his hold on faith and goodness. 'My head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John.'³ He passed through a phase of zealous Unitarianism, but did not find what he wanted in it; and gradually, as he exchanged Hartley's philosophy for views more nearly approaching those of Kant, and discerned more clearly the properties and limitations of the human mind, his intellectual perplexities cleared away, and he gained the satisfaction he craved in a fervid but thoughtful acceptance of Christianity as he found it set forth in the liturgy of the English Church. Before the nineteenth century had begun, the great struggle by which for some years past Coleridge's mind had been distracted—the ferment of his thought on religious, philosophical, and political questions—had compara-

¹ *Life of S. T. Coleridge*, by James Gillman, i. 87.

² *Id.*

tively subsided, and his powerful intellect had taken its matured form.

Through all this time, poetry had been no common solace to him. 'It has soothed my afflictions (he said); it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude; and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me.'¹ Hence the great charm of much of his earlier poetry. It is the innermost record of a mind instinct with life and thought, always religious even amid its most disquieting doubts—longing to believe, even when it could not—obedient to the rule of faith, even where reason affected to dispute its right to rule.

Thrice holy faith! Whatever thorns I meet,
As on I totter with unpractised feet,
Still let me stretch my arms and cling to thee,
Meek nurse of souls through their long infancy.²

Like most young men of ability and promise Coleridge had been intensely interested in the great events which had been transacted across the Channel. At the outbreak of the Revolution he had been fired with the most sanguine expectations. Ardent love of freedom, eager sympathy with the poor and the oppressed, expectations of a new order of society which would be truer, nobler, happier than had ever gone before, excited him into a sort of religious enthusiasm, as though the Saviour's kingdom were about to begin on earth, and the thousand years had reached their advent. He trusted that even the fury of the outbreak would be only as the storm that cleared the sky for halcyon days to follow; or rather the opening of the seals, prelude to the coming forth from God of the New Jerusalem.

Transfigured with a dreadless awe,
A solemn hush of soul, meek he beholds
All things of terrible seeming: yea, unmoved,
Views e'en th' unmitigable ministers
That shower down vengeance on these later days.

¹ *Life of S. T. Coleridge*, by James Gillman, 101.

² *To an Infant*, written about 1794: *Poetical Works*, i. 76.

For kindly with intenser deity
 From the celestial mercy-seat they come,
 And at the renovating wells of Love
 Have fill'd their vials with salutary wrath,
 To sickly nature more medicinal
 Than what soft balm the weeping, good man pours
 Into the lone, despoiled traveller's wounds.

Lord of unsleeping Love

From everlasting Thou! we shall not die,
 These, even these, in mercy didst thou form
 Teachers of good through evil, by brief wrong
 Making truth lovely, and her future might
 Magnetic o'er the fixed, untrembling heart.

The Lamb of God hath open'd the fifth seal :
 And upward rush, on swiftest wing of fire,
 The innumerable multitude of wrongs
 By man on man inflicted ! Rest awhile,
 Children of wretchedness ! The hour is nigh !¹

His fervid anticipations of a blest future upon a renovated earth were destined to speedy and bitter disappointment. In his pathetic ode upon France, written in 1797, he has recorded the progress of his disenchantment, slow and unwilling, but none the less complete. The outburst of 'fierce and drunken passions'—the 'loud scream of blasphemy'²—the shedding of innocent blood—scarcely availed at first to awaken him from his golden dream :

Ye storms that round the dawning east assembled,
 The sun was rising, though ye hid his light.³

It was not until France invaded the liberties of Switzerland that he reluctantly relinquished his hopes.

To Coleridge's mind, freedom was indeed a holy thing. In its highest sense it was

the unfetter'd use
 Of all the powers that God for use had given :
 But chiefly this, Him first, Him last to view,
 Through meaner powers of secondary things
 Effulgent, or through clouds that veil his blaze.⁴

¹ *Religious Musings* (1794), 85-94. ² *France, an Ode*, 1797, *id.* 130.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *The Destiny of Nations, a Vision*, *id.* 98.

His hymn on national freedom was a devotional poem in quite a true sense of the word, prefaced by a reverential appeal to the

Eternal Father! King Omnipotent!
To the Will Absolute, the One, the Good!
The I Am, the Word, the Life, the Living God.¹

It seemed to him a work in all respects worthy of angelic ministrations to build up kingdoms and to guide with superhuman agency the destinies of nations.² In his patriotism there was the same deep religious tone. The sanctity of human life, not in the individual only, nor only in its family and social relations, but in its wider sphere of political action—the loftiness of the ideal towards which its efforts should be directed—the inspiring greatness of its capabilities—these were thoughts which gave a very marked character to Coleridge's religious musings, and which were pointedly in contrast with the prevailing bias of the generation which immediately preceded him. Political life had so long been the almost recognised arena of low and worldly motives, of faction, intrigue, and corruption, that if the speculations of men of Coleridge's moral and intellectual power were apt to be somewhat mystical and overwrought, sometimes erroneous and misleading, they were of very real value to the age. They were not only a most refreshing contrast to much that had gone before, but they contributed largely to the formation of a new mental epoch. There were many men whose names occur in the public history of the eighteenth century fully as fervid and earnest as he was. But for a long time previously there had not been many—as there were many afterwards—in whose minds the same conjunction of ideas would be associated as to Coleridge, when he left for a wider sphere of action the myrtle-covered walls of his pleasant Somerset cottage:—

¹ *The Destiny of Nations.*

² *Id.* 104.

I therefore go and join head, heart, and hand,
Active and firm to fight the bloodless fight
Of Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ.¹

And no less was Coleridge sensitively alive both as a poet and as a religious man, to a sacred presence, a holy teaching, in outward nature. The *Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni*, published in 1816, but written before the close of the last century,² does not lose by comparison with the noble hymn which Milton has put into the lips of our first parents. It certainly touches finer chords of feeling than any which James Thomson, even in his noblest passages, appealed to. As the contemplation of a spiritual mind deeply touched by the sublimer aspects of mountain scenery, how beautiful is this—

Thou too, hoar mount, with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,
Starts downward, glittering through the pure serene
Into the depth of clouds that veil thy breast—
Thou too again, stupendous mountain ! thou
That as I raise my head, a while bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me. Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense from the earth !
Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from earth to heaven,
Great hierarch ! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth with her thousand voices praises God.³

Not that sublimity in nature was needed to kindle such sympathies ; for—

Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure,
No plot so narrow, be but nature there,—
No waste so vacant but may well employ

¹ *Reflection on having left a Place of Retirement*, 1798, *id.* i. 195.

² Gilman's *Life of Coleridge*, i. 308. He quotes an interesting criticism by Coleridge himself upon this poem, in answer to his friend Wordsworth, who had condemned it as 'mock sublime.' The sentiment of it is undoubtedly high-strung, but none the less genuine. ³ *Works*, i. 186.

Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to love and beauty.¹

Coleridge was no less persuaded than Wordsworth that poetry fulfilled a worthy and truly religious function in 'awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world before us,—an inexhaustible treasure ; but for which, in consequence of the feeling of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes that see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.'² He saw—

That outward forms, the loftiest, still receive
Their finest influence from the life within ;³

and he and his brother poet, in a spirit into which devotional sentiment largely entered, set themselves to awaken among their countrymen the livelier susceptibilities which they had learnt thus highly to appreciate. In earlier life they sometimes worked together, and worked harmoniously with the same general purpose before each. Coleridge had not the exquisite poetical simplicity of Wordsworth, but he was quite equally alive to the spiritual side of nature. The outward universe was to his mind full of divine and mystic life, active, although unseen ; abounding in what might be called the emblems and reflections of a higher existence.

The following are some fine lines from a poem written by Coleridge at the end of 1794 :—

He first by fear uncharm'd the drowséd soul,
Till of its nobler nature it 'gan feel
Dim recollections ; and thence soar'd to hope,
Strong to believe whate'er of mystic good
The Eternal dooms for His immortal sons ;
From hope and firmer faith to perfect love

¹ *The Lime-Tree Bower* : *Works*, i. 204.

² Coleridge, upon the *Lyrical Ballad*, published by him and Wordsworth in 1798.—Gillman's *Life of Coleridge*, i. 105.

³ *Poetical Works*, ii. 151. Cf. the passage from Thomas Burnet's *Archæol. Philos.* with which he heads the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* : *Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. . . . Juvat quandoque in animo, tamquam in tabula, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari.*

Attracted and absorb'd, and centred there
 God only to behold and know and feel,
 Till by exclusive consciousness of God,
 All self-annihilated, it shall make
 God its identity, God all in all !
 We and our Father one !

And blest are they
 Who in this fleshly world, the elect of heaven,
 Their strong eye darting through the deeds of men,
 Adore with steadfast unpresuming gaze
 Him, nature's essence, mind, and energy ;
 And gazing, trembling, patiently ascend,
 Treading beneath their feet all visible things
 As steps, that upwards to their Father's Throne
 Lead gradual.

There is one mind, one omnipresent mind,
 Omnific, His most holy name is Love.
 Truth of subliming import ! with the which
 Who feeds and saturates his constant soul,
 He from his small, particular orbit flies
 With blest outstarting ! From himself he flies ;
 Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
 Views all creation, and he loves it all,
 And blesses it, and calls it very good !
 This is indeed to dwell with the Most High !¹

I conclude this notice of his poetry by quoting from verses written after the century had closed. The first is from the somewhat sad poem entitled *Dejection*, dating about 1803 :—

O Lady, we receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does nature live :
 Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud !
 And could we ought behold of higher worth,
 Than that inanimate cold world allow'd
 To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
 Ah ! from the soul itself must issue forth
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the earth,
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element !

¹ *Religious Musings*, 1794, *id.* i. 86.

O pure of heart ! thou needst not ask of me
 What this strong music in the soul may be !
 What and wherein it doth exist,
 This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist.
 This beautiful and beauty-making power :—
 Joy, virtuous Lady, joy that ne'er was given
 Save to the pure and in their purest hour.¹

The mind of Robert Southey (1774-1843) passed through a development which was in many respects closely analogous to that through which Coleridge passed. An intimate friendship had grown up between the two men while the former was at Balliol College, and the latter an undergraduate of a year and a half's longer standing at Jesus College, Cambridge.² Their tastes and feelings were in many respects congenial. Both were fired with the same enthusiastic expectations of a coming reign of universal brotherhood. The great experiment of republicanism in America, the moral crusade in England against slavery, above all the tremendous revolutionary outbreak in France, flattered their anticipations, and kindled them to a glowing heat. Like Kant and Klopstock, like Lavater and Alfieri,³ and like many men of ability in England, their joy and hope were great, their disappointment proportionately bitter.⁴ It is well known how the two

¹ *Religious Musings*, i. 237.

² *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. by his Son, C. C. Southey, i. 210.

³ Gillman's *Life of S. T. Coleridge*, i. 47.

⁴ Cf. Shelley's fine lines :—

'The nations thronged around and cried aloud
 As with one voice, truth, liberty, and love !
 Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
 Among them, there was strife, deceit, and fear.'

Prometheus Unbound.

Thus, also, Sir S. Romilly wrote in May 1792: 'The conduct of the Assembly has not been able to shake my conviction that it [the Revolution] is the most glorious event, and the happiest for mankind, that has ever taken place since human affairs were recorded.' In the September of that same year, he could scarcely find words strong enough to express his horror of the movement.—*Corresp.* ii. 3. Quoted in W. Massey's *Hist. of the Reign of George III.*, iii. 502.

friends proposed to carry their theory into practice by heading a colony on the banks of the Susquehannah, where intellect and industry, pure philosophy and good agriculture, sound religion, cultivated poetry, and honest trade, should flourish together under a government of perfect equality in bonds of fraternity and peace. The pleasing vision collapsed through an unfortunate want of funds; and England retained within her shores two young men whose voluntary banishment into the wilds of America would have left a blank in our literary history.

Southey, like Coleridge, had been much disturbed in his religious convictions during the ferment of mind and feeling through which he had passed. He gave up all ideas of ordination, and his opinions were for a time very unsettled. 'They soon took the form of Unitarianism, from which point they seem gradually to have ascended without any abrupt transitions as the troubles of life increased his devotional feeling, and the study of religious authors informed his better judgment, until they finally settled down into a strong attachment to the doctrines of the Church of England.'¹ Here again, except that the period of change was marked in Coleridge's case by much greater intensity of religious feeling, the course of development was strangely similar.

Some very fine devotional passages might be selected from Southey's later poetry. Even *Thalaba*, which was begun in 1800, although an Arabian story, is indebted to a nobler source than the Koran for its pure religious feeling and moral sublimity.² But the poems

¹ *Life of Southey*, i. 203.

² 'The design required that I should bring into view the best features of that system of belief and worship which had been developed under the covenant with Ishmael, placing in the most favourable light the morality of the Koran, and what the least corrupted of the Mahometans retain of the patriarchal faith. It would have been altogether incongruous to have touched upon the abominations engrafted upon it.'—Southey's preface to eighth vol. of ed. of 1838. 'Thalaba is a poetic story of faith—its spiritual birth, its might, its trials, and its victory—such a story as none but a Christian poet could have told.'—H. Read's *Introduct. to English Literature*, p. 169.

he wrote in his earlier days, before the close of the eighteenth century, are also marked by serious loftiness of aim. 'I may not,' he wrote in June 1797, 'live to do good to mankind personally, but I shall at least leave something behind me to strengthen those feelings and excite those reflections from whence Virtue must spring. In writing poetry with this end, I hope I am not uselessly employing my leisure hours.'¹ In one of his first poems, dated 1793, *The Triumph of Woman*, a subject suggested by the third and fourth chapters of Esdras, he writes:—

And, loving beauty, learn
To shun abhorrent all the mental eye
Beholds deform'd and foul ; for so shall love
Climb to the source of goodness. God of Truth !
All Just ! All Mighty ! I should ill deserve
Thy noblest gift, the gift divine of song,
If, so content with ear-deep melodies,
To please all profitless, I did not pour
Severer strains—of Truth—eternal Truth,
Unchanging Justice, universal Love.²

Joan of Arc, published in 1795, is interesting as showing how, amid the unsettled opinions of his early manhood, he ever kept steadfastly in view the majesty of goodness, the sense of God's presence, the holiness of the Divine attributes, and the trust in immortality.

The second book of *The Vision of the Maid*, published 1798, is quite Dante-like in the weird energy and moral force with which he imagines the future doom of the wanton, the epicure, the hypocrite, the cruel, and so forth.

There is a very beautiful poem written by Southey during a tour in Portugal in 1796, after a visit to the Convent of Arrabida. It well expresses the natural transition by which a healthy mind passes out of an almost envious contemplation of peaceful seclusion, in the midst of natural beauty, from the sins and troubles of the outward world, to a sense of the active energies

¹ *Life of Southey*, i. 319.

² Southey's *Poet. Works*, 82.

required of life in its youth and prime. Then rest duly earned may be indeed welcome.

Happy then
To muse on many a sorrow overpast,
And think the business of the day is done,
And as the evening of our lives shall close—
The peaceful evening—with a Christian's hope
Expect the dawn of everlasting day.¹

The following was written in 1799 to the memory of his dear friend Edmund Seward :—

1

Not to the grave, not to the grave, my Soul,
Descend to contemplate
The form that once was dear !
The Spirit is not there,
Which kindled that dead eye,
Which throbb'd in that cold heart,
Which in that motionless hand
Hath met thy friendly grasp.
The Spirit is not there !
It is but lifeless, perishable flesh
That moulders in the grave ;
Earth, air, and water's ministering particles
Now to the elements
Resolved, their uses done.
Not to the grave, not to the grave, my Soul,
Follow thy friend beloved,
The Spirit is not there !

2

Often together have we talk'd of death ;
How sweet it were to see
All doubtful things made clear ;
How sweet it were with powers
Such as the Cherubim,
To view the depth of heaven !
O Edmund ! thou hast first
Begun the travel of Eternity :
I look upon the stars,
And think that thou art there,
Unfetter'd as the thought that follows thee.

¹ Southey's *Poet. Works*, 137.

3

And we have often said how sweet it were,
With unseen ministry of angel power,
To watch the friends we loved.
Edmund ! we did not err !
Sure I have felt thy presence ! Thou hast given
A birth to holy thought,
Hast kept me from the world unstain'd and pure
Edmund ! we did not err !
Our best affections here,
They are not like the toys of infancy ;
The soul outgrows them not ;
We do not cast them off ;
Oh, if it could be so,
It were indeed a dreadful thing to die !

4

Not to the grave, not to the grave, my Soul,
Follow thy friend beloved !
But in the lonely hour,
But in the evening walk,
Think that he companies thy solitude ;
Think that he holds with thee
Mysterious intercourse ;
And though remembrance wake a tear,
There will be joy in grief.¹

Living as William Wordsworth did into the middle of this century (1770-1850), and writing poetry almost to the last, it needs a certain effort to think of him as a poet of the last century also. Yet his mind attained its full development in and through the stirring events of the revolutionary decade. Although the mellowing influence of maturer years is very visible, both in his poetry and in his entire mode of thinking, the Wordsworth of 1800 is, in every line of his writings, unmistakably identical with the Wordsworth of a much later date ; and some of his most characteristic poems had been already written. Much that has been said within the last few pages in reference to Coleridge and Southey may be repeated of him. The birth of a great republic,

¹ Southey's *Poet. Works*, 131.

full of promise, beyond the Atlantic, had first seized his imagination :—

Before me shone a glorious world—
 Fresh as a banner bright, unfur'd
 To music suddenly :
 I looked upon those hills and plains,
 And seem'd as if let loose from chains
 To live at liberty.¹

Then came the outbreak of the Revolution, when his hopes were all aglow, and his whole spirit fired with enthusiastic expectation :—

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven.²

He watched with eager hope the growth of a new era, emerging triumphantly, as he believed, out of the midst of opposition ; yet scarcely dared to trust in all he hoped for :—

All cannot be : the promise is too fair
 For creatures doom'd to breathe terrestrial air :
 Yet not for this will sober reason frown
 Upon that promise nor the hope disown ;
 She knows that only from high aims ensue
 Rich guerdons, and to them alone are due.³

To Heaven, therefore, with religious earnestness, he commended the issues of what he confided in as a great and holy cause. He could not be satisfied to watch from a distance the progress of the movement. He wandered alone through France ; he stayed in Paris ; he returned to it again ; he listened to Jacobin harangues ; he

Became a patriot, and his heart was all
 Given to the people, and his love was theirs.⁴

¹ W. Wordsworth's *Poetical Works* : 'Ruth' (1799), ii. 121.

² W. Wordsworth's *Poet. Works*, and 'The French Revolution, as it appeared to Enthusiasts at its Commencement,' reprinted from the *Friend*, ii. 155.

³ *Id. Descriptive Sketches*, 1791-2, i. 36.

⁴ *Prelude*, 345 ; Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoirs of W. Wordsworth*, i. 73.

The atrocities that followed filled him with horror and dismay. Robespierre's fall revived for a brief interval his hopes. The news of it reached him as he was crossing the sands at Ulverstone :—

‘Come now, ye golden times,
Said I, forth pouring on those open sands
A hymn of triumph : ‘as the Morning comes
From out the bosom of the Night, come ye.’¹

‘But this ecstasy was of short duration : the cloud which hung over France became as dense and as dark as ever ; and his sadness was not relieved, but pressed with a wearier weight upon his soul.’² He was distressed with a very turmoil of perplexity and doubt. It was at this time he owed so much to his sister's influence :—

Then it was—
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all Good—
That the beloved sister, in whose sight
Those days were pass'd. . . .
Maintain'd for me a saving intercourse
With my true self.³

His democratical opinions gradually passed away, but left behind tempered feelings of deep and tender sympathy with the poor, and a quick appreciation of the grace and simple dignity of which humble life is susceptible. From ‘the fretful stir’ of human passion, from ‘the burden of the mystery,’ from

The heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,⁴

Wordsworth fled for refuge to a peaceful spiritual contemplation of nature. He has written few finer or more characteristic verses than some which he composed in 1798, upon revisiting the sweet scenery of the Wye :—

I have learn'd
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,

¹ *Prelude*, 291 ; *Memoirs*, etc., 84.

² *Memoirs*, etc., 84.

³ *Prelude*, 309 ; *Memoirs*, etc., i. 90.

⁴ *Poet. Works* : ‘Tintern Abbey’ (1798), i. 151.

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. Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows, and the woods
 And mountains ; and of all that we behold
 From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
 Of eye and ear—both what they half create
 And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise
 In nature, and the language of the sense,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being.¹

No doubt there are in this poem and in others of the same period² traces of something like a pantheistic philosophy in which enthusiastic love of nature degenerates into nature-worship, and the thought of God is merged in the contemplation of the works of God. At the least, there is an evident tendency to exaggerate the power of nature as a means of purifying humanity, and supporting it amid infirmity and sorrows.² In his later years, while his delight in natural beauty remained strong as ever, he was more invariably quick to discern that the soul of man, fallen as it is from innocence, cannot find the wisdom and the happiness it craves in any mere outward things. It needs aids and remedies more truly divine than these. The following passage, lovely as it is, needs the correction supplied in the later verses, quoted next after them :—

Knowing that Nature never did betray
 The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead
 From joy to joy ; for she can so inform

¹ *Poet. Works* : 'Tintern Abbey' (1798), i. 151.

² Cf. his verses on the Simplon Pass (1799), ii. 100, and those upon the 'Influences of Nature in his Childhood,' i. 93, also in 1799.

³ Cf. *Memoirs*, i. 48.

The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
 The dreary intercourse of daily life
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings.¹

Compare it with the following part of his 4th 'Evening Voluntary,' written thirty-six years afterwards:—

But who is innocent? By grace divine,
 Nor otherwise, O Nature! we are thine,
 Through good and evil thine, in just degree
 Of rational and manly sympathy.
 To all that Earth from pensive hearts is stealing,
 And Heaven is now to gladden'd eyes revealing,
 Add every charm the Universe can show
 Through every change its aspects undergo—
 Care may be respited, but not repeal'd ;
 No perfect cure grows on that bounded field.
 Vain is the pleasure, a false calm the peace,
 If He, through whom alone our conflicts cease,
 Our virtuous hopes without relapse advance,
 Come not to speed the soul's deliverance?²

But from the first there was little fear that Wordsworth's influence could be otherwise than conducive to true religious feeling. The pure and genuine enthusiasm of a mind sensitively awake to a spiritual presence in all that surrounded him, and to 'the types and symbols of eternity,'³ manifested to man in outward forms of earth and sea and sky, is almost sure to be beneficial to those who feel its influence. Even if it be in excess, it is not likely to lead men astray. Those finer chords of feeling to which it appeals are very rarely in danger, among the majority of even cultivated men, of being excited into undue or too frequent action. The reader, however much he may admire, is far more likely to lag behind

¹ *Poet. Works* : 'Tintern Abbey' (1798), i. 154 ; 'One Impulse from a Vernal Wood' (1798), iv. 181.

² *Poet. Works* : 'Fourth Evening Voluntary,' iv. 127.

³ *Id.* : 'The Simplan Pass' (1799), ii. 100.

the poet's thought, than to be led into advance of it. Moreover, such enthusiasm is so closely allied to the religious sentiment, that it may be generally trusted in the end to favour and promote it. Whatever stirs the mind to reflect upon truth and beauty, upon the ideal and supra-sensual, upon the traces of a Divine image both in nature and humanity, is adapted to enlarge the soul and prepare it for a glad reception of the noblest doctrines of Christianity. Wordsworth, throughout his life, in his earlier as well as in his later works, was a true religious teacher, and a teacher whose direct or indirect influence has been very widely felt. The *Christian Year*, for instance, even if it had been written, would certainly never have gained the popularity it has had, were it not for the growth of that finer, semi-religious love of nature which Wordsworth and his brother writers did so much to disseminate and increase.

Charles Lamb (1775-1834) was also one in that society of poets, of whom Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Rogers were the other principal members. His earlier poems were published in 1797, conjointly with other verses by Coleridge and Charles Lloyd. Southey hailed the volume with delight, and thought that none other that had lately appeared could be compared with it.¹ Certainly, there is often a grave and gentle reflectiveness about Lamb's poetry which is very fascinating. He had no love for the country. 'Beyond all other men whom I have ever met,' writes his biographer, 'he was essentially metropolitan.'² When Wordsworth dwelt upon the beauties of the Lake Country, and pressed him to come and see him there, he answered that he was 'not at all romance-bit about Nature. . . . When all is said, it is but a house to live in.'³ Nevertheless, he was a lover of Wordsworth's poetry; and Coleridge, his old school-fellow at Christ's Hospital, he loved and admired throughout life with a

¹ *Life of R. Southey*, by his Son, i. 329.

² Barry Cornwall's *Memoir of Charles Lamb*, 222.

³ *Id.* 84.

fervency of attachment far surpassing that of any common friendship.

Lamb had many sympathies in common with his friends, and, like theirs, his poetry was always pure and high-toned. He not unfrequently touches in his verse upon religious subjects, as in his 'Vision of Repentance,' or in his lines upon the 'Sabbath Bells,' which—

. . . wherever heard,
Strike pleasant on the sense, most like the voice
Of one, who from the far-off hills proclaims
Tidings of good to Zion.¹

In the following, from his 'Lines on Leonardo da Vinci's Picture of the Virgin of the Rocks,' there is a something which may slightly remind the reader of a passage in Wordsworth's noble 'Ode to Immortality :—

But at her side
An angel doth abide,
With such a perfect joy
As no dim doubts alloy,
An intuition,
A glory, an amenity,
Passing the dark condition
Of blind humanity,
As if he surely knew
All the blest wonders would ensue,
Or he had lately left the upper sphere,
And had read all the sovran schemes and divine riddles
there.²

He was certainly not one of those who have thought that poetry is exercised to a disadvantage upon divine subjects. Witness the following :—

The truant Fancy was a wanderer ever—
A lone enthusiast maid. She loves to walk
In the bright visions of empyreal light,
By the green pastures and the fragrant meads,
Where the perpetual flowers of Eden blow ;
By crystal streams, and by the living waters,
Along whose margin grows the wondrous tree

¹ *Poetical Works of Charles Lamb*, 70.

² *Id.* 48.

Whose leaves shall heal the nations ; underneath
 Whose holy shade a refuge shall be found
 From pain and want, and all the ills that wait
 On mortal life, from sin and death for ever.¹

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) published his *Pleasures of Hope* in the last year of the eighteenth century, when he was scarcely twenty-two years old. He too, although a mere boy at the time, had been infected with the same revolutionary enthusiasm which filled the minds of most young men of talent. The executions and massacres that took place in Paris had indeed sickened and disgusted him ; but he also deplored them as signal calamities to the cause of peace and liberty in England.¹ In all the principal poetry of the last years of the century, religious and political hopes were more or less blended. It was so with Campbell. The *Pleasures of Hope*, though not in any direct way either a political or a religious poem, is to some extent both one and the other. Hopes of a nobler liberty and hopes of immortality alike enter into it.

There were other Scotchmen in the eighteenth century who contributed to the store of sacred poetry, of whom mention must be made. The greatest poetical genius produced by Scotland during that period was of course Robert Burns (1759-1796). Notwithstanding the sensuous element which too much predominates in his poems, many of his verses show that he could both reverence a deeper religious life in others, and that he was not without knowledge of it in his own experience. The beautiful picture of household piety in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' is a familiar example. His 'Prayer for a Family' may be added, concluding with the verse—

When soon or late they reach that coast,
 O'er life's rough ocean driven,
 May they rejoice, no wanderer lost,
 A family in heaven !

¹ *Poetical Works of Charles Lamb*, 71.

² W. Beattie's *Life and Letters of T. Campbell*, i. 86.

Also his prayer for God's forgiveness, beginning, 'O Thou, unknown, Almighty Cause of all my hope and fear!' We are told that in his later days 'he had the Bible with him, and read it almost continually. . . . His sceptical doubts no longer troubled him, and he had at last the faith of a confiding Christian.'¹

There are a few graceful stanzas upon life and eternity, and our hope beyond the grave, in James Beattie's *Minstrel* (1771), and in his *Hermit* (1767).²

James Grahame (1765-1811), a barrister who afterwards took orders, is best known—though not so well known as he deserves to be—by his poem entitled *The Sabbath*. A thoroughly good man, of refined poetical temperament, and (as is shown by his *Birds of Scotland*) an observant naturalist, his poems breathe a characteristic spirit of tranquil piety, and a hearty relish for the sights and sounds of quiet country life. They abound in delightful passages. The very opening lines of his principal poem may be instanced:—

How still the morning of the hallow'd day !
 Mute is the voice of rural labour, hush'd
 The ploughboy's whistle and the milkmaid's song.
 The scythe lies glittering in the dewy wreath
 Of tedded grass, mingled with fading flowers
 That yester-morn bloom'd waving in the breeze :
 Sounds the most faint attract the ear—the hum
 Of early bee, the trickling of the dew,
 The distant bleating, midway up the hill.
 Calmness sits throned on yon unmoving cloud.
 To him who wanders o'er the upland leas,
 The blackbird's note comes mellow from the dale ;
 And sweeter from the sky the gladsome lark
 Warbles his heaven-tuned song ; the lulling brook
 Murmurs more gently down the deep-worn glen ;
 While from yon lowly roof, whose curling smoke
 O'ermounts the mist, is heard, at intervals,
 The voice of psalms, the simple song of praise.³

¹ Saunders's *Evenings with the Sacred Poets*, 361.

² Beattie's *Poems: The Minstrel*, 27, and last stanzas of *The Hermit*, 93.

³ *Poems* by James Grahame, 1807, i. 3 *The Sabbath*.

Among other passages which it would be a pleasure to quote may be mentioned that which describes the shepherd boy reading some Sunday of David or of Joseph, as he lies stretched upon the sward in some far-off glen,¹ or the solitary on a lonely island,² or the hymns sounding over the sea from the missionary ship,³ or (from the *Biblical Pictures*) Jesus calming the tempest,⁴ or the Resurrection of the Saviour.⁵ Saunders tells a pretty story of his bringing home his work on *The Sabbath*, just after it had been anonymously published, to his wife, who did not know that he was the author of it, and of her exclaiming as she read it, 'Ah, James, if you could but write a poem like this!'

Among Scotch hymn writers of the eighteenth century, Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), minister at Dunfermline, was one of the earliest. His *Gospel Sonnets and Spiritual Songs* passed very soon through at least twenty-two editions. Many of them are too full of dogmatic antithesis, at all events for ordinary English taste. But in many there is much beauty. Seven out of the twenty stanzas of one of them may be found both in the *Book of Praise* and in Rogers's *Lyra Britannica*.

The following is entitled *The Heavenly Song* :—

Happy the company that's gone
From cross to crown, from thrall to throne ;—
How loud they sing upon that shore
To which they sailed in heart before !

' Death from all death hath set us free,
And will our gain for ever be ;
Death loosed the massy chains of woe,
To let the mournful captives go.

' Death is to us a sweet repose,—
The bud was oped to show the rose ;
The cage was broke to let us fly,
And build our happy nest on high.

' Earth was to us a seat of war,
On thrones of triumph now we are ;

¹ *Poems by James Grahame*, 9 : *The Sabbath*.

³ *Id.* 29-31.

⁴ *Id.* 77.

² *Id.* 27.

⁵ *Id.* 82.

We long'd to see our Jesus dear,
And sought Him there, but found Him here.

'This, then, does bliss enough afford ;
We are for ever with the Lord ;
We want no more, for all is given,
His Presence is the heart of heaven !'

While thus I laid my listening ear
Close to the door of heaven to hear ;
And then the sacred page did view
Which told me all I heard was true ;

Yet show'd me that the heavenly song
Surpasses every mortal tongue,
With such unutterable strains
As none infettering flesh attains,—

Then said I : 'O to mount away,
And leave this clog of heavy clay !
Let wings of time more swiftly fly,
That I may join the songs on high !'¹

Thomas Blacklock's hymns and sacred poems, published 1746, may be found in the eighteenth volume of Chalmers's *English Poets*. His imitation of the 149th Psalm is perhaps the best.²

Southey speaks of Michael Bruce (1746-1677) as 'a youth of real genius.'³ His 'Elegy on the Spring,' written in prospect of an early death, is very pretty, and ends with the pathetic verse—

There let me sleep, forgotten in the clay,
When death shall shut these weary, aching eyes—
Rest in the hope of an eternal day,
Till the long night is gone, and the last morn arise.⁴

The following are four verses from 'Simeon waiting,' out of Palgrave's *Treasury of Sacred Song*:—

With holy joy upon his face
The good old father smiled,

¹ From *Lyra Christiana*, ed. by H. L. L., 556.

² Chalmers's *English Poets*, xviii. 186.

³ Southey's *Later English Poets*, ii. 368.

⁴ Anderson's *British Poets*, xi. 294.

While fondly in his wither'd arms
He clasp'd the promised Child.

And then he lifted up to Heaven
An earnest asking eye ;
' My joy is full, my hour is come ;
Lord, let Thy servant die.

' At last my arms embrace my Lord,
Now let their vigour cease ;
At last my eyes my Saviour see,
Now let them close in peace !

' The star and glory of the land
Hath now begun to shine ;
The morning that shall gild the globe
Breaks on these eyes of mine !'

It appears to have been clearly established, both by William Mackelvie and Alexander B. Grosart, that some fine and well-known hymns published in 1773 among the Scotch Paraphrases, under the name of John Logan, are really the compositions of Bruce. Logan was in possession of his deceased friend's manuscripts, and published the hymns as his own. Among the most familiar of them are, 'Where high the heavenly temple stands,' 'O God of Bethel, by whose hand,' and 'Behold the mountain of the Lord.'¹

John Logan (1748-1788) has paid the penalty of his dishonesty by its being no longer known what are justly to be attributed to him as his own production. His repute on questions of psalmody was at one time very great in Scotland.²

William Cameron, John Morrison, and Hugh Blair were all associated with Logan in editing the Scottish Paraphrases of 1773. Cameron's hymn, 'How bright these glorious spirits shine,' though mainly his own, is founded upon one of Watts's.³ Morrison's 'The race

¹ Logan's Poems, Anderson's *British Poets*, xi. 1028 ; *Life of Logan*, in *id.*, and *Life of M. Bruce*, *id.* xi. 273 ; Rogers's *Lyra Brit.* 97 ; *Book of Praise*, 494.

² Anderson's *British Poets*, xi. 1028.

³ *Lyra Brit.* 122 ; *Book of Praise*, cxiv.

that long in darkness pined'¹ is better known as slightly altered by the compilers of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Blair's hymns were none of them altogether original.

It might perhaps seem, from the preceding sketch, that the eighteenth century was, after all, rich rather than not in sacred poetry. Certainly it was not so barren in this respect as some have been apt to think. Throughout its course there was no period in which verse of a more or less religious cast failed either to be produced or to find a very considerable number of readers. Yet it is equally certain that, until it began to draw near its close, the predominating influences of the age were essentially prosaic, and very unfavourable to any poetry which required for its due appreciation anything more than sound reason and ordinary practical sense. The state of feeling which existed among the cultivated classes in England encouraged poetry of a satirical, moral, or didactic character; it applauded art, polish, and correctness; it was willing to listen, not too intently, to the voice of its counsellors when they discoursed, either in verse or prose, upon the wisdom of virtue and the folly of vice, upon the reasonableness of religious life and the happiness which attends it, and upon the evil consequences which a contrary course must bring. But there was little intensity either of thought or feeling, little spiritual activity, little to stir the soul and excite the imagination. Man cannot live with the mysteries of life around him, and that of death in front, without such reflections on time and eternity and the meaning and object of existence, as cannot be altogether prosaic or commonplace. A Christian faith cannot, in all its leading features, be otherwise than sublime. Where Christianity, however depressed, is still a great power, there can be no age so wanting in depth of spiritual sentiment as to be altogether without materials for a religious poetry of a very high order. There were no

¹ *Lyra Brit.* 430; *Book of Praise*, xxxix. cccxlv.

influences in the eighteenth century so uncongenial to success that a truly great religious poet, if such a one had arisen, could not have triumphed over them. But, apart from the spiritual and moral grandeur inherent to it and inalienable from it, Christianity had certainly, through various causes, come to be generally regarded from a lower and, so to say, a more worldly level than has been at all usual. It will be readily understood that when theology was in this condition, theological poetry was very apt to be either vague and impersonal, or frigid and deficient in warmth, or to have an air of being somewhat unreal and conventional. In the latter case an attempt might probably be made to conceal the deficiency by a turgid, declamatory style. All these faults did, in fact, abound. Perhaps in this chapter the attention of the reader has been too much directed to passages of merit, and too little to others which might have exemplified characteristic blemishes. But the former is by far the most grateful task; and to have done both might have exceeded necessary limits. All, however, who have any knowledge of the poetical literature of the period under review will be well aware that the deficiencies here noted were very common. The solemn litany of sacred song was at all times far indeed from being silent, and its notes were often worthy of the greatness of its theme; but throughout a great part of the century it certainly fell short, in copiousness, richness, and fervour, both of a preceding and of a subsequent age.

It will have been noticed that some of the best sacred poetry which the century produced had its origin in quarters which lay apart from the main current of popular thought. Ken, deprived of his bishopric, and singing to his lute in the quiet seclusion of Longleat, belonged rather to the Churchmen of George Herbert's day. Norris was the last survivor of the noble school of Oxford and Cambridge Platonists. The sympathies of Hamilton and Walter Harte were all with the dispossessed adherents of the Stuart rule. Elizabeth Rowe,

Byrom, and Blake, however much they might differ from one another, were all in a greater or less degree mystics, little understood by their own contemporaries. Among the hymn-writers whose compositions form by far the most distinctive and prominent feature in the sacred poetry of the century, Watts, Doddridge, and others, were Dissenters. And though Methodism rose up in the very bosom of the English Church, it was too generally treated as an alien and an enemy; and the rich accompaniment of sacred song by which, through the talents of Charles Wesley, its rise and progress was attended, was for a long time neglected and discarded by the rulers of the National Church. Toplady, Newton, Cowper, and the other Evangelical hymn-writers might have shared the same fate if Wesleyanism had not prepared the way for them, and created just that stir in the waters of which the spiritual life of the country stood so greatly in need. As it was, it cannot be said that Evangelicalism was in any way in discord with the prevalent development of popular religious thought towards the latter part of the century. And throughout the period, if a good deal of its graver poetry was not that which the age could best appreciate, there was also a very considerable residuum which fairly and genuinely represented the predominant style of thinking among educated people upon religious questions in which they were seriously interested.

The last decade of the century stands in many respects on a very different footing from the rest. In none is this distinctiveness more marked than in the general character of its poetry. When so much that was old seemed rapidly passing away, and the new was so full of promise to some, so suggestive of fear and disquietude to others—when faith and hope, however much alloyed by visions of earth, were at all events vivid with life, and when religious doubts, on the other hand, were no longer mere speculative difficulties, benumbing action rather than actively opposing it, but giants in the path with whom mortal combat was

inevitable—when the foundations of society were in a state of upheaval and commotion, and all questions, divine and human, were being boldly canvassed—when great virtues and great wickedness came into strong collision—when brilliant promises were rudely checked, and when it seemed to others that glorious light might rise up suddenly out of utter darkness—at such a time it was not possible that great ideas should lose their strength through mere inactivity and torpor. To the partisans of the new, conceptions of Christian freedom, Christian brotherhood, and the like, had become pregnant with meanings they had never dreamt of before. The partisans of the old learnt to treasure with a greater love blessings which, through familiar use, they had thought little of before—to appreciate the advantages they possessed, to overlook their deficiencies—to cling to all noble traditions of the past with a tenacity proportioned to their newly-awakened fears. It was a time for revived enthusiasm and increased intensity of thought. The period of acute suspense passed quickly away, and caused very little outward change in England. Ancient feeling and established ideas, both in religion and in politics, were confirmed rather than shaken by the dangers which had so closely threatened them. But in religion, as in politics, a real change had taken place—more sensible in its after results than in its immediate issues. The eighteenth century had practically expired before its years had arrived at their natural term. Its latest portion belongs more to the present than to the past: in nothing more so than in its poetry. Poetry, by virtue of that imaginative faculty which is closely akin to prediction, may often lay claim to advance in the van of human movement.

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