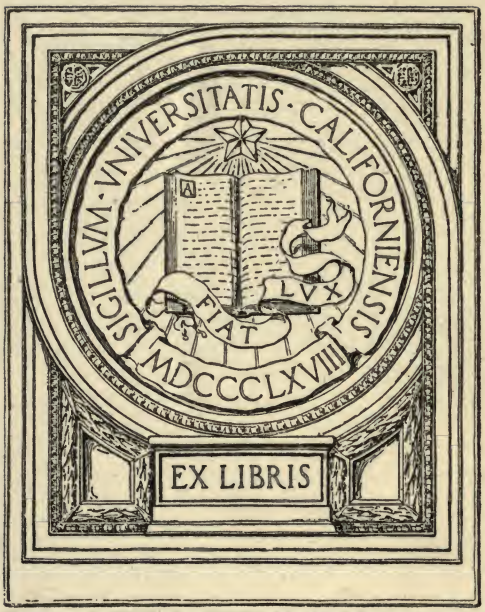
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THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

BY

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PREFACE

This little book was originally projected by Mr. A. C. Guthkelch, of King's College, and was to be written by us in common. The pressure of other work prevented him from carrying out his share of the undertaking, and, at the request of the publishers, I took up the work alone. For the plan of the book I am mainly, and for the execution entirely, responsible.

Mr. Guthkelch's originality and accurate scholarship would have produced a very different kind of book, and the chapters which follow can have little or nothing to offer to the trained teacher of literature; but there are many who, without special training, have to teach literature as a subsidiary subject, and to them these hints and suggestions of method may be useful. My aim has been practical guidance, rather than originality. Doubtless the results of my own reading will be found imbedded in what I have here written, and for this I need make no apology; I have not, however, consulted for this present purpose, nor consciously drawn upon any books of reference or histories of literature.

It has not been my object to offer a full treatment of the various questions arising out of the

study of such authors and books as can usefully be read in schools. No teaching is likely to be worth much to which the teacher has not contributed something of his own. I have not tried to save him from the necessity of thought and reading ; and have as far as possible avoided the temptation to write a history of English literature in outline, instead of indicating the general direction which teaching in literature might take, and the points which appear to me to deserve special attention.

I am indebted for the index to the kindness of an old pupil, Mr. M. W. Davies, late Scholar of Christ Church, Oxford.

R. S. B.

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PART I.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THERE are two ends which the teacher may reasonably have before him in teaching any subject; he may aim either at cultivating the mind without reference to direct results, or at developing some special talent or capacity. Neither of these sides of education can be neglected; the best education is that which combines them in due proportion by means of subjects carefully selected to fulfil one or the other purpose; the most useful kind of subject is that which serves both ends at once. The only kind of subject that is unworthy of a place in any system of education is that which is neither of practical utility nor of any value in forming mind or character. If, in addition to these negative qualities, it has the further disadvantage of being absolutely repellent and uninteresting, so as to warn the wayfarer off some desirable field of knowledge to which it is believed to form the gate of entrance, it may be said to have reached the

utmost limit of unsuitableness. Such a subject is English Literature, as it was, until recently, taught in our schools, and as it is perhaps still taught in many of them.

The Classics, which formed the staple of education for so many centuries, survive now for the majority of our boys in the form of Latin as an alternative to German; Greek has practically disappeared, except from the few public schools; and Latin retains its precarious place on the plea of usefulness—a knowledge of Latin makes correct spelling easier, and also facilitates the learning of French and Spanish. Otherwise subjects of obvious utility and direct practical value succeed one another with great rapidity on the time-table which diversifies a boy's day or distracts his mind; parents and guardians are respectfully requested to inquire of the headmaster for any subjects which they cannot find in the prospectus. All subjects being now of nearly equal value, any one (except Greek, for which there is usually an additional fee) may be substituted for any other; Drawing and Spanish, German and Geography, History and Botany, may be regarded as equivalent. But our scheme of education provides for culture also, not at the wasteful expense of time and labour which our forefathers tolerated, but quite as effectually, in the intervals of more serious occupations. Instead of many weary hours devoted to dead languages, there are now two hours every week, or at least one, given to the living literature of our own country and our own times. Boys are no longer allowed to leave school

with their heads stuffed full of Latin and Greek, but entirely ignorant of the poets and prose writers of their native land. They have taken our Homer and Plato, our Vergil and Tacitus from us, but they have given us in exchange a course of lessons in English Literature. How far the humanities can survive this change it will be the object of a later chapter to consider. But the change is inevitable; and with the change of subject has come a change no less thorough in methods. Henceforth our boys will leave school practical to the finger-tips, yet saturated with culture in a fuller measure and more stable solution than in the unpractical days of old; for we have learned to be practical in our teaching, no less than in our choice of subjects. Of old a boy had to get what culture he could out of a vast mass of material; he was required to gorge himself with intellectual food and assimilate as much as his capacity allowed; now culture is presented to him ready made; his food is predigested, and can be absorbed into the system without effort, delay, or waste.

Such in theory are the great and salutary results which modern education promises. And in a large and increasing number of schools an effort is being made by intelligent and competent teachers to get the best possible results out of the lessons in English Literature. But there are still many schools where literature is taught in the manner in which geography used to be taught—as a mere collection of more or less interesting facts; and the system is perpetuated by the

nature of the examinations for which these schools prepare their pupils. The various authorities who directly or indirectly legislate for the teacher seem to have proceeded somewhat as follows: they have made a short list of well-known authors, and set apart a select number of their works, nicely calculated in respect of length and difficulty, so that, when the inevitable examination is reached, a candidate who takes a novel of Sir Walter Scott may have no undue advantage over one who offers a play of Shakespeare; then their known requirements have speedily produced a host of school editions, with learned historical introductions, and a life of the author, and an appreciation of his work (which, however, need not be read, as questions in it are not set), and a text which is swamped in notes of a philological or antiquarian nature; and then, under the sympathetic guidance of a teacher with whom the intelligent anticipation of the details of examination papers has become second nature, boys are taught to analyse the longer sentences and give the derivations of the harder words, and learn by heart brief biographies of the persons in the novel or play, with sketches of their characters, and to turn the verse of Shakespeare into a schoolboy's bald prose, or the impressive, if sometimes incorrect, English of Scott into a jargon neither impressive nor correct —a pastime which is called paraphrasing, and involves the same irreverence as parody, without the critical insight and verbal skill—and finally they are sent to be examined in the introduction and the notes, and in the text, considered, not as

literature, not as a form of art, but as a mass of facts to be committed to memory. This is the short road to culture, devised by the practical teachers of a practical age.

No doubt there is already a considerable number of schools in which English Literature is taught on a more rational system; but as long as County Councils and other bodies which control entrance and scholarship examinations require a set book to be offered as a subject, and examine candidates in a knowledge of its contents, it is inevitable that teaching in English Literature will be confined to the accidental and miss the essential. Here, for instance, is the kind of paper actually set at an examination for intermediate scholarships held by the London County Council. The examination in English comprises a general paper in Analysis, Paraphrasing, and Essay-writing; and a special paper on one book to be chosen previously out of a list of seven—four plays of Shakespeare and three works of Sir Walter Scott. Six questions are asked in each case; the first of them concerns either the date of the work and the evidence on which the date is determined, or else the extent to which the author has conformed to historical fact; the second requires a sketch of one of the characters; the third asks for an explanation of certain rare or obsolete words; the fourth gives a number of passages to be annotated and assigned to the persons by whom and to whom they were spoken; the fifth gives further passages to be explained (or, in some cases, a map of certain districts to be drawn); the sixth requires ten lines to be written

from memory, or, in the case of one book, a description of a banquet.

This paper was actually set for an examination within the last few years, and similar papers are being set still.

When a boy has laboriously qualified himself to answer these questions, what has he gained? A knowledge of the plot of one novel or play; some isolated facts, mainly etymological, which, being no part of a systematic knowledge of etymology, will soon be forgotten; and a permanent dislike for at least one work and, inferentially, for one writer, and perhaps for literature itself. Literature for him will mean Shakespeare and Scott, and these names in after life will recall pages of introduction and notes full of learning, in which the actual text will be lost. Etymology and antiquarianism are good things, but they should be forced on no one who has not a taste for them, and they should be studied systematically, and not in fragments. Analysis is to the student of literature what anatomy is to the student of art; but it does not promote reverence for the body which is dissected. The taste for poetry is naturally given to most children, and it can be cultivated; but not if poetry is treated merely as a lesson in grammar—probably the dreariest and most uninteresting subject that is taught.

No one would endeavour to instil into the young a taste for art, by making a particular picture the occasion for instruction in such matters as the nature of pigments, the botanical names of trees, the geological formation of a landscape, or the

rotation of crops; yet this is not less absurd a method than that which is pursued by many teachers of literature, less through their own choice than through the need of preparing boys for examinations. The reason of course is that the criticism which has now for many years been directed at education and educational methods has very often been mistaken. As long as human nature retains its paramount interest for man, the humanities will continue to be the most satisfying education in the proper sense of that word. The study of Greek and Latin has produced poor results in the past compared with its possibilities, because the means, in this, as in so many other cases, have become the end. But while the reformers have seen that the mechanical drudgery of learning Greek and Latin grammar has not led, as a rule, to a knowledge of the languages, and so have abolished the Classics, they have, unfortunately, left us the methods which made the study of the Classics unfruitful; and the very men who have taught Greek and Latin without sympathy, intelligence, or insight, have been permitted to apply the same methods to English Literature—methods which save time and thought and careful study, and can be used by anyone without special knowledge; but which produce results of even less value than when they were applied to Greek and Latin texts.

And yet, at a time when old theories of education are discredited, and our whole system is being reconsidered, and a spirit of utilitarianism prevails everywhere, we need to make the best possible use

of the one part of modern education which is able to give some kind of culture to a boy destined to spend his life in the endeavour to make money ; which may give him the key to a place of rest and refreshment from the sordid business of the world ; which may show him that there are things worth knowing and possessing, not to be bought with money, and with a value not to be stated in terms of the currency, and independent of direct utility. No one at least who has taught in middle-class schools can have failed to recognise how great a need there is of some corrective for the merely commercial view which boys begin to take of all things, including their work at school, as soon as they begin to think. The series of texts to which this little book is in some sense supplementary is free from the faults of the old-fashioned school edition of English Classics, which may be used to indicate all that should be avoided in teaching ; it gives only so much extraneous information as is needed for the understanding of the author, and does not distract the attention nor burden the memory with irrelevant learning. Is it possible to be content with this ? Can we trust the natural taste for literature to develop itself by the mere study of good models, or is there something which the teacher must do for his pupils besides providing them with sound texts ? When we remember that the boys in secondary schools usually leave at sixteen or seventeen, and when further we consider the books which are most commonly read—often ill-conceived, ill-written, slovenly in style, debased in language—we cannot help feeling that

so far education has failed. Hardly one Englishman in a hundred can read, speak, or write his language correctly; hardly one in a hundred can distinguish between the good in literature and the bad, the ephemeral and the permanent; and still fewer know or care for the history of their literature and the great writers of the past. But in the years from fourteen to seventeen something can be done; a boy may be taught to read and to write his own language without rigidity, pompousness, or vulgarity; to grasp the fundamental principles of criticism, so as to distinguish the good from the bad, and to lay the foundation of a sound literary judgment; to realise the organic nature of literature, and the laws of its growth and development; and, above all, to form his taste, so that the best poetry and prose may be more attractive to him than the inferior. But to do this we must once for all abandon our old system. We must give a boy not a surfeit of one author, but a taste of many, so that he may learn to compare and appreciate them; he must be taught, not the source of Shakespeare's history, but the true descent of his genius, not how far he departs from his authorities, but how near he comes to nature; he need not be troubled with the affinities of rare or obsolete words, but must be trained to see

> "All the charm of all the Muses, often flowering
> in a lonely word."

CHAPTER II

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

ANYONE who attempts either to initiate or to criticise a constructive policy in the teaching of English Literature must first decide what part in his general scheme of education English Literature is to play. The problem of education is to train all the faculties—the moral judgment, the memory, the reason, the imagination, the aesthetic sense, and the subtle harmony of all these which is taste. Modern education is apt to neglect the aesthetic sense and the imagination ; and yet, unless these are developed and refined, a man is incomplete ; he must lose something in mere effectiveness as a workman, and still more in character, and consequently in well-being and happiness. And to the training of the faculties must be added the acquisition of knowledge, less important, indeed, than the other side of education, but by no means to be left out of education altogether. And here again, while modern education keeps in view at all times the need for knowledge of the physical facts of nature and of human life, there is a tendency to leave out of sight the inner life of man, which has uttered itself in literature and embodied itself in

history. I am not speaking of the crude facts of war and revolution, of the rise and fall of nations, but of the movement of thought and the moulding of national character of which these things are the sign.

Now, as we must look to the records of literature for the facts which are sometimes left out of education, so in the study of literature shall we find the training which mere learning cannot give—in Greek and Latin with the greatest fulness, since the one nation has left us the greatest national literature in existence, and the other the most complete illustration of the causes of national greatness and efficiency, and of their gradual and permanent decay. But Greek and Latin have been thrust aside by the multitude of utilitarian studies; there is no time for them, except in the case of the few, and we must look elsewhere for the training which they could give. We shall find it, as the Greeks and the older Romans found it, in the study of our national literature.

Our quarrel with the traditional method of teaching as used in schools and tested in examinations is that it fails to give the right kind of training; that to the many subjects of modern education it adds one more, and that one which has neither practical value nor formative power. The road to the priceless literatures of Greece and Rome lay through two dead languages; each word noted and traced to its root, each fact in ancient manners and customs learned, each mythological or historical allusion pursued to its place in history or myth, increased the command of the dead tongue, and

the knowledge of the extinct civilisation, which so largely affect our language, our manners, and our thought to this day. But English Literature lies nearer at hand, and does not need the weary years in the wilderness before a man may set foot on the promised land. Yet, just as the first railway carriages were built like the stage coaches which they displaced, because it did not occur to anyone to build them otherwise, so we have been content to teach literature as though it were Latin and Greek; and, having at our disposal but a quarter of the time given to one of those languages, we have never reached the literature at all, but have wandered about in a jungle of notes and grammatical exercises, with no hope of seeing the open country beyond. In this chapter we are not concerned to criticise old systems, but to devise and discuss new. I wish to point out some principles on which a healthy system of literature teaching must be based. One reads from time to time in the newspapers that, in the Court of Chancery, or wherever else it is that they keep safe the property of unconscious or careless owners, there are large fortunes awaiting various individuals which may be had for the asking. So I wish to show how we may help English boys and girls to enter into the inheritance which awaits them, did they but know it.

What then do we desire to achieve in teaching English? On the practical side we desire to enable a child to express himself with absolute clearness and precision, in good, and, when the subject requires it, in dignified, English; on the

intellectual side to teach him to know the good from the bad, the higher from the lower ; to know literature in part, that he may some day know it more fully ; to be familiar with the map of the country, that he may wander in it at will hereafter ; and on the scientific side to make him realise that the phenomena of literature are as much the result of inevitable laws as the concrete facts of natural science, that the books of one age cannot be fully understood without reference both to the general tendencies of that age and to the ages that preceded them.

Of these three sides, the practical side lies beyond the scope of English Literature teaching, and the sooner we realise this the better. The study of good prose models will no doubt affect the prose style of the student, but that is not its primary object ; and English Composition must be taught on a method of its own. It would be easy to show the gradual steps ; the simple sentence, the compound sentence, the paragraph, the essay ; the elimination of vulgarisms, of solecisms, of bad English, and of French which has not crossed the sea. But such work should not encroach on the necessarily scanty time given to literature. Advanced Grammar is no more literature than are Archaeology and Etymology, and has an even more deadening effect on the interest of the teaching. Prose and poetry must be studied for their own sake, and not regarded as material for analysis and paraphrase.

In teaching literature, we must see it from three points of view, the aesthetic, which regards the

form alone as it appeals to the ear, irrespective of its contents; the philosophical, which is concerned with the psychological and metaphysical aspects of literature—the criticism it offers of nature and life; and the scientific, which shows us literature as a living organism, with its roots in the past and its branches still extending towards the future. And this threefold division, the form, the meaning, the history, taken in that order, indicate the path along which the gradual emergence of the child's faculties will compel us to proceed.

The Board of Education, in a circular issued a few years ago, put forth a scheme of English teaching, with a suggested list of books for reading, which, combined, show a great advance on what has hitherto obtained for the most part in our schools. The schedule of books is divided into four divisions, corresponding to the four years of the recognised course, and thus has no pretence to completeness. It needs supplementing above and below. The books chosen are merely illustrations, and it would not be fair to complain of the omission of this book or that. But there are four criticisms which I think may justly be made on the scheme as it stands. In the first place there is still a trace of the old confusion between grammar and literature—the railway carriage is still a stage coach. Next, though there is some attempt at graduation according to difficulty of subject-matter in the selections made for successive years, there is no scientific adjustment to the growing capacities and needs of the infant mind, no attempt to call out one faculty after another in its psychological order,

and to train it from the earliest possible moment. Thirdly, there is no co-ordination, no chance of studying the growth of literature and the law of cause and effect in its products; the phenomena are isolated, not correlated, nor brought into connection with knowledge as a whole. Lastly, there is a great deal too much prose in the earlier years. I would exclude prose altogether from a list of books chosen with a view to the instruction of very young children. Poetry comes in the nature of things before prose, as it invariably comes before it in historical order. And the reason is clear. The aesthetic sense reacts to simpler agents, and in a more direct manner than any other faculty to which art and literature appeal. The aesthetic sense, in the secondary meaning of the word aesthetic, supplies the raw material of artistic consciousness, just as the aesthetic sense, in the primary meaning, supplies the raw material of thought. And it can soonest be awakened, as far as literature is concerned, by the appeal to the ear of rhythmical movement. Prose rhythm is far more elusive than metre, and can be referred to no definite standard as can the regulated rhythm of poetry. And again, the element of beauty which is involved in the choice of words is more easily understood in poetry than in prose. The diction of poetry differs no more from that of prose, than does the diction of prose from that of conversation in daily life. But the former difference is far more clearly marked and impressive; and is therefore a better training for immature faculties than the subtle distinctions between the

language of prose and the language of the newspaper or the novel.

Let me now sketch in outline a course of literature teaching which, avoiding these faults, as I consider them, may embody the principles I have indicated, and may give in the scientific order, a complete training as far as that can be done at school.

We begin naturally then with the simplest ballads. The children are taught to get hold of the story, and so their interest is aroused. But this is only a means to an end ; our real aim all the time is to teach them to apprehend the first element of beauty which they are capable of perceiving—the rhythm or metre. For this purpose they should constantly be reading aloud and frequently committing passages to memory. The well-defined swing of the ballad, while it is an aid to memory, will insensibly train the ear and prepare for a study of easy metres a little later. But their recognition of the metre which will gradually take form in their minds must not be allowed to affect their mode of reading or reciting ; the metre is a standard, not a rigid rule. From the very first, before a mechanical, sing-song style is developed, children should be made to read verse as if it were prose ; to take care of the sense and let the metre take care of itself. Beyond this practice in reading and this first vague notion of time-values little can be expected of young boys ; but there is no reason why so much should not be done before a child reaches the age of twelve, at which the four years' course of the Board of Education begins.

With the beginning of this course I would pass from simple ballad poetry—the poetry, be it remembered, of a nation's infancy, and therefore most suitable for the childhood of the individual—to narrative poetry more prolonged, but still simple, though the interest of the story becomes more complex and the metre more varied. As materials accumulate it begins to be possible to elicit the rules which govern the simpler metres, so that children may advance from the vague consciousness of rhythm to a clearer knowledge of what it is. They may also begin to find out that the language of poetry is not quite that of ordinary intercourse and learn to see wherein it differs and why. But on this path they cannot be expected to advance very far. In the main, to the end of the first year we can do little more than treat poetry as a pleasant and easily-remembered setting of an interesting tale told in words which vary a little from those they hear elsewhere, and which are arranged in a rhythmical succession according to rules more or less faithfully observed. My own experience teaches me that metrical values can be realised by quite young boys in practice, but not in theory.

With the second year it is time to begin the appeal to the imagination. Simple descriptive poetry, or narrative poetry abounding in descriptive passages, should be read, and children should be trained to see things that all have seen but have never been able to put into words, with other things that have been seen subconsciously, but never definitely marked and fixed in consciousness,

and others, yet again, which, especially in the case of town-bred boys, have never either consciously or subconsciously come within their knowledge. And these things should be realised as parts of a picture ; the instinct for the beautiful shown in what the poet accepts and what he rejects ; the notion of idealisation insinuated for the first time into the young mind.

The poems of Thomson, some of Cowper, of Wordsworth of course, and of Shelley, will give the needed training. And besides the appeal to the imagination we should be stirring to a vague but fruitful movement the sense of fitness in words; for fitness is the foundation of beauty. We may begin to help the child to realise how completely in a fine description the words do their work. To this end, and further to stimulate the imagination, I would take care to include at this period poetry, such as much of Tennyson, in which a scene is rather sketched than filled in ; and again poetry like the " Palace of Art," in which the connection between Painting and Poetry can be clearly seen. The full appreciation of word-music comes later, I think ; but the graphic power of words and the skill with which they may be used may be made dimly visible, even to boys of thirteen or fourteen.

So far we have used our appeal to the imagination to help our pupils to apply their nascent æsthetic sense to the beauty of the ideal world which the poet paints for them. Now in the third year of our course it must be put to a further use. It is time to introduce the psychological element. The poet now comes before us as the interpreter of

human nature ; and the study of longer poems as artistic wholes is begun. The gradual evolution of character through the force of circumstances, the working out of man's destiny partly through his own acts, partly through forces which he cannot control, the power of sin to involve in suffering and ruin not only the sinner but the guiltless who are near and dear to him, the inexorable fulfilment of the moral law, may be realised in Shakespeare's plays ; children of fourteen need help in words and phrases here and there, but they grasp essentials readily enough—the unity and artistic motive of a play—and they can form an intelligent judgment of the characters, while their own knowledge of human nature is gaining in breadth and depth.

With the last year of the course should begin the study of some literary period as a whole, so that literature may become visible as a living and growing thing, while each writer assumes his own individuality and yet is part and parcel of his age. And with this must be induced an insight into the elements of criticism and into the deeper emotions and more complex workings of the human heart, for which the previous years of work should have prepared. Now, therefore, at the latest, must begin the study of prose. I believe it will be found that the nineteenth century is the best period to take for our purpose. It presents marked characteristics which clearly differentiate it from the previous periods ; it is rich in the kinds of poetry and prose from which the required training may be got ; it is nearest and most intelligible to the still imperfect faculties of children fifteen years

old ; and, lastly, as so many leave school at the end of this year, it is well to give them while it is possible some guidance as to the literature to which they will most readily turn for recreation when they have left. It would be desirable to prepare the ground by a brief study of Pope, as representing the classical period ; and then to show in Coleridge the transition to the new romanticism ; to see that romanticism reduced to a philosophy of poetry in Wordsworth's verse and Coleridge's criticism, triumphing in Byron against the poet's will, applied to the facts of human life by Browning. Other poets, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, with prose-writers such as Lamb and Scott and Ruskin, should be read, to show how each reflects his age and has yet his own individuality. I would subject the books chosen for reading to a more minute criticism, and the thought to a more careful analysis. We must not forget to study the author through his books, and not the books alone. All that can throw light on his relation to the literary current of the time—his life, his friends, his character—must be glanced at, if we would gain a complete understanding of his work. And in all our teaching we must beware of two things ; we must avoid the curse of notes as ends in themselves ; they must be given orally, where necessary for the understanding of the text, but never committed to memory ; they must suggest lines of inquiry to be followed if a boy's inclination leads him that way, but not close inquiry by giving ready-made knowledge, to be learned as a task ; and again, never losing sight of the maieutic function of the teacher,

we must stimulate the reflective and critical faculties, first giving our pupils such a training as may enable them to form right opinions, and then encouraging them to express for themselves the opinions so formed ; we must not save them the trouble of thought by thinking for them.

We are far as yet from having finished the map of that country to which our pupils have been occasional visitors ; but have reached the end of our fourth year, and must bid many of them farewell. At least they know there is such a country ; they have memories of it which, we will hope, are pleasant enough to draw them back to it in after life. For the remnant who are staying on for two or three years there is much to be done. While they are preparing for the University or for a profession they can be led through the whole course of English Literature—not, of course, by reading in a hand-book, or hearing from a teacher, of books and authors they have never read. Few methods of teaching are more futile than this. It is to substitute a Baedeker and a Continental Bradshaw for foreign travel. Rather we shall travel in actual fact down the whole length of the stream from the lays of the Anglo-Saxon minstrels at its source, or at least from Chaucer's poems, where navigation becomes henceforth uninterrupted, to the fuller songs of the great poets of our own day. We must sometimes pass without stopping where we would gladly linger ; but we can take the great writers who most fully represent their age and see what inheritance was theirs, how they dealt with it, and what they handed on. We can read some-

thing, however little, of every book and every writer that we consider necessary to an understanding of any period, but need not cumber our memory with mere names. Each literary form as it comes in sight must be noted, and our notion of it made precise, so that our students will know epic or lyric or satire, not as something the definition of which they have learned by heart, but as a part of literature at an understanding of which they have arrived by the only sound method—an examination of the thing itself and of the impressions it has made on the mind. And as we sail down the broad stream we shall have time to trace each important tributary to its source ; thus we can follow the descent of our drama from the miracle and mystery plays through the earliest tragedy and comedy to Marlowe and Shakespeare, or see the novel growing and taking shape from its crude beginning with Richardson to its perfection with Scott ; we shall leave unexamined no important factor in the literary history of our country and the literary phenomena of our time. And so our boys will leave school with some notion of what there is to read and how to read it for their pleasure and profit.

Is not this knowledge worth the sacrifice of some two or three hours a week from the time given to practical studies ? And it can be gained even in the scanty time allowed us if that time is well used, not wasted in extraneous work, in analysing and paraphrasing, in making or learning notes.

It will not be easy to test results by examination. I believe they can be tested, to some extent, if

examiners will not treat the contents of books as facts like the dates of history, but will hear boys read, and get them to talk about what they have read, and will note in their written work the traces of thought and culture and taste ; but I have not been fortunate enough to meet many such examiners. And, indeed, the real difficulty is that the results are, and must be, for the most part latent. We shall never get any really good results out of the teaching of literature till we cease to look for direct results altogether. And we must work in faith, sowing for a distant harvest, and waiting for a return which may never be entirely visible to us. In this one part of our educational system we are trying to put boys in the way, not of making money, but of gaining in happiness ; we are forging no new weapon for the battle of life, but rather preparing a place in which their weapons may now and then be laid aside. Those of us who live on the outskirts of London see the overgrown city creeping on to swallow up our countryside ; and sometimes here and there the work of destruction is arrested, and some old garden, laid out for rest and enjoyment in the leisurely times of old, is preserved to relieve the monotony of common houses and mean streets. There will always be some who declare that soft turf and shady trees produce nothing but a heavier taxation, which is more than the amenities of life are worth ; and so they would have our garden dug up and grow cabbages there for the London market. But we know that it is truer wisdom and truer economy to keep it. They may cut up the

peaceful fields into building sites, and pull down the stately dwellings of the past, but the garden shall be maintained to please the eye and rest the mind, and fill the lungs with a purer air. Such a garden must literature be in modern education.

CHAPTER III.

THE CLASSICS AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

An eminent teacher of chemistry, in a recent article on "School Science," affirms that teachers of Science *know* that their subject is capable of imparting a finer culture than any other. How the facts of chemistry and physics can be manipulated so as to develop the taste and the appreciation of the beautiful in the sphere of art and of humanity he does not explain; one gathers that they do not at present perform this beneficent function owing to defects of method on the part of the teacher. Strangely enough, teachers of Greek and Latin advance the same claim for their subject, as a sufficient justification for the time devoted to it; and of late years those concerned with modern languages and with English Literature make the like profession—all of us can impart the fullest measure of culture, in addition to more or less useful information; only, as a matter of fact, we do not. It is generally conceded that subjects which potentially satisfy all the requirements and serve all the ends of education are practically quite worthless. On all sides we hear the same large

claim, on all sides the same lamentable admission of entirely inadequate preformance.

Fortunately we have not to examine the pretensions of modern science, or of French and German, to the power of transmuting, by some spiritual alchemy, their crude facts into the fine flower of culture. Our concern is with two lines of study only whose teachers propose to themselves culture as their direct end, not culture through the medium of utilitarian accomplishments—a sort of waste-product to be turned to account in the economy of education. When we set boys to learn Greek and Latin, or to read English literature, we do not expect that they will be able to make money by them. We do hope that such study may help to produce gentlemen, to refine their tastes, to make them more humane; and the questions we have to consider are these: Is a classical training the only or the best way of attaining this end? And, if not, is English Literature an efficient substitute for it?

In the first place, let it be admitted at once that the claim of the classical teacher is to some extent confused. The two classical languages are regarded by him, apparently, as having, jointly and severally, the power to humanise the mind; and any such claim is self-destructive. It is not as dead languages, but as undying literatures, that Greek and Latin can be of any use in imparting culture; and for the purpose of culture a knowledge of Latin is of no more educational value than a knowledge of Dutch. Speaking generally, the surviving works of Latin writers

which deserve to rank with the greatest products of English, French, German, or Italian literature are few indeed; a full knowledge of all of them would be very dearly purchased with the loss of our own Elizabethans. The real advantage of Latin as a study is not in the direction of culture at all, but firstly in the training of the mind to habits of absolute accuracy in thought and speech, and secondly in the great practical utility of so rigidly logical a language as a basis for further linguistic study. The legacy of Rome to the world is a legacy of law, of patriotism, of the art of government, of imperial ideas. Roman history is a great educational study; but it is not absolutely necessary, except for the professional historian, to read Livy and Tacitus. The majority of English schoolboys learn no Greek at all; and yet we still talk of the culture to be derived from the Classics in secondary schools, when, of the two classical languages, that one which alone can impart real culture is already practically eliminated from all but a few of such schools.

On the general question whether the best preliminary training is classical or modern much is to be said; but we are concerned only with the practical side of the controversy. It will be allowed that the Greek literature is, on the whole, the greatest known to the world, and the study of the best is obviously the best possible study. The debt of English to Greek literature needs not to be stated; and the influence which Greek writers have had on our literature as a whole they will to some extent exert on individual students. The

study of Greek then is obviously desirable; and it has a further advantage that the effort of translation brings out more clearly the beauties of the writer, and lays the same sort of foundation for taste and discernment as the study of Latin lays for clearness, precision, and accuracy of thought and expression. But to benefit by the study of Greek, to get out of it any permanent advantage, we must carry it very much further than it is usually carried in schools. To learn Greek long enough to spell out with difficulty a few pages of Xenophon, and a few hundred lines of the *Iliad*, and then to give it up, is useless. Improved methods of teaching, increased attention to the humanities at the expense of the grammar of Greek texts will make the study more fruitful. But it is best to recognise frankly that Greek is for the few; those only will gain any benefit who can bring to it the necessary ability and can afford the necessary time; and these—the few—must leaven the community. Greek literature will never be the training ground of the majority even of well-educated people in England.

A knowledge of Greek and Latin literature, however, brings with it an indirect advantage—it makes English literature easier and more intelligible; and perhaps this is the greatest benefit to be derived from a classical education. Greek literature is an end in itself; yet if one had to choose between the literature of Greece and that of our own country, we should certainly choose this rather than that for the majority of people. A man may be educated without Greek; he is

certainly not educated if he knows nothing of the poets and prose writers of his own country. But the subsidiary use of the Classics just now pointed out suggests one of the greatest difficulties in the way of the teacher of English literature in non-classical schools. There is a whole universe of myth and legend, of poetic fancies and images, which is the common inheritance of all modern literature, and to which the Classics are the key. Much of our literature is absolutely unintelligible without the knowledge which a classical education gives. Fortunately this knowledge, which has hitherto been acquired incidentally while boys were learning to write Greek verses and to construe Greek texts, may very easily be divorced from the purely linguistic training, and be imparted for its own sake. Greek and Roman History and Mythology are naturally interesting even to those whom the languages of Greek and Rome repel. There is not the slightest reason why they should not be taught in schools, and thus to some extent the results of Greek culture will become available for all.

The case then for the Classics in education may be thus stated. Greek thought and culture are of transcendent importance to our life to-day as they were three hundred years ago; and it is a task worthy of the best and brightest intellects to keep our grasp of them strong and vigorous. Greek literature is the most perfect in form which the world has seen and is the best possible instrument for the humanising of education and of our national character. And while the difficulty of the lan-

guage is great, it is not too great for boys of real ability; the very labour involved in the acquisition of it enhances the educational effect. A boy's appreciation of modern literature will probably be the keener for his minute study of Greek forms; while the practice of writing Greek and Latin Prose and Verse fixes the exact meaning of English words and phrases and brings out the beauties of English Prose and Verse as probably nothing else can. But for the ordinary boy—and still more for the dull—a knowledge of Greek literature is impossible. He never can reach the land of promise, but wanders for the years of his school life through a wilderness of notes and grammar, of irregular constructions and abnormal forms. The mere acquisition of the Greek language, apart from its literature, unlike the acquisition of Latin, is of little more value than the acquisition of German. The pressure of modern life drives Greek out of the field for those who have to begin to earn their living when they leave school. Latin without Greek is a valuable mental discipline, but does not produce culture, while Latin literature, as such, is hardly worth the trouble it involves to enable one to read it, and is almost as dependent for its full value on a knowledge of Greek thought and religion as is English literature.

Culture by means of Greek and Latin being therefore unattainable for the many, what can be said for English as a substitute? There is work to be done in the world both by those whose education has been mainly literary, though

culture in them should be leavened by some knowledge of scientific fact ; and also by those—a larger and an increasing number—whose education has been mainly scientific, but who have managed to acquire some tincture of culture by the way. Can they gain this tincture of culture from a study of English literature ? Can English culture be based on English letters, as Greek culture was based on Greek letters, as Roman culture for several centuries was based on Roman letters ?

A knowledge of his own literature is essential for every man who can claim to be well educated. The literature of England is second to none in all the real qualities of greatness, except form ; its copiousness, its strength, its humanity, its criticism of life and of nature will supply just the training which our boys want ; will show them that there is at hand, ready for every one of them, a place of refreshment from the sordid business of the world, and that in this money-making time there are good things which money cannot buy ; and this, their abiding possession, will not be associated in their minds with thoughts of the long hours of useless drudgery which made school life a burden. The enjoyment of literature —of a kind—is natural, and common to all boys, and to form the taste it is needful only to work on existing capacities, not to create the capacity from the very elements. Lessons in literature are directly productive, as well as pleasant, from the first, instead of being a mere mental training, for future pleasure and profit. The time required for a full and satisfactory study of literature,

though more is wanted than the teacher will get, is yet far less than it takes to learn two languages —an important matter when the time-table is already so full. The facts of Greek life can be learned by a less laborious and more interesting process than is involved in their incidental occurrence in notes to Greek texts, while Greek thought is no longer the exclusive property of the scholar, but is transfused through our own life and civilisation ; and, as long as humanity is a more important and interesting study than inanimate nature, and the mind of man than his body, there will never be wanting a supply of persons duly qualified to keep open the channels through which flows the current connecting Athens and England. So, while Greek is always desirable, it is not always necessary or possible ; while it is indispensable for the teacher—for all knowledge should come to him direct from the source—it is not indispensable for the pupil. English literature is the product of Greece no less than of England, and a man may be a Hellenist who knows his Alpha beta only as algebraical signs. In general, the literature of a nation has as much culture in solution as the national character is capable of absorbing. The Romans profited little by their contact with Greece ; it is because of the affinity between Greece and England that Greek literature is so powerful an instrument in education ; it is because of the same affinity that we can dispense with it.

CHAPTER IV.

LITERARY FORMS; THEIR VALUE AND DIFFICULTY.

THE value for educational purposes of different literary forms varies so greatly with the age and capacity of the class that it is hard to arrive even at the most general conclusions. And again, in any one class the personal equations to be solved are so many; there are so many types of character, undeveloped of course, but calling for development along certain lines; so many tastes to be consulted and utilised, that we can hope only to indicate certain considerations which may help a teacher in the choice of books. Variety of tastes, of course, can only be met by variety of matter; and as the variety cannot be synchronous, since we are dealing with class teaching, it must be consecutive. We must combine as great a variety of books in the work of the term as is consistent with the acquisition of a real knowledge of those selected.

The first question to present itself is the choice between poetry and prose. It is obvious that a literary training cannot be complete if confined to either form; both therefore must be included;

but the question is, in what order and in what proportion should they be included? We may choose to read more poetry than prose, or more prose than poetry; we may also base our elementary instruction on prose works, and arrive at poetry later, or we may begin with poetry and begin prose later; or, again, we may begin both simultaneously.

There can, I think, be no question that few men or women read poetry in after life; and even those who read it read far more prose. And I think it will not be generally disputed, further, that poetry is of the two the higher form, that it is capable of imparting a finer pleasure, that it produces a greater culture, and, perhaps most important of all, that it does not lead to such intellectual debauchery as the excessive reading of inferior newspapers, magazines, and novels. If, then, we can create a taste for poetry, we shall do well to devote more attention to it than to prose. Our pupils will inevitably read prose for themselves—prose of some kind; poetry they will never read, in most cases, unless we teach them early to read it. The taste for poetry can be created—or, to speak more accurately, evolved; for poetic utterance is more primitive, more natural than prose; and minute and careful study of poems will ultimately, in a large number of cases, draw out the taste for poetry. The writer of this chapter traces his own taste for poetry almost exclusively to the practice of writing Latin and Greek verse, which involved an effort to get at the force of every word in the

pieces chosen for translation. Our method will produce the same result in a pleasanter and less laborious manner. There are two possible objections to the predominance of poetry in our course of instruction. The cynical or pessimistic may tell us that we shall never succeed in awakening the British Philistine to a love of poetry or any other form of art, and that we should do better to show him that there is a kind of prose—since prose will be his exclusive fare hereafter—better than that of the halfpenny press or the inferior novelist. Others will say that the preference for prose over poetry is in itself a proof that prose is the higher form; that the order of evolution is song, verse unsung, prose (*μέλος*, *ψιλομετρία*, *λόγοι*), and that advancing civilisation will drive out metre and rime, till the literature of the future consists exclusively of prose. To both these objectors it is sufficient to answer that poetical taste is a condition precedent to taste in prose; it is easier to master the elusive rhythm of prose through the more defined rhythm of poetry; we must in fact read poetry in order to write prose easily and melodiously, or to read it with discrimination, as some people learn to sing in order that they may speak the better. So on all grounds we shall give poetry the preference over prose.

Perhaps the same considerations will help us to decide the other question. Poetry comes before prose in the natural order; and we may reasonably conclude that a taste for it is capable of being formed in the child's mind sooner than a taste for prose. It has also certain advantages

as a means of training. In the first place, the rime and the metre, being unlike anything in everyday speech, help to fix the attention and to attract interest, and increase the pleasure of reading; next, the rhythm of prose is far more difficult for an untrained ear to grasp; boys awake to the sense of metre much sooner than to the sense of mere rhythm; again, the diction of poetry differs in a positive manner from that of prose, while the diction of prose is rather marked out from that of common speech by negative characteristics. Those who believe "that prose is verse and verse is merely prose" will, of course, not agree; and the subject of diction in poetry and prose is beyond the scope of this chapter, though something will be said on the subject later.

But most persons will probably agree that, while there is no separate poetic language as distinct from ordinary speech as was the artificial epic dialect of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and no uniform diction appropriate to all kinds of poetry alike, and while the diction of poetry and the diction of prose are indistinguishable when poetry and prose meet, yet that, speaking broadly, there is such a thing as poetic diction, based not on fixed rules but on special fitness, and that we can consequently gain more definite results from the study of poetry than from the study of prose; and definiteness in teaching—or in learning—is what we must chiefly seek at first. Lastly, it is very important, in dealing with artistic forms, to treat them as wholes; and there is abundant material for such treatment in poems which belong

to literature—simple ballads and narrative poems—and which are not written for the purpose. Prose tales of reasonable compass and sufficient simplicity are not so easy to find, just because at the period of the national life analogous to childhood such tales were not written in prose. Prose tales written expressly for children are apt to be too simple, and the essential stimulus of a difficulty just a little beyond the child's previous experience is thus missed. So, whether the study of prose be deferred till later or not, poetry at any rate must be largely used from the very first—*i.e.* as soon as literature begins to be studied as literature, and no longer as a mere lesson in reading.

This question having been dismissed, it remains to consider various forms of both prose and verse. We hear sometimes a criticism of modern literature teaching from the science men that our selection includes nothing from the literature of science. But the reason is obvious. Works of science as well as history and other subjects are excluded, because they are too long to be read in school or even out of school as a regular part of our course; but still more because their primary object is to impart knowledge, not to give expression to thought or emotion. Education at large is quite sufficiently preoccupied with facts and theories; we wish, no doubt, to utilise the faculty which makes children acquisitive of facts, but for other purposes. Their attention is to be directly to the manner rather than to the objective truth of a writing; and the truths we deal in are of a less tangible kind. Excluding then all history and

science, we have left in prose essays, tales of all kinds, speeches. The lighter essay, whose object is to please, is admirable for our purpose; no list of books for school purposes would exclude the *Essays of Elia*, the *Spectator*, Bacon's *Essays*. One would not read Macaulay's *Essays* any more than his history. The novel is very useful for rapid reading, and like the best plays gives some insight into complexities of character; and may be used to elucidate the technical difficulties and excellence — or the reverse — of construction. Speeches are usually uninteresting to boys, and may well be omitted. The present writer feels himself entirely unable to read Burke, for instance; why should he expect a class of boys to find an interest in what is essentially uninteresting?

Turning from prose to poetry, we should exclude didactic verse as a rule. It is dry, and it is like a lesson. Satire again is not entirely suitable. It is not a very wholesome diet for boys; and needs constant reference to notes or the teacher to explain allusions. We do not want a history lesson in disguise. But all narrative poetry is good. Lyric poetry, and such exotic forms as the Sonnet, must be introduced with caution. The taste for them has to be acquired. It is just this kind of poetry which seems to our young barbarians "sentimental rot," and it is by means of it that we have to teach them the invaluable lesson that a healthy sensibility is a necessary part of their mental equipment. The "purgation" of sentiment by healthy means is the best way to avoid alike a brutal revolt against all sentiment

and a mawkish sentimentality, which are apt to beset youth. It is here that the teacher's real difficulties begin. Our course is quite plain as long as we are reading any kind of narrative poetry or prose, or anything in the way of observation of life or character ; descriptive poetry is not difficult ; there is the pleasure of recognising the familiar, and the still greater pleasure of deciphering the partially known. A boy who has been able to find out for himself, with or without hints from his teacher, exactly what Wordsworth meant by his cloud

> "That heareth not the loud winds when they call
> And moveth altogether, if it move at all,"

has gained a distinct pleasure, and is on the watch for more discoveries of the same kind. But when we come to a religious view of nature or to the poetry of the emotions, we reach subjects which his whole training, his prejudices, his share of the national characteristics, cause him to look upon shyly, and to say nothing of them, while his undeveloped faculties make them partially unintelligible to him. And if boys stayed at school till they were twenty it might be as well to leave this kind of poetry till the twilight of the emotional nature became a little lighter. Few things are more depressing than the rows of blank faces which face us when we try to elicit our pupils' impressions on any poem which has the remotest connection with the ideas of religion or of love. But as things are, when boys in middle-class schools go out into the world at sixteen, the guid-

ance which they need must be given at that immature age or never. You will not get them to say much; you can get them to "hear and remember and understand"—some day. But the results will probably never be fully—perhaps never even in part—visible to the teacher. He must work in faith.

CHAPTER V.

RHYTHM AND METRE.

RHYTHM is one of many things easier to apprehend than to comprehend, to describe than to define. The current of speech must flow musically in order to give pleasure ; and to its music two factors must contribute ; the sweetness of mere sound, the melody of speech, which is beyond our scope ; and the ordered succession of sounds, which is rhythm. Now we become conscious of a succession of sounds or of movements only if the sounds or movements are not all of the same kind. The roar of a waterfall, or the rattle of a mill, is made up of a succession of similar noises, but so rapid that they impress the ear as one protracted noise ; and rhythm is lost. Rhythm, therefore, depends on variety, or alternation ; and this may be of four things. Alternations (1) of sound and pause ; (2) of accent or intonation ; (3) of stress ; (4) of quantity (*i.e.* of long and short syllables). Of these perhaps we may dismiss the last, as it practically does not affect an English ear, though it enters into certain exotic forms of metre. In Latin prose it had a definite place. Cicero, for example, in the *De Oratore* recommends the use of

the paeonius to close a period ; that is, such a word as *pĕrĭĕrint.* But precepts of this kind are quite inapplicable to the composition of English prose.

Now the important point to be noticed is that the other three elements enter alike into the rhythm of poetry and the rhythm of prose ; or, to put the same fact in other words, the rhythm of poetry and the rhythm of prose can be reduced to the same elements, though that of poetry is more clearly defined. Prose and poetry may be scanned equally ; and the result is not merely metre in either case.

Of the three elements the stress is far the most important. If the pause is too long delayed the rhythm becomes unwieldy, and the ear is fatigued ; if the pause is too frequent the rhythm is broken into a series of jerks. Intonation in English is a quality not of words, as in Greek, but of sentences. A question is marked by an acute accent on the stressed syllable nearest the end ; other clauses and sentences by a grave accent. Emphasis may be marked in the same way—by intonation as well as by stress,—and contrasted words by a grave succeeding an acute accent.

But the real character of the rhythm is given by the stress. Most English words have a stress, and long words have more than one, generally on alternate syllables. There are, however, both proclitics and enclitics, as in Greek, only their character is given them by their dependence for stress, instead of accent, on the following or preceding word ; thus some adverbs, monosyllabic prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs are proclitics ;

personal pronouns are enclitics, except when they are to be emphasised or contrasted. The combination of personal pronoun and preposition is enclitic as a rule. Correct reading of prose depends on the observance of these simple points. Any piece of prose may be analysed into recurrent stresses, with unstressed syllables dependent on them, varying in number, but usually one, two or three—the unstressed syllable being sometimes suppressed—that is, into such simple feet as trochees and dactyls, iambi and anapaests, occasionally hypermetric. "And nów | abíd- | eth fáith, | hópe, | chárity, | thése thrée; | but the greát- | est of thése | is chár- | ity." This is distinguished from verse rhythm only by two qualities. (1) The number of stresses is not approximately fixed; (2) hypermetrical syllables are commoner. In general character it resembles the so-called logaœdic metre of Greek choruses, which by a free treatment of Glyconics and Pherecratics gives a rhythm indistinguishable from that of prose.

Take for example the following passage from the *Antigone* (ll. 100-103):

ἀκτὶς ἀελίου τὸ κάλλιστον ἑπταπύλῳ φανὲν
Θήβᾳ τῶν προτέρων φάος,
ἐφάνθης ποτ', ὦ χρυσέας
ἁμέρας βλέφαρον, Διρκαίων ὑπὲρ ῥεέθρων μολοῦσα κ.τ.λ.

and the metrical analysis, as given by Jebb:

– ∪ | – ∪ ∪ | – ∪ | – ‖ – ∪ | – ∪ ∪ | – ∪ | –
– – | – ∪ ∪ | – ∪ | –
∪ | – | – ∪ | – ∪ ∪ | – ‖ – ∪ | – ∪ ∪ | – – | –
– ∪ | – ∪ ∪ | – ∪ | – ∪

If we regard each long syllable as stressed, we shall have a rhythm very similar in character to that of the passage from the Epistle quoted above.

The common conception of metre is of a really stringent kind of rhythm, which the poet disregards at his peril. We say of it that there are five feet or five accents or ten syllables to the line, and that these feet are iambi. And then we try to scan a given verse in accordance with our scheme, and explain all really intractable feet—but few will not yield to a metrical *tour de force*—as exceptions, under some long name. A recent writer on metres solemnly discusses the question whether in Shelley's line

"And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,"

" roses " is a trochee, and irregular, or an iambus, and regular. One used to hear illiterate curates pray for " the Prince of Wales, the Princéss of Wales, and all the Royal Family " ; but rosés! Irregularity implies a rule which is broken. The real secret is that there is *no rule*. The belief that there is comes from the classical teachers, who have taught us what little we have to forget about metres. They bring their habit of scanning quantitative metres by fixed rules to our accentual metres, where there are no fixed rules. That is one mistake they make ; and there is another, even in their own province—they confuse rhythm and metre. Even in Greek and Latin these are not identical. Take a line of Homer and of Vergil :

τὸν δ' ἀπομειβόμενος προσέφη κρείων Μενέλαος

and

" Arma virumque cano Trojae qui primus ab oris."

Who really believes that a Greek reciting the former of these stressed the third and sixth syllables of ἀπομειβόμενος, or the last of προσέφη and κρείων as the scansion would suggest ?

In Latin it is generally agreed that stress and accent coincided, as they do in modern Greek. Yet the metre requires a stress on the latter syllable of "cano" and "Trojae"—surely an impossibility.

In the line "Íntegér vítae scélerísque púrus" the tonic accents (and consequently stresses) are as marked. But the metre requires an accentuation as follows: "Íntegér vitaé scelerísque púrus," if metre and rhythm be identified, *i.e.* Latin poetry will not scan unless read in a non-natural manner. Read naturally, the line has exactly the rhythm of its musical setting by Fleming—or practically of Cowper's gloomy Sapphics, as in "Dámned below Júdas, réprobáte as hé was"—except that one accent is there omitted. Let the reader try the effect of reading this line as the metre would require: "Dámned belów Judás, reprobáte as hé was."

Calverley in his note on metrical translation well likens the metre to the trellis on which a vine is trained. The tree might be forced to take the outline of the trellis work; but as a matter of fact it climbs from point to point as it will; the trellis supports it, but does not fix its direction. But in Latin poetry the trellis is there; the metre is actually carried out quantitatively; and though that is not the rhythm of the line, it is felt as metre, and colours the rhythm to some extent.

That is why all modern imitations of quantitative metres are unsatisfactory. Either they ignore quantity, and the expectant ear is defrauded, as in Longfellow's hexametres, *e.g.* "To and fro in a room of his simple and primitive dwelling," where three syllables long by position are counted short; or they observe quantity, which, being unnatural in English, gives a stiff and ungainly effect, especially as regards lengthening by position; the English ear, classically trained, resents a long syllable counting short, yet does not feel as long a syllable long by position as

"O ye chorus of indolent reviewers,"

where the last syllable of "indolent" feels short, and is only tolerable because of the faint subordinate stress on the third syllable of such a word.

In English metres the trellis is not there. The metre is rather a scaffolding, which is removed when the structure is complete. In the more regular metres there is a fixed number of feet in the line; but we cannot say they are iambi or trochees—only that they tend to be—that these feet predominate. And it is not, as in the classical metres, that there is a fixed alternative. Any foot—or almost—can be substituted anywhere for any other, *e.g.* for an iambus may be substituted a trochee, a spondee, a dactyl, an anapaest, a foot of two or of three syllables without accent,—even a single syllable. The line

"I bring fresh showers for the thirsty flowers"

occurs in an anapaestic poem; yet of its four feet

one only is an anapaest; the others are an iambus, a spondee, an iambus.

Hence the metre is no guide to the rhythm; and the rhythm of poetry in the regular metres is the same as that of prose, but for two things, the fixed number of feet and the prevailing character of these feet.

It is obvious that the English poet has a far greater variety of means at his disposal than the Greek and Latin poet of making sound and sense conform. To take one instance alone, what an effect is gained by such an accumulation of unaccented syllables as we have in:

> "The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
> Merrily did we drop,"

where the suppression of the second stress gives (practically) the combination of dactyl and anapaest—thoroughly descriptive here. Similar examples are:

> "Mérrily, mérrily shall I líve nów,"

and

> "Úp with me, úp with me ín'to the cloúds!"

where the accent on "in" is so slight as to be hardly felt.

The last line brings us to the less regular metres, especially frequent in lyric poetry. Here there need be no prevailing type at all; each line may have the special character which best fits the thought. The most skilful metrical effects can be produced. Let us take one or two examples and analyse them:

> "Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
> For thy song, Lark, is strong;

Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With all the heavens about thee ringing.
Lift me, guide me, till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind."

The first line has dactyls and a gathering of unstressed syllables, expressing the flight of the lark. In line 2 we have an anapaest and a cretic —a pause in the flight and a reflection. Line 3 repeats line 1; the flight is resumed. Then in 4 we have the steady flow of song in trochees. In 5 the steadfast heavens listen in iambi, but the hypermetre gives a trochaic effect—the echo of the song. Then in line 6, a trochaic catalectic line, we have the slower, imagined flight of the poet's soul, and in the last line of the verse the dragging iambics suggest the reaching of the goal. It is not necessary to carry the examination further, except to call attention to the wonderful effect of contrast given by the pedestrian iambic lines at the end of the poem, and their melancholy cadence, in which the poet describes the actual, as compared with the imaginary state:

"Alas, my journey, rugged and uneven," etc.

Take again the lines from Maud:

"O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again."

Line 1 gives us dactyls again—the swift reaching out of desire and longing after the unattainable. Line 2 gives us cretics—the slow memories

of past pain. Note that " after long " might be an anapaest; but the character of a foot in English verse is sometimes to be determined psychologically; the burden of memory makes us linger, and gives the first syllable of " after " a factitious stress. Then line 3 gives us iambi, again to show the realisation of desire, and the iambi melt as it were into the softer trochaics of the last line, as everything fades but the consciousness that the past has come again. The parallelism between the two quotations will perhaps vindicate the analysis from a possible change of fancifulness.

The final outcome of all is just this, that common sense, in conjunction with particular sense, that is, the sense of the passage, must guide us to the metre. Understand first, then read, and the metre will define itself, or suggest itself, as the case may be; but the *a priori* method will lead to confusion, to the loss of all fine metrical effects, and to a rhythm which is only poetical in the sense that it is not the rhythm of prose.

CHAPTER VI.

METHOD.

THE task of the teacher of Literature is one of the hardest which can be set to any teacher. He has before him twenty or thirty children, all eagerly aquisitive of facts, and of little else; and, with nothing to work upon except that material curiosity, he has to lead them away from facts, into a world where facts are of little importance; where ideas and emotions take their place—ideas they have never realised, emotions they have never felt; and he has to lead them thither in spite of their growing conviction that they are being led astray—out of the region of safety in which they feel at home into one where all is bewildering, unintelligible, and, at first sight, not at all attractive. It is not an impossible task, but it needs infinite patience and discrimination; one must not expect a quick reaction to the touch; only by slow and imperceptible degrees can the feeling for literature be awakened; only by still slower steps can the dumbness of the schoolboy, where anything but fact is concerned, be overcome. The teacher of literature can only sow for a distant harvest; it is highly improbable that he will see the result.

A child of eleven or twelve knows only that there are two ways of writing English, one of which is called Poetry, and is readily recognisable by its rimes; everything which does not rime may be set down as Prose. Of the meaning of literature he, of course, has no conception. In order that he may appreciate literature, whether in poetry or prose, it is necessary that he should have a clear conception of what it is; to gain that clear conception he must accumulate materials; he must familiarise himself with literature in detail, before he can arrive at a general definition. It is obvious that the first step in his road will be the reading of carefully chosen and diversified texts.

In reading these texts the teacher has to keep in view two distinct objects: firstly, to awaken interest in and appreciation of literary form as such,—or, in other words, to stimulate the æsthetic faculties of the child and train them to respond to the appeal which poetry or prose makes to them; and secondly, to develop the intelligence towards the apprehension of literature in its psychological and metaphysical aspects; towards the criticism it offers of nature and life.

The simple ballads and narrative poems, or plain fairy tales, sagas, or stories of heroes, present little difficulty. Children will always read stories with interest, and the teacher's part is simple enough—to ensure correct reading and to give needed explanations. It is most necessary not to interrupt the reading too often. A few words of introduction, giving information necessary to the understanding of the tale, will save many notes;

but words which present difficulty to children must, of course, be explained as they occur; or rather, the children should be encouraged to ask for explanation, and the information, if possible, extracted from the better informed for the benefit of the others. The main function of the teacher during the progress of the lesson is to secure good reading —the training of voice and ear, and the cultivation of a sense of rhythm and metre—not a theoretical but a practical knowledge of what these words mean. It is astonishing that so few people read even prose correctly; hardly one in twenty can read poetry. It cannot be begun too early. It is of no use to give rules; the training must be empirical, and must be mainly imitative. The class should be trained by reading frequently in turn; but the teacher must be as frequently giving them a model. Children must learn to read slowly, so that the eye may be ahead of the lips, or the sense will be mutilated; to pick out the really important words and to emphasise them and no others; to modulate the voice properly—neither breaking into "little sharps and trebles" such as mar the reading even of most adults, nor reciting on one note; the pitch must fall at the end of a sentence or clause, unless it be a question, when it must be raised. All this is elementary, but it needs infinite pains and patience, almost more than human. Above all, in reading poetry the custom into which children and many adults —including unfortunately a large number of actors —naturally fall of hammering out the metrical accents like a metronome, in defiance alike of

sense and rhythm, and of making a pause at the end of each line where there is none in the thought, must be eradicated. It is a saying which will be disputed, and which may in the long run be found to require qualification; but for the purpose of the teacher there is only one sound and safe rule for reading verse—to read it as if it were prose. Any metre which does not sufficiently indicate itself when the passage is read with the natural rhythm required by the sense, is either not worth trouble or is too elusive in nature for children to realise. Above all must young readers be cautioned against the vicious habit of emphasising rime, especially in couplets. The ear should convey rime to the mind half consciously; rime should be like the sound of a bell heard faintly from a distance in a garden or a forest; to emphasise it is to make prominent what is of minor importance, and to disturb the mind and misdirect the attention.

Too often the teacher himself needs instruction in all these points, even the simplest of all, the choice of words to be emphasised. Many so-called educated men emphasise prepositions, unemphatic pronouns and conjunctions, ruining the sense. How few Englishmen understand that there are enclitics in English as in Greek. How few consider the sense in all cases—the really dominant notion in a phrase. When graduates of universities are heard to say, "All this is hard tó do," or to read in the Bible, "A little while and ye shâll see me," what hope is there for our boys and girls? At the same time it seems necessary to

caution the would-be teacher against many professional elocutionists. Much so-called elocution is merely the invention of charlatans. An elocutionist as an elocuticnist can teach voice production; he cannot teach how to read; that needs common sense guided by a sound literary education.

Elementary instruction, then, is mainly a lesson in reading a simple tale; explaining words and phrases only where it is necessary. To this should be added the practice of recitation—not declamation, but the repetition, in a natural manner, of passages learned by rote; and of reproducing on paper the substance of the tale, when it has been read two or three times. To stimulate inquiry in other directions it would also be well if the teacher would discuss with the class any questions legitimately arising out of the tale or poem,—the worth of a character, the goodness or badness of an act, and so on. Nothing is more necessary than that boys should learn from the first to form their own opinions.

As experience accumulates it should also be possible to make clear the character of the simple metres which we may suppose are being employed; no very elaborate scheme is necessary, but if the ear has been trained correctly in reading, children may be made to understand such metres as the common ballad metre, or the short rimed lines of *Marmion*—to know the number and general character of the feet employed. Some vague notion of prose rhythm may be gained in the same way, but this is far more elusive than metre.

Again, the class ought to be able to see that the diction used is not quite that of ordinary life; moreover, that the diction of poetry is somewhat different from that of prose—getting together materials out of which the fuller knowledge is to be built up.

Passing from narrative to descriptive poetry, we have as a starting point the most rudimentary kind of artistic appreciation that exists—the pleasure that a child or a savage takes in the delineation of the familiar. The picture that pleases is that which can be identified; and we have to train our pupils to see with the poet's eyes; but we must begin with simple pictures which, or the like of which, they have seen. So it is desirable to get them after reading to describe in their own words what they have seen—not to profane by paraphrase, but, having made the picture their own, to give it out again. And then gradually they must be led—always by suggestion, if possible, rather than by direct statement—to see things that they have either not seen, or only seen sub-consciously. Again, their attention should be directed, as opportunity offers, to the writer's choice of words, the correspondence of sound and sense, the fitness for their purpose of the words employed, the skill with which a landscape may be sketched in four or five lines; the connection between painting and poetry should be shown—the fact should be brought out that descriptive poetry is not, like much of Walt Whitman, a mere catalogue or mass of materials which a builder has brought together, yet never shaped into a build-

ing, but a work of art, or a collection of pictures ; the notion of idealisation should be gained from a consideration of what the poet accepts and what he rejects. Thus literature begins to reveal itself as a criticism of external nature. In dealing with Shakespeare or Browning, or some more advanced prose, we see the poet as the interpreter of life and of human nature. We see the gradual evolution of character through the force of circumstances, the working out of destiny through man's own acts, as well as through forces beyond his control. Criticism, however crude, however slightly and uncouthly expressed, of characters, of the construction of the plots, of the lessons to be learned, must be encouraged. Above all, let the teacher avoid imposing too ruthlessly his own judgments ; to get boys to know what there is to think about is his function ; but it is far better for them to think wrongly for themselves than to let him think rightly for them. Few things can be more instructive than a discussion, however monosyllabic and disjointed, of a long poem or prose work as an artistic whole, *e.g.* how far it maintains an essential unity, whether unity in a play is necessary, etc. ; or of more particular questions, such as the character of Hamlet or of Brutus. Prepared work in these earlier stages should consist largely of the making of abstracts. If a subject is set for an essay—and especially for an essay on a literary question—the essays written may be divided into three classes : the few which show some signs of thought and care ; the larger number which laboriously reproduce the opinions of some manual

or encyclopædia, usually obsolete and inaccurate, in language which no healthy boy would choose for himself; and the remainder, which present five or six lines of platitude spread out over as much of a page as is possible. By requiring the reproduction of a definite story or an abstract of a specified piece, the teacher secures a reasonable amount of work, and is enabled to correct the style of the more backward boys, and to give them sufficient practice in writing. Under the usual system the boys who require most practice naturally get least. It is to be remembered that an appreciation of the niceties of style can be obtained only by repeated effort at the acquisition of style. In order therefore to ensure sufficient practice in writing, the teacher should set subjects which cannot be got out of books—for the schoolboy seems always to have at his disposal books of reference equally inaccurate in statement and loose in style; or should supply himself the headings, or the facts which are to be introduced. For example, an essay on the life of a writer will, in most cases, be copied from a book, if no help is given; but if the facts of his life are supplied by the teacher, and the class be required merely to put them together, some effort at composition will usually be made, even by the more indolent.

When boys are drawing towards the end of, say, a four years' course, they are in a position to arrive at more general conclusions. Questions such as of rhythm, metre, and poetic diction can be introduced into literature lessons and illustrated

from what they have read ; the difference between various kinds of poetry can be settled ; metre treated more scientifically ; the elements of criticism imparted ; the way in which poets have handled the problems of the human heart in its complexity can be studied. And such general questions as we suggested at first can perhaps now be answered—what is literature, poetry, prose ; what differentiates wit and humour, poetry and eloquence, and so on ? though opportunities for the further and fuller discussion of these points will no doubt be used when they occur later, in studying literature consecutively.

By this time, too, boys should be ready to appreciate a writer as well as a writing ; that is, to form a judgment of the man from his works. His characteristics should be collected as we proceed, and the points in which he specially differs from other poets and prose writers emphasised. But these things should be the outcome, as far as possible, of the boys' own observation from what they have read, or, if the teacher has to take the initiative, what he points out should be capable of verification from the knowledge possessed by the class ; and essays should occasionally be set on such questions, in order that the teacher may be able to find out to what extent his instruction is being assimilated by the class. The teacher must not be discouraged if he finds in such essays a mere mechanical reproduction of the oral instruction given. I have known examiners who complained that the essays of boys of sixteen showed no trace of original criticism, but merely reproduced the

text-book or the teacher's *obiter dicta*. Boys of sixteen cannot be expected to produce original criticism ; it is much if they can be made to understand what criticism means and how it is applied. But if the teacher never sets essays on literary questions, he will probably live in a fool's paradise. A frequent inspection of note-books is also desirable, for a similar reason. The present writer once found that in a boy's note-book, filled with notes on the literature of the eighteenth century, every quality attributed to the work of Alexander Pope had been ascribed to " the Pope."

Lastly for older boys, a course of literary history amply illustrated by selected texts, seems very desirable. It is most essential to a clear comprehension of what literature is that its organic nature should be realised ; boys must see it growing, must see how the age shapes its literature to its own needs, how each writer reflects his age, and yet has his own character ; how one age differs from the next, and so on. Essays on literary questions of greater range and depth may now be expected, and the prepared work should certainly be so directed as to encourage reflection of an original kind on the subjects indicated.

Let us now take as specimens, (*a*) a course of lessons on Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, and (*b*) a lesson on Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters*.

(*a*) Let us assume a general knowledge of the Arthurian legend ; and that the class has read some Homer (in the original or in a good translation, such as Lang, Leaf, and Myers) ; some Vergil (in Latin if possible, or say Bks. II. and IV.

in Surrey's admirable translation); if not, the teacher should read some portions at least of these poems to his class; we may in any case take for granted that they have read the *Idylls of the King* wholly or in part; and that their work has included the bulk of Malory's text as arranged in some judicious selection. Certain parts would then be read in class, and attention drawn to the following points, by questions addressed to, and if possible answered, by the boys. (The order is immaterial.)

The qualities of Malory's Prose—its simplicity, dignity, etc. His diction—typical of the language, Anglo-Saxon idiom, with many words of foreign origin. His grim humour, his naiveté, his religious faith, somewhat sounder than his moral tone.

The characters of the chief knights in this view of the story compared with Tennyson's—a mere idealisation of chivalry, with an allegorical treatment. Note, too, how allegory and reality overlap in Malory. The class should be invited to define an epic—in the narrower sense—or at least to contribute observations towards a definition; the *Morte D'Arthur* should be tested in the light of the resultant definition. Has it unity? We should point out that there are three epics in one. Complexity? Spontaneousness? Archaism of manners, etc., as in Vergil, or contemporary manners as in Homer? Has it continuity? We should note the blend of Christianity and paganism, of plain narration and fairy tale; the constant intervention of magic—whereas epic knows of no agency but divine and human action and the

course of nature, here the course of nature is altered and human action frustrated, not through divine action, but through magic wielded by man.

This is the kind of teaching suggested for a long prose work, studied by an advanced form. Let us now sketch (*b*) a single and more elementary lesson on Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters*. We begin with a few words about Odysseus and the Lotophagi as preface. The poem is then read through for the first time without comment, by the class. Next the teacher might read it, pausing where necessary. The class is invited to realise the various pictures —necessary explanations being given. The metre of the first part is elicited—the number of lines, their iambic *tendency* (see Chap. V. on Metres), their rime sequence, their final Alexandrine. The stanza may be named and the name explained—but this is not necessary. Boys should be asked the use of the double rime, and the catching up of the second rime into the first place in the second half to weld the stanza together ; and the use of the Alexandrine to round it off. What kind of poetry must be looked for in these measured stanzas, each capable of standing alone ? The class may then be questioned as to the force of particular epithets as " downward " smoke, " slumbrous " sheet of foam—would " sleeping " do as well, and if not, why ? " Gleaming " river ; try " brimming " ; " wavering " lights and shadows, with " quivering," " flickering " as variants, and so on.

Now we come to the choric song—the metre changes ; why ? it is irregular—hardly two lines

alike; Why? What kind of poetry is this? What is lyric poetry? (Probably the word "lyric" is better avoided.) How does the lyric poet look on nature?—let them read the choric song again and pick out the dominant feeling—the desire of rest—and see how it colours the landscape; let them find out for themselves if possible that it does so colour it. The same treatment may be given to salient points:-

"Only to *hear and see* the far off, sparkling brine,
Only to *hear* were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine."

Why is "see" not repeated in the second of these lines?

"All day the air breathes low with mellower tone."

What is the force of "mellower" as epithet and as mere sound?—but the points are infinite in number. Lastly, note the steady trochees at the end—the emotion dies down, and leaves no sign in the metre except the irregular length like the swell of the waves after storm—why? and what is the feeling expressed by the change? What ends the unrest of the opening lines?

Teaching of this kind shows a child a number of facts whose existence he did not suspect; it reveals to him a piece of mechanism in an unexpected place, and is interesting for both reasons; while it helps to stimulate the reproductive imagination, and to make him see that poetry is worth study—is not merely "sentimental rot," but has something in it, needing to be dug out.

PART II.

LITERATURE IN THE HIGHER FORMS.

When we reach the upper forms in a school, the question arises how we can develop and extend the training given in the lower forms, and at the same time gather up the results of that training into a comprehensive historical course ; how, that is, we can combine a more critical study of more difficult works with some attempt to realise the part played by different writers and works in the evolution of our literature treated as a whole, not altogether neglecting to trace to their separate beginnings some of the more important individual threads. The problems which confront the teacher are where to begin and where to end, what to include and what to omit, what texts to read through and what to present in extracts, and, again, what books must be read in class and what may be put into the hands of boys for home reading, what editions to select in either case, and lastly, on what general lines to conduct the teaching, to what special points to direct attention. It is the purpose of the present and following chapters to give hints towards the solution of

these problems, though in many cases the actual solution must depend on local circumstances.

In schools where there is a strong sixth form, with a fair number of boys who are destined for the University, the Civil Service, or the Professions a three years' course for the three highest forms is not impossible, and a period of three years is the time assumed for the working of the syllabus outlined below. In some schools boys reach the sixth form at about sixteen, and begin to drop off at various ages, the longest survivors reaching nineteen and twenty. In this case the sixth form alone might work through the course. Though desirable, it is not indispensable for every boy to have followed the whole course. He will have learned much if he has been taught to read critically in the better sense—that is with discrimination and judgment—and to see the essential unity of literature. In other schools again, where promotion occurs at shorter than yearly periods, the syllabus might well run concurrently through three or four higher forms, so as to give continuity however rapidly a boy accomplishes the last few stages of his ascent. Where the leaving age is much below nineteen, the syllabus can be modified and abridged in two ways : by leaving out certain books—especially the longer prose works—and by beginning later ; at Chaucer, perhaps, or even at Spenser ; while the nineteenth century could also be omitted. Much will have been read from that century in lower forms, and boys in later life will be more likely to read recent literature than that which is older, unless they have had their

attention specially directed to the latter, and been taught to like it. But where time and circumstances permit, it seems to the present writer very desirable to begin the more formal study of English literature—as distinct from individual books—at the very beginning, and to trace our literature back to its sources. One is confronted, of course, with the initial difficulty that what remains of the earliest work is in a dead language, unintelligible to the school boy and often to his teacher. No one probably would propose to add Anglo-Saxon to the already over-crowded time-table; and hence we must necessarily begin with translations. Nevertheless, it would be well to give a general idea of the nature of Anglo-Saxon as an inflectional language, with its pure vocabulary, its simplicity and directness, and its power of forming compounds. Miss Warren's *Treasury of English Literature* (Constable) or Hadow's *Oxford Treasury* would supply what is needed; the former being much fuller for the earliest period. It gives, however, no specimens of the drama; and should be supplemented for this by the second volume of the *Oxford Treasury*.

CHAPTER I.

THE EARLIEST PERIOD.

At the outset then, the teacher would discuss with the pupils the meaning of the term literature. Systematic discussion of general notions is a very necessary part of the training to be given. It is not that the results elicited are in themselves very valuable—they are, at first at any rate, monosyllabic and fragmentary; but in literature it is above all things needful to cultivate independence of judgment, and a merely dogmatic method will do considerable harm. The teacher should guide rather than dominate the discussion, gather up and co-ordinate the different suggestions offered, until a clear understanding of what is to be included in the meaning of the term literature is gained. And it might be as well to show the practical application of whatever definition is agreed upon by looking according to the Socratic method for the marks or notes of true literature —Truth, Beauty, Universality, perhaps; and then the results might be reproduced in an essay to be set for home work.

From literature in general, which belongs to all men and all times, being the utterance not of one

generation or age but of humanity, and is permanent just because it is concerned with those permanent realities of life and thought and emotion, which, amid superficial changes of manners and of interests, remain always unchanged and always seek expression in new forms, we pass to consider the general laws which govern the production of literature in any particular age and nation ; how it grows and develops, declines and dies, in obedience to its own laws, which are partly laws of human nature, and partly laws of external conditions—climatic and political circumstances moulding each race from age to age. Hence it will be seen that the history of a national literature cannot be separated from the history of the nation, and that each period of literature depends on that which precedes ; its special characteristics are the necessary result of the previous period, modified by circumstances. The individual author is among those circumstances and contributes something to the process of development, but he is only one among many forces. The literature of a period is the product of all the factors controlling the national life in that period ; the literature of a nation is the result of all the circumstances that have moulded the national destiny and formed the national character.

So far we have been merely clearing the ground and laying a foundation. We may now proceed to the study of some specimens of our earliest poetry. A few lines should be read by the teacher to give the pronunciation, and a line or two written on the board in order that the class may understand the

alliterative metre, their attention being of course drawn to the break in the line, to the four accents, the alliterations, and the variable number of syllables. It would be useful to compare with the metre its modern modification in *Christabel*, and let the class see how completely its character is changed by the rime, and by the neglect of the medial pause. The class should then read some of the verse specimens in Miss Warren's *Treasury*. *Beowulf* should be reserved for more prolonged study—unless the course needs abbreviation—and of the others the specimens of *Widsith*, *Caedmon*, *Christ and Satan*, the *Seafarer*, the *Riddles*, *Cynewulf* and the battles of *Brunanburh* and of *Maldon* should certainly be included. The kinship of *Christ and Satan* and *Paradise Lost* should be pointed out, and the possibility of direct influence on Milton's work, and some of the latter might be read by the teacher for an illustration. Some idea of life in Anglo-Saxon times would naturally be given, and in this connection should also be read the account from Bede of how Caedmon became a poet. After this should follow a discussion of the characteristics of early poetry, which might be illustrated by the teacher from a rather wider range, *e.g.* the *Psalms*, Homer (in Lang, Leaf, and Myers or Butcher and Lang's translations), *Hiawatha*, Lamb's *Essay on Old China* (to adduce the analogy of another art). The chief point to elicit and emphasise is the childhood of the nation reflected in its poetry—the elementary source of pleasure in the recognition of the familiar, as in the uncritical appreciation of pictures (Aristotle's

acute psychological remark in the *Poetics* might be quoted, that this pleasure is due to the natural delight in learning, here by way of inference from signs to things signified), in the absence of proportion, and of reflection, in the simplicity of emotions which suggest no criticism of life, and in the naiveté of emphasis by way of iteration.

This brings us to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, specimens of which should now be read. The teacher would point out the analogy between the origin of the Pontifical Annals at Rome and that of the Monkish Chronicles. He would trace the history of the *A.-S. Chronicle*, its sporadic and fragmentary beginnings, amplification, growth of national feeling, extension backwards from legend or invention, and continuation as contemporary records to a relatively late period in our history. Aelfred's influence should also be noted, and the change in the character of the *Chronicle* from his time onward. The early date at which English prose, fostered by Aelfred, appeared, as compared with prose in other national literatures, should be pointed out. Here might also come a discussion of the nature of history. Historical works cannot, for obvious reasons, be included in a course of literature for schools ; but there is no reason why boys should not clear their notion of what constitutes history, and the *A.-S. Chronicle* forms as good a text as any other.

We come now to *Beowulf*, the first document to be studied as a whole, and the only one for the first term's work. Care must be taken in choosing out of the forty or fifty translations in existence.

Beowulf presents much the same difficulties to the translator as Homer. Translations in blank verse may be fine poems, but they can hardly reproduce the *staccato* energy of the original. For the teacher who can read Anglo-Saxon the present writer is inclined to recommend the version of Messrs. Morris and Wyatt, which retains much of the alliteration, and gives a suggestion of the roughness and repeated hammer-blows of the metre; but the version will constantly need interpretation for young readers, and the teacher himself will often fail to understand it unless he has the original to consult. Probably a good prose version will be found most satisfactory. Having decided on his text, the teacher would prepare the way by indicating the connection between the events narrated in *Beowulf* and the facts of history. A map, drawn roughly on the board, would indicate the geographical distribution of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians, Danes, Goths, etc., and should be copied into note-books. Something might be said, too, as to the confusion between the hero Beowulf and the god Beowa. A plan should be drawn and copied by the class of the mead-hall, with its settles, gift-stool, dais, etc. Life in Anglo-Saxon times has already been dealt with, but the religious beliefs of the North in pre-Christian times should be spoken of, or the class might be left to discover them and record them in an essay; and, finally, the steps in the development of the epic should be traced—first the hymn, with its expression of primitive religious emotion; one would instance the Dorian war dance, with its song, the hymn of

the Arval Brethren (to be found in Wordsworth's *Fragments and Specimens of Early Latin*, with a translation), and the *Psalms*; then, as the divine element in life recedes and human individuality emerges, the saga, with its one heroic deed, and its rudimentary characterisation; lastly, the full-grown epic, coming, when society is organised and no longer savage, as the ideal expression of daily life, from the combination of isolated lays and the evolution of a fixed poetic style. Without entering into the Homeric question, the teacher might give some idea of the way in which the *Iliad* combines many separate lays in a framework of recurrent incidents and stereotyped expressions. Then the poem is read through; and the teacher might read to the class the adventures of Odysseus with the Cyclops (*Od.* ix.), and with the Laestrygones (*Od.* x.), in order to show that the monstrous element, episodical in Homer, is essential in *Beowulf*.

When the poem has been carefully studied, the whole question of the nature of Epic poetry might be raised. Definitions of epic poetry might be invited; the two aspects of definition, positive and negative—or inclusive and exclusive—being insisted on. Probably no definition will be found satisfactory, and the teacher will suggest his own—whether he prefers the Aristotelian or some other. The tests of greatness, complexity, unity, grandeur, fulness being applied—Aristotle's definition, we will assume, being finally chosen—*Beowulf* will be seen to fall short of the epic scale; but the teacher will not have failed to point out the epic character

of the narrative, the set formulae, the lingering over details, however trivial and commonplace, the speeches which delay the action but are needed to bring out the hero's temper, and the long episodes. The poem may again be illustrated from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as fully as time permits. Especially should the union of separate lays be indicated. Further, to show the difference in atmosphere between the earlier or natural and the later or artificial epic reference might be made to the *Aeneid*, and some portion read to the class—for example, the Laocoon episode in Surrey's admirable translation of book ii. In dealing with the characteristics of Beowulf, apart from those due to its epicoid style, the teacher will lay stress on the simplicity of the characters, types of one quality, like those in the *Mysteries*, and on the melancholy and grim humour of the narrative and descriptions—qualities already present in the infancy of our literature. The question of the date of the poem is peculiarly important, and must be considered in connection with the religion, which is Christian, the morals, which are largely Pagan, and the political condition depicted, which would indicate a date subsequent to the Anglo-Saxon settlements in England. Was the poem re-written in England in Christian times, after the model of an older poem, or was Christianity grafted by Christian teachers on to a Pagan poem brought by our forefathers from their original homes? The class might be asked for signs of interpolation in the text it has read, and whether again there is anything altogether inconsistent in

the morality with what history tells us of early Saxon warriors, after their conversion; and, further, whether the relatively late framework of the society represented is or is not conclusive for the later date. It should be observed that the identification of the scenery of *Beowulf* with places (often bearing modifications of the same names) in Northumbria, while the action is laid in Scandinavia, is inconclusive; and a parallel may be found in the identification of the sites of Arthur's battles in various parts of England. Finally, instances of graphic power in the description of Nature throughout the poem should be carefully noted, and likewise the absence of the epic simile.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER BEOWULF.

FROM Beowulf to Langland is a long interval in time, yet *Piers Plowman* is our next text; but there is a good deal of history to be traversed before we reach it. The teacher will point out how the Church, with its gaze fixed on another life, starved the epic, the ideal presentment of life in this world. Hence no further step was taken in the direction of the epic. Reference will be made to the literary activity of Aelfred's time, and to the causes which gradually stifled English literature in the next centuries—the struggle against the later Danish invasions, ending in defeat and humiliation, internal divisions, Norman influence, and finally Norman conquest. A higher civilisation, a more subtle and refined speech, a more artistic versification—English literature could not struggle against these. If, as is probable, it was still produced, it was the literature of the poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed, and it was not destined to live. Again, the Norman Conquest brings England into the sphere of European politics, with its tradition of an empire embracing the whole system of Western nations, and its tendency

to denationalise literature. The effect of the final settlement, following the ultimate fusion of Saxon and Norman, should be pointed out—the Anglo-Saxon framework surviving, with ever weakening inflexions, the inroad of new words and ideas, the prevalence of the new metre with its rigorous counting of syllables instead of beats, and the adoption of the Romance.

The rise of the romance, the natural product of an international literature, should be sketched, and as many specimens should be read as seems desirable, preference being given to those dealing with King Arthur, though the genesis of the Arthurian legend should be considered later, when we come to Malory. Layamon's *Brut* should certainly be looked at, with its rugged, uneven lines, uncertain alliterations, and occasional rimes —not so much a compromise between the new and the old, as an unskilled handling of the new. Three other poems deserve a more detailed study, though they cannot be read in full. These are *Havelok the Dane*, *King Horn*, and *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, of which a whole canto should be read, if time permits. A summary of all three poems should be given, and then specimens read by or to the form. They may be found pleasantly summarised in Ten Brink's *English Literature*, vol. i. (Miss Warren gives no specimen of *King Horn*, but one may be found in Morris and Skeat's *Specimens of Early English*, vol. i.). All these are important links in the chain of evolution. The two former give, recast in the thirteenth century, stories of much earlier date. The class should note

the great development of society since *Beowulf*, as depicted in these two, and the metre should be carefully studied, *Horn* giving us a real compromise, as it shows the old alliterative line, with its two halves riming, while in *Havelok* we find something very like the four-foot rimed iambic couplet of *Marmion* and the *Prisoner of Chillon*. Points to be noted are the projection of chivalry into the days of Danish raids and of Danish rule in England —a note of the epic—and the grotesque exaggeration of *Havelok*, and its inferior refinement—the more striking since its metre is far more artistic (Does this imply the spread of a taste for romance to a lower social class ?) ; and the love interest, which is not to be found in the epic.

The metre of *Sir Gawayne* is more interesting than either ; for it is written in the alliterative line, interrupted at intervals by a curious five-lined rimed stanza of very original construction. In *Sir Gawayne* we have the greatest poem between *Beowulf* and *Piers Plowman*. It is a romance of chivalry at its best, and the class should find in it already some of the qualities of the highest kind of English poetry—lofty moral tone, deep religious feeling, and love of nature. Moreover, if a sufficiently careful description of it is given, it will be seen that the poem has cohesion and unity, and is an artistic whole. Probably most of the boys in the class will have read portions of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* ; and a comparison between the two naturally suggests itself. They can hardly fail to be struck by the greater freshness and spontaneousness of the earlier writer. They will

agree that he is the better story-teller, though they will need to have the reason explained to them—that the interest is sustained by the personality of the hero, which is never overshadowed by the minor figures in the tale, while it is more free and human than any of Tennyson's characters. The author lost himself in his creation, and so we lose him too; we feel that Tennyson is always at our side to moralise his tale.

It will be a useful exercise for the class to consider the three long poems, *King Horn*, *Havelok*, and *Sir Gawayne*, together from the point of view of their relation to real life. An intelligent boy will not fail to see how the two Danish stories depict a state of manners and of political conditions contemporary with their earlier writers, and are in a sense realistic narratives, yet ignore probabilities, without introducing a supernatural element. The teacher will point out also how the two poems differ from each other—*Havelok* being a cruder story, appealing with its scullion hero and his adventures to a lower class, and carrying improbability to the point of absurdity, so that it is in some ways a burlesque of the other; while in *Sir Gawayne* we have an ideal tale in which many of the elements are frankly non-natural, and yet there is a spiritual truth and depth in the story which the other two lack. This would be a good opportunity to discuss the significance of the terms realism and idealism, and the meaning of the saying that "poetry is a criticism of life and of nature." Boys are not so receptive of ideas as of facts, and it is not easy for them to understand

that truth is not to be found in literal accuracy, nor idealism in a distortion of facts.

With the fourteenth century also we begin to meet with a more purely national literature, resulting from the desire for articulate expression of the beginnings of the national spirit, and from the consciousness of a national life, afterwards, in other forms, to find a more complete expression in Chaucer. Hence the great importance for the history of literature of the lyrics and the patriotic poetry of this time. We shall, of course, read the *Cuckoo Song*, and note the purely objective character of its description. Here again we may take the opportunity to consider and clear up the meaning of the terms objective and subjective, which it is easy to overwork, but which yet involve a point of view not to be neglected, in consideration of the change wrought by religion in this very lyric form, linking the childlike and sensuous delight in nature with deeper feeling ; as we see again much later, when we come to Crashaw and others of the religious lyrists. Nor must we neglect the political verse of the time—verse born of the troubles of Edward II.'s unhappy reign, of the glories of Edward III.'s brilliant maturity and the gloom of his declining days. And so we come to the father of all jingo poets, Laurence Minot, in whom jingoism speaks with the tone and temper which nearly six hundred years have not altered. Note his combination of rime and alliteration, and note the characteristics of his insular patriotism for future reference—the simple belief in England as specially protected by providence to be the

greatest nation on earth, and in Englishmen as the bravest men in the world, combined somewhat inconsistently with contempt as well as hatred for their enemies. It would be well to let the class see what there is of real worth at the basis of all this by a comparison perhaps with such poems as Wordsworth's sonnets, " It is not to be thought of " and " When I have borne in Memory." Miss Warren gives only one specimen of these, and none of the other political songs of the period; but specimens may be found in Morris and Skeat, ii., and should be read to the class.

Thus we come to our next text-book—*Piers Plowman*, passus i.-vii.—wherein we say farewell to the alliterative metre, and renew our acquaintance with the allegory, destined to affect our literature so profoundly and so long. Most boys will want constant help in reading *Piers Plowman*, both with words and with phrases; and the teacher who is not familiar with Middle English will do well to make a careful study of the book before he attempts to guide others; but with such guidance the book is not beyond the capacity of the upper forms, and will be read with interest. One notes about Langland the clumsiness of his framework—in strong contrast to that of *Sir Gawayne*—with its undreamlike dream, so often broken and renewed, and its crude form of allegory, partly by way of mere personification of abstract qualities, partly by means of types which have no individuality, and its lack of cohesion—the loose connection of its string of pictures, combined with vagueness and unreality in places. We note, too,

the influence of the miracle and mystery plays in the symbolic representation of the deadly sins, to which we shall recur when we come to the beginnings of the drama and the satire. A fuller discussion of the nature and origin of satire as a form of literature had better be postponed; but the sympathy which underlies his rough humour and his kinship with the Flemish and early Dutch genre painters should be pointed out. There are two things further to be realised in reading Langland—one is that we have not yet reached the age which questions fundamentals; the faith of Langland in the established order both in Church and State—as apart from its abuses—is touching, in spite of the fact that Wyclif was his contemporary; the other, that we have here, as in the *Canterbury Tales*, an assemblage of all classes, except the very highest, of society; yet the difference in treatment and in point of view is really remarkable. To this the teacher will need to return when he reaches Chaucer. Langland's use of alliterative metre may be pointed out as perhaps typical—he is not open to new ideas. Of sensuous feeling for nature, such as several fourteenth-century poets show, he has little or none; his metre shows no trace of rime; he looks for salvation to a more faithful use of existing institutions; he represents the best of what was passing away, not the promise of the opening age.

Many boys will begin their study of literary history with Chaucer; and in any case he is the first poet of those whom we read at all who has left so much work behind him, and that of so much

importance, that the task of selection needs care. We may get a good notion of Chaucer in his best and most characteristic form if we read the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* and one or two of the tales; at any rate no one would fail to read the *Prologue*; but this alone will not carry us far in an attempt to see what Chaucer's place should be in the history of poetry. The teacher will no doubt begin by pointing out clearly the influences which were shaping our literature when Chaucer began to write, till his own great genius modified them. They were: (1) expiring mediaevalism with its dreary pseudo-philosophies, false science, and arid scholastic theology. (2) A religious system at once inextricably interwoven with daily life, receiving unquestioned allegiance from almost all men, and served by a corrupt and venal clergy, openly derided and despised by those who accepted their ministrations. (3) A decadent chivalry, with its sterner functions inoperative, its ceremonial and lighter features exaggerated and running riot in a conventional worship of love and an affected gallantry. (4) The lingering influence of the imperial idea, making the civilised world one family, and literature international, working up over and over again the same themes. (5) The predominance of French models in this international literature, and especially in England, owing to proximity and to natural affinity of the educated classes in both countries; and the subsequent advance in the fourteenth century of Italian literature to the leading position, when the first stirrings of the Renaissance movement were

felt. (6) The counteracting tendency of the growth of English national feeling, such as produced Minot's songs (note that English was introduced into the courts of law in 1362). (7) The prevalence of allegory as a literary form, owing to the vitality of religious poetry steeped in Old Testament history and probably never quite extinguished, even by the Norman Conquest. (8) The growing love and worship of nature, which borrowed symbolical forms from the allegory, and a certain conventionality of expression from chivalry. These things being noted, it will be easy to understand the division of Chaucer's work into three periods, French, Italian, and native, or those of translation, imitation, and origination; and to illustrate them and Chaucer's development from the poems. The division into periods should not be insisted on; what we want to show our class is Chaucer gradually passing from translation, as of the oft-translated *Romaunt of the Rose*—his version is of course lost—and retelling of old tales, to a more individual style of his own; not, of course, that Chaucer, any more than Shakespeare, ever became independent of other poets' invention.

The teacher or the class should read specimens of the *Book of the Duchess*, of Chaucer's *Translation of Boethius*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Parliament of Foules*, the *House of Fame*, and the *Legend of Good Women* (the opening), and as much as they can bear of the *Parson's Tale*. Some idea of the scope of each work should be given; and the teacher will point out how John of Gaunt, mourning for his

dead wife, is disguised as a knight devoted to the service of love, who describes at great length the lady whom he has lost ; how Boethius spins platitudes and commonplaces into five books, patiently followed by Chaucer ; how in *Troilus and Cressida* we have a tale of faithlessness in love, in which Chaucer follows the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio ; how Chaucer, having read in Cicero's *Republic* the *Somnium Scipionis*, itself an imitation of the *Vision of Er* in the *Republic* of Plato, is taken, like Scipio the younger, by the elder Scipio, not, however, to hear the music of the spheres, but to the garden of the goddess of Love, where, amid allegorical surroundings, the birds assemble before the goddess Nature to choose their mates ; how in the *House of Fame* Chaucer, carried from the Temple of Venus by an eagle, as Dante was carried in the ninth canto of the *Purgatorio*, is brought to the House of Fame, and sees the capricious goddess ; how in the *Legend of Good Women*, after telling us of his cult of the daisy, in which, as in so much else, he follows various French forerunners, he dreams that he is in the Court of Love, and is bidden by Alcestis to write a poem in praise of women who have died for love, the idea of the legend coming, like the story of *Troilus*, from Boccaccio ; and finally, how a number of chance associates amusing themselves on a merry journey would listen patiently to a long and very dull sermon. These things the teacher will emphasise to show what materials Chaucer found ready to his hand, and how he used them, and how finally he found other and better material of native growth.

So we come to the *Canterbury Tales*. It will be impossible to read all or nearly all in class; and the choice of those to be read must be left to the teacher; but the *Prologue* is indispensable, and perhaps with the *Knight's Tale* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale* will be sufficient. (They may be obtained in Skeat's edition, which is not expensive.)

In reading Chaucer there are many points to discuss; we notice those only which are of obvious use for teaching purposes, and for literary history. The attention of the class should be drawn to the greater refinement and expressiveness of Chaucer's English, as compared with that of his contemporary, Langland; in his hands it becomes an adequate vehicle for the expression of thought; again we shall observe Chaucer gradually freeing himself from the conventions of poetry indicated above, and venturing at last to be himself—to leave allegory and the cult of love and tell his stories in a plain and natural manner; and we shall not forget that Chaucer is the founder of our metrical system, as well as of Modern English and of poetry; we shall observe his final rejection of alliteration, and his gradual abandonment of the short couplet for other and more varied metres, and in particular his work on the stanza which bears his name, and on the longer couplet—to which we shall have to return later. Particular attention should be paid when his work is read to the careful scansion of the lines, and his accurate use of alternate accents; especially must the teacher insist on the final 'e,' without which

Chaucer's metre becomes chaotic, as we see in some of his successors.

We must also point out that in Chaucer we find already the kind of humour that has never since altogether failed in English literature, though some of the greatest writers have been wanting in it. This may be a good time for a discussion of the nature of humour (for which see Appendix). It is a subject not easy for boys to grasp, and they need to be reminded of it at intervals. They need especially to be reminded that humour is not always comic, but is rather a form of sympathy. In Chaucer we have humour neither grim, as in Langland, nor cynical as in Swift, but genial and kindly. Boys should be made to see that it is this which gives Chaucer his insight into character, and his appreciation not only of a wide range of diverse characters, but of the subtle distinctions between individuals of the same class, age, and circumstances —for which the *Knight's Tale* is especially valuable; we have in the *Canterbury Tales* the microcosm of *Piers Plowman* reproduced; but the characters are no longer shadows; they live and move in a real world. Chaucer is no visionary, nor stern moralist; only a mild and gentle satirist, who takes the world, good and evil, as it is. Again, it must not be forgotten that Chaucer wrote for the nation—not for the poor like Langland, nor for the Court like the poet of *Sir Gawayne*, but for all classes. Lastly, we must insist on Chaucer's view of nature. His appreciation of natural beauty is remarkable for so early a poet. It has a touch of Epicureanism, spiritual-

ised by his conception of Nature as a beneficent goddess, source of life and of the joy of life—a view coloured by the allegorising tendency of this age. A note on the treatment of Nature in poetry will be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER III.

FROM CHAUCER TO SPENSER.

We leave poetry for the present, and take up the history of prose. Our text-book will be Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*—either an abridgement, or some selection from the complete work at the option of the teacher. But before we actually read Malory, we need to clear the ground by glancing at the previous writers of prose, and by reviewing briefly the genesis of the Arthurian Legend. Of the simple and inartistic prose, chiefly religious, before Malory's time it will be sufficient to read a few extracts from earlier writers; for example, the *Ancren Riwle*, the nature and object of the book being first explained, will show the class how little developed was prose at the beginning of the thirteenth century; and the translator of Mandeville will show what prose was becoming in the next century—growing in range and variety and moving more freely but still showing little art. Probably the writer himself helped to increase the vocabulary; and Wyclif, who should also be read, helped to develop English prose by making it a vehicle for the expression of

new ideas, in spite of his harshness and want of style. Malory is the first great prose-writer.

The Arthurian story should be traced to its sources—the battle of Mt. Badon mentioned by Gildas, and his hero Aurelius Ambrosianus ; the multiplication of the battle by twelve and the appearance of Arthur, in the next three centuries ; then in three centuries more we come to Geoffrey of Monmouth and his Latin *Historia Britonum*, giving accounts based on legend of early and very mythical English kings. (Gorboduc, Locrine, Leir and Cymbeline should all be named, since all have found a place in later literature.) Note that so far we have a very much simpler and less heterogeneous story of Arthur and his life and death, with Gawaine and not yet Lancelot as the model of chivalry, and Mordred as the lover of the Queen—an element which occurs twice over in Malory, as Beowulf's contest occurs twice in the poem bearing that name ; and that Arthur henceforth becomes definitely the national hero. After Geoffrey comes Wace, who writes in French verse, and introduces the *Round Table.* Then Chrestien de Troyes gives us an element due to the Crusades in the Byzantine heroes such as Sir Palamedes. Various hands interweave the quite independent story of *Tristan* and *Iseult,* introduce Lancelot as the type of chivalry and lover of the Queen ; the story of the *Holy Grail* is told by Robert de Boron in *Le Petit Saint Graal,* of which Percival, not Galahad, is the hero, and the mystical element is further developed in the prose romance *Le Grand Saint Graal,* and finds in

Galahad a new hero, in another romance *Le Queste de Saint Graal.* Map in his Latin version embodies the Grail element; and so we come to Layamon again, who worked on Wace's version of the story, largely amplifying it. By these and many others was the ground prepared for Malory's compilation. The class should be reminded of what was said on *Beowulf* of the fusion of various lays in one epic poem; and the analogy between the genesis of *Le Morte d'Arthur* and the *Iliad* should be pointed out, Malory's work being analogous to that which was traditionally undertaken at the direction of Peisistratus.

In reading Malory it will be necessary to abridge or to select portions. Care should be taken to give some idea of the multiplicity of sources from which Malory drew, which cannot be done by reading one or two books through; *e.g.* books i.-iv. tell of Merlin (founded mainly on De Boron) and are fairly homogeneous; books xi.-xix. are concerned with Lancelot; books viii.-x. give us the Tristan story, unfinished. The selection made by the present writer (*Stories of King Arthur*) is intended for younger children, and purposely avoids giving any notion of the multifariousness of Malory's story; that made by Mr. Martin (Macmillan) may serve. In any case much of the work can be done by pupils at home; they can be set to read over a certain number of chapters, and to reproduce the story in summary—in itself a useful exercise. If this is done for evening work, much time will be saved.

The master will point out, or get his pupils to

point out to him, how the miscellaneous origin of Malory's book is revealed in its contents—the various legends existing side by side without cohesion ; the doubling of characters and motives, the manners and customs of the twelfth century when the stories assumed literary shape, combined with incongruous miracle and still more incongruous magic, relics of the oral period of legend. Especially should the class compare with the mediaeval framework the charming chapter which ends book xviii., and which is ascribed to Malory ; in it we find the same feeling of exaltation in presence of spring which drove Chaucer forth to worship the daisy.

There are three subjects which the teacher may usefully discuss with the class, in connection with the *Morte d'Arthur*. Is the work a prose epic ? Obviously it is epic in style, it has fulness of detail, greatness in issues involved, complexity of narrative, the grand manner : but on the other hand, it is too long for the reader to keep the whole in view—like the *Faerie Queen* in this respect ; it has too many incoherent incidents, and it lacks the simplicity and directness of the true epic ; it presents an ideal life rather than ideally presents that of every day ; it is not wholly free from allegory—the selection should be made with a view to showing this fact among others. Now and then persons and things which profess to be part of a real narrative suddenly prove to be symbolical ; and, as has been said before, while epic knows of no agencies but the operation of nature and human and divine action, in Malory the course

of nature is constantly diverted and human action frustrated, not by divine action, but by magic. The want of unity is too obvious to need to be pointed out ; but the class should be made to see that these are the three romances, not fully welded together, of which the book is composed—the story of Arthur, the Quest of the Holy Grail, and the story of Tristan.

Malory is of great importance in the history of prose—hardly less than Chaucer in the history of verse. Points which should be brought out are : Malory's fine rhythm and cadences, his excellent choice of words, his simplicity and directness, his naïf pathos and humour, his pure idiom enriched by French words. Readers of Greek will recognise one point of resemblance between Malory and Thucydides—the tendency to irregular grammar and anacoluthon, and from the same cause, a want of models ; but Malory's sentences are never involved, like those of Thucydides, and are always clear.

We have already compared the *Idylls of the King* and *Sir Gawayne* ; in connection with Malory we should naturally read some part of Tennyson's poems dealing with the same subject ; and it would be instructive to recur to Layamon, or the extract from the *Brut* might be reserved for the present occasion. Of Tennyson some part of the *Coming of Arthur*, the *Holy Grail*, and the *Passing of Arthur* should be read ; or if time fails, they might be set as home-work. Especially should the passages be pointed out where Tennyson has done little more than versify Malory, as in

parts of the *Passing of Arthur*. In comparing the three we shall see that Layamon, the poet-priest, told a simple tale of chivalry, with no doubt an atmosphere of religion and miracle, but no governing motive to make an artistic whole. Malory gives us tragedy in epic dress, sin working out its punishment; Malory's men and women—in spite of incongruities—are the men and women of his day. In Tennyson the story has been idealised, and the characters are unreal; there is too much conscious art and too little humanity; and the poet's hand is not light enough for the homely and familiar touches which the subject sometimes requires. And again, for tragedy we now have allegory—the war of soul and sense; whereas in the last analysis the subject of all art is man or that which limits him on either side, God and the world without, but not an abstraction, a soul without a body, or an intellect without the senses. Hence, while the hero is unreal, the faulty human creatures, Lancelot and Guinevere, excite the sympathy which we cannot feel for Arthur; and this obviously lessens the effectiveness of the poem.

Chaucer's immediate successors need not keep us long; three things will be noted about them—their inferiority, their dependence and their derivation from the earlier rather than the later manner of Chaucer. A glance at the subjects of their works and at their metres will show this clearly. They use his stanza or his rimed couplet, but some of them, as Lydgate sadly complains in his own case, are not very skilful; the muting of final 'e' makes Chaucer's metre a riddle which

Lydgate tried vainly to solve. Occleve's lament for Chaucer in the *Gouvernail of Princes* is a favourable specimen of a dull poem; Lydgate's Troy book, *Story of Thebes*, *Falls of Princes*, *Temple of Glas* remind us of Chaucer's *Troilus*, *Knight's Tale*, *Monk's Tale*, *House of Fame*; Henryson in the *Testament of Creseide* continues the story of *Troilus and Cressida* in Chaucer's stanza (specimen of the fables in Miss Warren's *Treasury*). He and James I. of Scotland in the *King's Quhair* handle Chaucer's metre with some skill, and James, writing in modified English, gives a long allegorical poem, inspired by Boethius. The Scotch poets—these, and Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndsay—have more originality than the English, though still influenced by Chaucer. Dunbar's *Thrissell and Rois* belong to the same type as the *Parliament of Foules*; his *Golden Targe* is allegorical; his *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* reminds us of Langland. Douglas, again, in the *Palace of Honour* imitates the *House of Fame*. The class should note the metre of this poem (used also by Dunbar in the *Golden Targe*); it is a nine-lined stanza with two rimes. Especial attention should be given to Douglas for two reasons: he is our first translator, and gives us in rimed heroic couplets a version of the *Aeneid*, in which Vergil appears in Scots dress—as Pope's Homer wears a wig and knee-breeches—with charming descriptive prologues; and in *King Hart* we have an allegory of human life, which, with Hawes' *Pastime of Pleasure*, anticipates in part the *Faerie Queen*. Note the roughness of Hawes' versification, verging on doggrel. Lindsay also

in his dream carries on Chaucerian tradition in Chaucerian stanza. Like so many other poets, Lyndsay was carried away in a dream by allegorical persons, and saw visions. The teacher should give an epitome of the dream, to show its political nature, which connects it with Lyndsay's satires, and with Skelton. The last also deserves careful attention, for his influence was solvent alike for metre and subject, and he did much to break up the Chaucerian tradition. His *Boke of Philip Sparowe*, in lines of three accents riming in groups of two, three or four, might be compared with Catullus' *Passer Deliciae meae Puellae*, to give the contrast of genuine pathos in a highly wrought metre with a discursive half-humorous lamentation in the loosest of verse. The *Bowge of Court* (the title should be explained) is allegorical ; but in *Colin Clout* we have genuine satire of the clergy, in vigorous verse which may be compared with *Hudibras*. Thus the class will see that in England at least the stream of poetry tends to lose itself in doggrel and in satire.

Perhaps at this point a word or two might be said about the ballad. Probably members of the class will have read at an earlier stage such representative specimens as the *Nut-Brown Maid*, *Chevy Chace*, *Sir Patrick Spens* and *Robin Hood*. For questions as to their popular origin and oral tradition formal histories must be consulted ; but they may be read again, or at least quoted here, to show the vigorous life of popular poetry, independent of the main stream of literature.

Four pioneers must be noticed who complete the

transition to Spenser, and help to find new forms for the expression of the new ideas now filling men's minds. They are Wyatt, Surrey, Sackville, and Gascoigne. It is important to notice that they are all of the upper social class. The various influences which moulded the Elizabethan age will probably be familiar to the class ; the teacher will perhaps find it necessary to sum them up, and might set an essay on the subject. But the fact just indicated should be emphasised as illustrating one important aspect—that it was through the educated, that is, the noble and gentle class, that the inspiration derived from the classics was brought into English literature—neither a purely learned nor a popular movement. Their work was to make poetry native not foreign, direct not allegorical ; to invent new forms, to devise new metres. They gave us the sonnet, blank verse, formal satire. Wyatt and Surrey introduce the sonnet, the history of which should here be traced from Pier delle Vigne (sequence of rimes ab ab ab ab cde cde), and Petrarch, whose form of sonnet should be described and compared with those of Milton and Wordsworth (quoting or reading one at least of each) to show how these two neglect the pause after the octave. The Shakespearean sonnet should also be described by anticipation, and its very different type noted ; and likewise the similar sonnet of Drayton and Daniel. Then the specimens of Wyatt's and Surrey's essays in sonnet-writing should be read, and the tentative character of their rime-sequence noted. About these two poets it remains to point out that they give free

expression to individual feeling, and prepare for the lyric utterance of the Elizabethan times ; that Wyatt gives us formal satire (to be found in Skeat's *Specimens*. Read *The Mean and Sure Estate*, based on Horace, *Sat.* ii. 6 *ad fin.*, which might be read in Conington's translation ; we shall have to recur to Wyatt's satires later) ; that Surrey is the first great translator, and the father of blank verse ; his version of two books of the *Aeneid* has been quoted already. Perhaps, too, the obvious parallel between *Tottel's Miscellany* of 1557 and the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 should be pointed out. Of the other two, Sackville, to be named again in the history of the English Drama, is important as a direct link between Chaucer and Spenser. The *Mirrour for Magistrates* continues Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*. Sackville's Induction, by its Chaucerian stanza and allegorical subject looks backward, by its original presentation of nature it looks forward. Gascoigne, also a link in the dramatic chain, writes satire (with a framework of allegory) in blank verse. Probably the teacher will do well not to introduce the subject of his critical essay, *Notes of Instruction*. The subject is too large for study at school.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DRAMA.

The Elizabethan drama was the product in part of native sources, and in part of the ancient Greek drama, studied and imitated at the Renaissance. Hence it will be well to obtain at the outset a clear idea of Greek Tragedy. The teacher should indicate briefly the origin of Greek tragedy from the religious dance and song in honour of Dionysus, the introduction of speeches from the leader of the chorus, and then of a single actor, and subsequently of a second and third. He will describe the nature of a Greek tragedy when it was fully developed, and of the theatre in which it was performed—the vast auditorium, the full daylight, the mask, the buskin, the eccyclema, the function of the chorus, all elements which made acting in one sense of the term impossible. In particular he will draw attention to the simplicity of the plot, the absence of incident, and the avoidance of any violence on the stage. A better idea of what such a play was like will be gained by reading say the *Agamemnon* in Mr. Morshead's version, or, if it be preferred, Matthew Arnold's *Merope*. If time does not permit of this, at least a chorus, a dialogue, and a

speech should be read. The history of Comedy should likewise be briefly given, and its descent, in its later form as the comedy of manners, to the Romans. The plot of the *Miles Gloriosus* might be outlined, and a scene or two read. The teacher will also do well at this point to obtain definitions of tragedy and comedy, and to discuss the question of the unities, pointing out that Aristotle insists only on unity of action, that of time being approximate, and that of place not mentioned by him.

The native element will require a longer study. The history of the *Mysteries*, or miracle plays, should be given, their introduction into England, their gradual extension and secularisation, with some account of the *Harrowing of Hell*, of which a specimen should be read. Then some details should be given of one of the four cycles, and extracts read, carefully chosen so as to show the familiarity of the verse, the crude wit and rough humour, and the comic relief. Attention should be drawn to the doggrel metre, to the crowding of the stage by the members of various guilds who undertook parts of the cycle; and then the teacher will go on to speak of the *Moralities*, with their allegorical characters, and gradually increasing freedom of treatment, and humanity of the characters. The story, *e.g.* of *Everyman*, or of the *Castle of Perseverance*, or of *Hyche-Scorner* may be told. A definite plot and real characters superadded to the *Moralities* give us a rudimentary drama of native growth, *Everyman* exciting pity and fear, and so being a rudimentary drama, and

Hyche-Scorner depicting manners and character, and so being a rudimentary comedy.

Next he will speak of the *Interludes*, of which Heywood's *Four P's* is a good example for class purposes. Thus the way is prepared for the study of the first English Comedy and Tragedy. The plot of *Ralph Royster Doyster* should be given, and a scene or two read. In it will be observed a more regular plot; the observance of dramatic unity and the division of the play into acts, all due to classical influences, which suggested also some of the characters (compare the *Miles Gloriosus*, which suggests the chief motive). The metre and the significant names are native. More instructive as showing a more complete blending of the streams is *Gorboduc*. The teacher will not fail to point out that this play, like the preceding, was not for popular representation. The circumstances in which each was produced should be made familiar to the class. Let them hear the plot of *Gorboduc*, and read enough to get a notion of the work and the metre, and the combination of English plot and setting, together with contrasted types of characters and symmetrical arrangement of scenes, on the one hand, and the absence of action and use of messengers, and the chorus, on the other, quaintly contrasting with the interludes in dumb show. Note also the rather stiff and monotonous blank verse. Of the authors of *Gorboduc* we have heard before of Sackville. Note that as *Royster Doyster* is based on Plautus, so *Gorboduc* is modelled on Seneca; it was the derivative Roman Comedy and Tragedy which

furnished the type. In Roman tragedy the chorus is little more than an ode between the acts, and the speeches are all-important.

Between the writers of popular interludes or of a broad farce like *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and those who wrote for learned societies or for the Court, we have the so-called University wits. Space will not permit us to notice any except Marlowe. It is in any case better to confine our attention to the three greater dramatists, and in the case of Marlowe and Shakespeare to take as wide a survey as possible in order to see their development. It is suggested, therefore, that the class should read one play of Marlowe in full, namely, *Edward II.*; and parts of *Tamburlaine* (Part I. Act IV. Sc. iv.; Part II. Act II. Sc. iv.; Act IV. Sc. iv.), *Faustus* (Sc. iii. v. xiv. xv. xvi.), and the *Jew of Malta* (Act v. Sc. ii. to the end). The class should be invited to notice in these plays the gradual improvement of Marlowe's blank verse, from *Tamburlaine* to *Edward II.*, in freedom and variety; the extravagance of diction and thought, gradually lessening; the influence of the *Moralities* and *Mysteries*, seen in characters typical of one virtue or vice; the absence of development in the more complex characters; the loose construction of the plays—though this is less noticeable in the *Jew of Malta*, and not at all in *Edward II.*; his clear and current English, easier than Shakespeare's, and free from euphuism; and his curious mental limitations—lack of humour, lack of love interest, ignorance of women, want of direct observation. Before reading *Edward II.*

it would be well to describe the Elizabethan in contrast to the Greek stage; the crowding of the stage, as in the *Mysteries*, with many actors and attendants; the briskness of the action and absence of reticence. Then, too, the freedom with which Marlowe, like Shakespeare, treats his materials should be shown by a comparison of the events of the play with the facts of history; and the shadowy and unreal nature of the characters, except perhaps those of Kent and Gaveston, should be pointed out.

Owing to the great range of Shakespeare, a more extensive selection from his works is needed. It will be impossible to read several plays in class, and they must be read out of school. We begin with one of the earliest plays, and end with one of the latest; we must have a history, a Roman play, and one of the great tragedies, and perhaps one or two more. We suggest, therefore, *Love's Labour's Lost, Richard II., The Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar, Lear*, and the *Tempest*. One would gladly add *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It*, but probably six will be as much as can be managed. To take the chosen plays in order, the teacher will point out the signs of immaturity in *Love's Labour's Lost*—the frequent rimes, the weak repartee, the puns, the straining for effect, the symmetry of the *dramatis personae*; the originality and excellence of the plot, the moral (*naturam expellas furca*), the genial satire on current follies and pedantries, and the source of the characters, with a particular attention to those of Boyet, Biron and Rosaline —types which occur again. This may also be the

best occasion to explain the speeches of Shakespeare's clowns, their errors being due to an imperfect assimilation of the increasingly preponderant Latin element in the language; and the hyperbole of speech, the common vice of the age, from which Shakespeare never wholly freed himself.

Richard II. will need little comment. There are the characters of Richard, Bolingbroke, York, and the Queen. The comparison with *Edward II.* is inevitable. It will probably be felt that Shakespeare's play is of more sustained interest, and Richard the more complex character; while the pathos of the closing scenes of *Edward II.* is greater, and the interest increasing more certainly to the end; and this is partly due to the fact that Edward's character is the more amiable of the two. In this and subsequent plays the great improvement of the blank verse should be noted, and the dropping of rime. Both *Edward II.* and *Richard II.*, it should be observed, are based on Holinshed. It will also be pointed out that Shakespeare deals as freely as Marlowe with his materials.

The Merchant of Venice again suggests comparison with Marlowe. Note, however, that if the *Jew of Malta* is a better constructed play, Shylock is more human than Barabas. The plot of the *Merchant* deserves especial study, for it has four distinct motives, all borrowed, and ignores the unities. Other points for discussion are the characters of Antonio and of Bassanio; and how far Shakespeare is superior to the anti-Jewish prejudice of his day. The influence of Marlowe,

possibly seen in these two plays, is henceforth outgrown.

In *Julius Caesar* the points that need discussion are the source of Caesar's history, and the compression into a few days of the history of several years; the irregular nature of the plot, in which the catastrophe occurs half-way through (Dr. Dowden's unconvincing theory that the subject of the play is not Caesar but Caesarism may be put before the class; it should be reminded of the definition of tragedy and be made to see that the theory is incompatible with it); the characters of Julius himself, of Antonius, Brutus, Cassius, and Portia—especially that of Brutus; was he a shallow idealist, a single-hearted patriot dying for a lost cause, or a self-important weakling, used by clearer-sighted men? and the speeches of Brutus and Antony at the funeral; was Antony a mere self-seeker, playing on the passions of the mob for his own ends, or was there real sorrow for his master behind his extraordinarily effective speech?

In *King Lear* we reach the culmination of Shakespeare's genius, and the play should receive the closest study. If time permits it should be read in class. The story, told or alluded to in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Layamon, the *Mirror for Magistrates*, the *Faerie Queen*, was also the subject of a previous play, so that here, as in so many other of his plays, Shakespeare uses a tale already worked up in dramatic form. The characters are of quite extraordinary interest. Note the gradual progress of Lear's madness, with the glimmering return of reason at the end; how the fool—type

of shrewd native sense hidden under a covering of jest and mockery—fades out of the play when his work is done and Lear's madness is too violent to bear relief by a fool's caustic wit ; how in the assumed madness of Edgar we have a contrast between mere feebleness of mind and frenzy ; how Cordelia's destruction is the result of her own obstinacy, inherited from her father ; how Regan and Goneril, Kent and Edgar, Edmund and Oswald are finely differentiated. The plot of *King Lear* should be discussed ; the points which arise in connection with it are : (1) Is there compensation for the division of interest and destruction of unity caused by the subsidiary and analogous tragedy of Gloucester and his sons ? (2) Is the punishment of Lear for a caprice—itself arising out of his affection—too great for the offence ? The answer is to be found in a consideration of the nature of tragedy, which is not poetic justice. (3) Was Shakespeare wise in deserting Holinshed and the older play, which gave Lear a happy ending ? (4) Is the initial improbability of the story sufficient to lessen our interest in the tragedy ? It will be remembered that there is a similar motive in *Gorboduc*, that the tragedy of Gloucester proceeds on similar lines, without the improbability—which therefore is not essential ; that the story was familiar ; and that the test would cause us to condemn many of the greatest Greek tragedies.

Nothing will show a class of intelligent boys the essential identity of tragedy on the Athenian and on the Elizabethan stage, combined with their

accidental difference of presentment, more clearly than a comparison of the *Agamemnon* and *King Lear*. Both Aeschylus and Shakespeare have a supreme command of language and metre ; both excite pity and fear in the highest degree, and both are masters of pathos ; both deal with the mystery of evil, the inscrutability of the purposes of the gods ; but in the *Agamemnon* the reversal of fortune is swift and sudden, while in *Lear* it is a storm which gathers force gradually, to sweep away all who come within its reach ; in the *Agamemnon* the two or three actors are isolated, and stand out against the background of necessity ; in *Lear* necessity drives onward to an appointed end a whole microcosm of human beings ; Aeschylus tells us of the power of fate, while Shakespeare lets us see it at work ; finally, whereas in one play it is the chorus which raises, in stately songs, the problem of man's fate, in the other it is the characters themselves. Aeschylus gives us a solution ; Shakespeare's characters guess, but there is no finality in their answers. Note, too, that Shakespeare, again deserting his authorities, puts the action of his play in heathen times, that he may have the greater freedom of speculation. " The gods are just and of our pleasant vices Make instruments to plague us " ; "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods ; They kill us for their sport " ; " It is the stars, The stars above us govern our condition." Perhaps the final answer will be found in the last of our plays.

It will be instructive after reading the *Tempest* to revert to *Love's Labour's Lost* and compare the

earlier and the later play. Note the disappearance of rime, of conceits, of symmetrical grouping of characters, the increase of weak endings (lines with an additional hypermetrical syllable). The satire, too, is gone; the poet in the large wisdom of middle age has become too tolerant for satire. The *Tempest*, like *Love's Labour's Lost*, observes the unities, and its sources cannot be traced. The master will point out that the *Tempest* is one of a group of plays, written at the end of his active life, in which broken ties are renewed, and families which have been separated by quarrels or misfortunes are re-united by forgiveness and restored prosperity. He will show them in Caliban a picture of humanity hardly raised above the brute, yet with the capacity for emotion and for learning; in Prospero the finished product, a mind which through suffering and reason has gained self-control and power over lower nature; and perhaps will find here the answer to the riddle of *King Lear*—"We are such stuff as dreams are made of."

The careful study of these six plays will have indicated to the teacher what points in Shakespeare's greatness he will endeavour to draw out in discussion with his class—his universality, his profound knowledge of the human heart, his skill in characterisation, his serene morality, sense of proportion and technical skill.

Ben Jonson will prove less interesting to boys than either Shakespeare or Marlowe, and it is difficult to find a single play in a form available for school use which can safely be read in class, or put into the hands of boys for private reading.

The master will do well to confine himself to a selection of his own from one or two plays. If we choose *Volpone* and *Epicene*, we shall note that each play turns, as in Marlowe's earlier plays, on one exaggerated quality, though it is on a less heroic plan; Volpone is a monster of avarice, Morose of eccentricity; neither has any dignity. We shall note also Jonson's skill in devising his plots, and sustaining the interest to the close; his observance of the unities; his mechanical characters, which come on the stage fully developed (though this is perhaps a necessity arising out of the limitation of time), and are types, rather than individuals; and his workmanlike blank verse. Note, too, that the minor characters in *Epicene* are life-like presentments of superficial refinement and essential vulgarity. Read also Dryden's criticism of the play in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesie*.

The subsequent history of the drama it will be impossible to follow in detail. The teacher might find time to give it in outline at this point—the separation of tragedy and comedy, the one diverging further and further from real life—the so-called heroic tragedy—and the other following it only too faithfully, and instinctively dropping verse, as Jonson had dropped it in the *Epicene*, to suit its lower level of feeling; and its final severance from literature after Goldsmith and Sheridan, whose plays there may be time to examine later.

CHAPTER V.

SPENSER AND MILTON, AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES.

THE way has already been prepared for the study of Spenser; yet perhaps before reading some of his work it may be well to insist on the practical outcome of the Renaissance—freedom, causing the growth of nationalism and of individualism; a critical spirit, which, applied to religion, caused the reformation; to philosophy, the end of scholasticism, and the beginning of modern science; to institutions, the growth of modern political and social theories; to literature, the rejection of old models and the search for new. The facts of life are seen with fresh interest; Greek and Latin literature is deliberately chosen for standards; the works of the Elizabethans show freedom of thought, fulness of life, boldness in experiment; some lack of judgment, running riot in exuberance, and even affectation and mannerism, but direct observation and direct contact with reality. The beginning of the age may be placed in 1579, which saw the publication of the *Shepherd's Calendar* and Lyly's *Euphues*. The teacher should point out the genesis of the Pastoral from Theocritus through

Vergil, and its convention that shepherd and poet are convertible terms. He might read one of the shorter idylls of Theocritus in Mr. Lang's translation. A description of the *Shepherd's Calendar* and its contents will show Spenser's versatility and restless experimenting, and a specimen should be read. The teacher will draw attention to the " rustical dialect," and its object, to give a homely appearance to the verse, and to the varying and sometimes involved metre, where Theocritus and Vergil are almost uniform. This brings us to the *Faerie Queen*, of which the teacher will choose a book ; the fifth is on the whole the simplest. Whatever book is chosen may be supplemented by the extracts from the others given in the *Treasury*. If the book be found too long to be read in class, it may be set for home reading, a canto or more at a time, with some written analysis as a record. There are many subjects for discussion and instruction in connection with the *Faerie Queen*. First the plan of the whole work should be indicated, and the unfortunate artifice by which the key to the whole was to be contained in the last book ; the twelve converging stories ; the historical basis of book v. —if that be chosen ; the facts of Spenser's life as bearing on his work ; the Spenserian stanza, its strength and weakness, and how it has been used since Spenser's day ; the influences under which Spenser wrote—the old social order surviving in pageantry and meaningless forms, the religious and political struggles of the day ; the allegorical nature of the work, it being noted that the cruder

allegory which personifies mere abstractions has disappeared, and we have the more developed form of real persons who are types ; the personal element, *i.e.* the real characters hidden behind the personality of Duessa, Orgoglio, etc., the incongruous blending of new and old, of Paganism and Christianity ; and the artificiality of Spenser's vocabulary, with words coined anew, or changed in form and sense, with which may be compared the artificial dialect of the Homeric poems. Note also the defects of the allegorical form in so long a poem—the double allegory, moral and religious or political, and how it gradually becomes less obtrusive. In summing up Spenser's poetical quality the teacher will not fail to note four things : (1) Spenser's classicism—both his extensive though inaccurate learning and his classical spirit, his combination of simple directness of expression with the appreciation of moral and physical beauty. (2) Spenser—in spite of stateliness and beauty—does not give us real life, but masquerade and pageantry, the pastoral and the chivalrous epic. Literature has still to free itself from tradition and devise its own forms. (3) Spenser is called the " poets' poet." The poet or maker forms his own world, and roams in it at will. Spenser's ideal world lacks cohesion, and we lose our way in it. But the poet finds his way because the world is like his own. Spenser is best understood by one who lives in a universe similar to his. (4) His puritanism, which connects him with Milton, and is shown in the whole scheme of his work.

Spenser's followers need no lengthened study; if the teacher finds time he might let the class read specimens of Davies, Giles and Phineas Fletcher, Browne and Wither; all reflect in some degree Spenser's manner and spirit; Wither is important as connecting this with another line of descent from the greater Elizabethans. He also shows the curious lack of self-criticism of some of the lyrists. The lyric poetry of the time cannot be neglected. All the great dramatists were great lyric poets also; sufficient examples of their art may be found in the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson. If Shakespeare is the Catullus, Jonson is the Horace of the group; in his highly wrought lyrics verbal felicity masks the absence of the deeper inspiration. He is the father of a group of poets whose work shows a tendency contrary to Spenser's puritanism. They are the priests Donne, Crashaw, Herbert, Herrick, and the cavaliers Carew, Suckling and Lovelace. Their poems—a specimen or two of each—may be fitly prefaced by Johnson's well-known criticism of Cowley; when they have been read, the teacher may revert to it, and see how far it is borne out. What Johnson says of *Lycidas* may be compared. The teacher will point out that a certain extravagance of thought and quaintness and exaggeration of expression is common to most if not all the Elizabethans. Their metrical skill and genuine lyric feeling should also be recognised.

Of Milton as much as possible should be read: the early poems, some of the sonnets, and a book or more of the *Paradise Lost*. Here again much

of the reading may be done at home. The class should note the closely antithetical nature of the twin poems *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro* (and be taught the quantity of the middle vowel of the latter name) ; *Lycidas* may be compared with the third idyll of Moschus (Mr. Lang's translation) and with the *Adonais* ; especially for the jarring note produced by the futile rancour of *Adonais* and the polemic of the *Lycidas*. Before reading *Comus* the meaning of the term 'Masque' should be given and the previous history of the form told in outline. Then, before we read the *Paradise Lost*, the plot should be sketched. Intelligent boys will see for themselves how far the poem is removed from the primitive epic, as neither a compilation of lays nor a picture of contemporary life, as lacking complexity and encumbered with theology. The character of Satan should be discussed ; and the Miltonic blank verse should be examined and compared with earlier forms—*e.g.* Surrey, Gorboduc, Marlowe—and especial note should be taken of the variety of pause and predominance of medial pauses, and the tendency in Milton's verse, as well as in his prose, to larger units.

Malory, like Chaucer, had no immediate successors capable of maintaining his level. Ascham indeed gives us simple and native prose, free from the pedantry with which he is charged. The boys may be told the common criticism of his English, that it reads like a literal translation from Latin, and test its truth for themselves. If Ascham's style is colourless, Lyly's they will find too highly coloured. The meaning of the name 'Euphues'

should be explained, and its descent to Lyly through Ascham from Plato ; the plot of *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit,* and of *Euphues and her England* may be briefly told ; then if specimens are read it will be seen that Lyly's vocabulary is as vernacular as Ascham's ; but his style is variegated by laboured antithesis and extravagant simile. His natural history in particular is to nature what heraldry is to art. The whole question of the meaning and origin of Euphuism should be discussed ; it should be made clear that this play with words and search for quaintness of expression did not originate with Lyly, and was not confined to prose, nor to the literature of this country, but was an efflorescence due to the too abundant vitality of the age; that much of Lyly's mannerism is not Euphuism, but is peculiar to him (this a specimen of the *Arcadia* will show plainly) ; and that it was the transference from language to thought of the same restless desire for novelty which produced the so-called metaphysical poets. Before going on Sidney's *Arcadia* should be described ; the teacher will perhaps revert to it when he comes to speak of the novel. Neither Ascham nor Lyly could be a perfect model ; but in Bacon we have a more enduring type. Some of the *Essays* should be read—at home if there is not time enough in school. It would be as well to explain the term 'Essay' as used by Bacon, and the difference in its meaning at the present day ; and the study of his *Essays* may be preceded by some specimens of Florio's translation of Montaigne. The essays of Bacon chosen should include that

of *Building* and of *Gardens*. There are two subjects to be discussed in connection with Bacon; his style and his mind. His style will be found to have the qualities of good prose, short of the very highest—it is simple, direct, rhythmical, with all the quaintness and originality of the Euphuists; but Bacon's wit is his servant; theirs is their master. In particular, his striking similes should be noticed. Bacon's reasoning, which, at any rate in the *Essays*, proceeds by concrete examples, is his one poetic quality. His mind is broad rather than deep, full of practical wisdom, benevolent, tolerant; but note his absence of passion, his inadequate and shallow view of love, his imperfect knowledge of life and nature below the surface. Let the class be asked to reflect on the bearing which these qualities have on the question of the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare's plays. Note finally the touch of kinship with Lord Beaconsfield in a certain gorgeousness of taste shown in the essays mentioned above.

What can be done in English prose with a simple vernacular style and small units may be seen alike from the *Authorised Version* and from Bunyan. The former should now be compared with the versions of Wyclif and of Tyndale, on which it is largely based. The teacher will find in Mr. Saintsbury's *Elizabethan Literature* an analysis of the causes which enabled a committee of divines to produce a version sustained so remarkably at a high level of excellence, and so harmonious. Perhaps the chief thing to note for our purpose is that the English used is free from worn-

out metaphors such as overload our language to-day—the alluvial deposit of the literary stream.

From the *Authorised Version* it is natural to turn to Bunyan, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* is our next text. His prose recalls that of the *Bible*; the reader will note that it is free from conceits and has a homely vigour of its own, though perhaps lacking distinction. The book will probably need to be read away from class owing to its length; but the allegory should be discussed and its merit and inherent defects pointed out—the obtrusion of theological discussions, the unreality of the characters, which have little more complexity than those of moralities, the too rapid change in Christian's motive from fear of destruction to love of God, the bare patches in the allegory, where direct religious expressions of a puritan cast replace the symbols of a traveller going to a new country. But the merit of the narrative portions—their interest, terseness, and descriptive power—should be noticed, as marking a link in the chain of story-telling from which depends the novel.

From the excellent models given by Bacon and the translators we come to a group of writers, in whom prose becomes unwieldy—Jeremy Taylor, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne. The pupils will note the inordinate length of their sentences, especially those of Taylor and Milton; and their massive periods, weighted with Latinisms. Browne is so important for his influence on Johnson and Lamb that as many specimens of his work should be read as time permits. Note about him especially his learning and conceits—he is a metaphysical

poet in prose—and how the law of association works with him in obscure or less obvious ways, giving quaintness to his thoughts, and justifying his style ; for style is the fit expression of thought, and Browne uses quaint words to convey quaint thoughts. Note too the kinship of Browne and Montaigne in their self-revelation ; and their greater difference, in that Montaigne begins and ends in himself and is an irresponsible babbler, while Browne is a scientific observer, who looks through his own personality at a wide range of facts and fancies. A note may also be given on Browne's Latinism, which is partly a preponderance of current words of Latin origin, partly an etymological Latinity of meaning, partly a licence in coining uncouth Latin derivatives. These should be illustrated from the works.

CHAPTER VI.

DRYDEN AND POPE.

In dealing with the important change which came over English poetry during the seventeenth century, the teacher will find it easiest to convey the nature of that change if he analyses it into two main threads—reaction against the riotous freedom of the later Elizabethan period and the gradual dying down of the vehemence which made the children of the Renaissance fling themselves on life as on an undiscovered country. Hence there is introduced a certain formality into the garb of literature and then a certain preoccupation with the garb, hampering freedom of movement. For this we shall find preparation in the work of Waller, Cowley, and Dryden. If the class be asked to review what they have learned of the two commonest English metres, they will perhaps remember that blank verse—corresponding to the Latin hexameter—had reached its fullest development with Milton, and that of its essence is freedom from restriction; while rimed couplets, corresponding to the Elegiac metre, were as yet in the making; and just as the Romans imported rigidity into the Elegiac,

it was the work of these poets and others to set up a standard for the rimed couplet. The teacher should read the well-known quotation from the Preface to Dryden's *Rival Ladies* concerning Waller. Then let him read or quote a few lines of Chaucerian or Elizabethan rimed couplets, pointing out the absence of marked pause at the end of the first line of each couplet, and the frequency with which the couplet fails to be self-contained. Then let the class read specimens of Waller and mark the smoothness of his verse, and the rigidity of the structure in couplets. The same qualities may be noted in Cowley and Denham; and these poets mark the nature of the new inspiration in poetry, which came from reflection rather than passion: Denham in particular marks the transition to the school of Pope in diction by his use of adjectives,[1] and of pretentious names for common things, and in his tendency to mechanical personification.

Before reading Dryden's *Satires* some historical information will be necessary to render them fully intelligible; and the class will probably need to be reminded of the definition of satire. In discussing the merits of Dryden as a satirist, special attention should be given to the excellence of his portraits, the absence of personal spite, and his economy of effect—pictures finished in a few

[1] The teacher should point out the proper use of adjectives, to add a qualification to a noun which is not necessarily and immediately suggested by the noun; where such suggestion is immediate, as for example in "verdant grass," the adjective is superfluous, and therefore vicious.

strokes, not laboured and over-elaborated. In all these things the comparison with Pope when we come to the *Dunciad* will be in his favour.

The qualities of Dryden's prose will be easily seen from a few specimens; its clearness, compactness, and vigour; its native vocabulary and vernacular syntax; yet it has little elevation or impressiveness. He stands at the head of modern prose and poetry alike; but others were needed to carry his work further. A word or two should perhaps be said on Dryden's critical work. It is not without significance that the representative poet of his day should have taken a new departure in criticism as well as in pure style. There is no time for a detailed study; it is easy to see that his judgment is honest, unprejudiced, and definite.

Of Pope the teacher should make his own selection—as comprehensive a selection as possible; but it should include some of his pastoral poetry, the *Rape of the Lock*, some portions of the *Essay in Criticism*, the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, and part of the *Dunciad*. The ground should be prepared by a brief consideration of the social and political condition of England in Pope's time; a comparison of the Augustan age at Rome, from which his school borrowed its name; and a consideration of the natural products in literature of such a time; poetry working towards an object—perfection of form—rather than proceeding from an inspiration; the newspaper and its correlative, journalism; the essay in a new form, less an examination of a thing than a monograph in some branch of learning;

biography, history, pamphlets, and letters of a literary cast. Some account must also be given, better perhaps after a study of Pope than as a preliminary, of the change in subject matter and diction which we saw beginning; the vast and varied landscape of life in its entirety narrowed down to the dreary waste of politics, the barren fields of philosophy, the flat plains of formal morality; and since poetry has gone out of life, the attempt to elevate the commonplace to the true poetic level by the aid of language instead of imagination.[1]

[1] It may perhaps be of use to the teacher if we collect here some of the more obvious elements of poetic diction at this period. They are: (1) The use of classical terms, as "Phoebus" for the sun. (2) The use of frigid periphrases, as "the short tube that fumes beneath his nose" for a pipe, or the "leaden death" for a bullet. (Compare Tennyson's "The bright death quivered at the victim's throat," where the periphrasis is vivid and effective.) (3) Use of non-significant adjectives. Compare

"No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear
Pleased thy pale ghost, or decked thy mournful bier"

with

"Now air is hushed, save where the weak-ey'd bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn."

(4) The antithetical arrangement of clauses, a rhetorical device, more suited to prose, as in

"To err is human, to forgive divine."

(5) The constant use of participles, *e.g.*

"And, pleas'd the Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm."

(6) Frequent use of apostrophe and of mere mannerisms, as the use of "eye" for "look at," or of "each" for "every." (7) Weak personifications, as

"And taught the doubtful battle how to rage."

In reading the pastorals we shall note that this artificial form, half allegorical in Spenser, has been hardened into a lifeless convention; and that Pope's scenes from nature have as a rule little sign of direct observation. The *Essay on Criticism* might well be compared with the *Ars Poetica* in Conington's translation, or in the original, if intelligible to the class. The translation of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* should be compared with Chapman and with any good modern version. A few lines will suffice to show how Homer is disguised. The incident which gave rise to the *Rape of the Lock* should be told. This poem will serve to illustrate the difference between wit and humour. In the *Essay on Man* we have the best example of Pope's ideal in writing "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed"—a vegetarian banquet causing temporary repletion followed by a desire for more substantial food. Pope's satire, formal and other, will reveal his personal feeling. His portrait of Harvey and attack on Addison should be compared with Dryden's famous portraits. The history of the gradual growth of the *Dunciad* will form a practical comment on Coleridge's dictum.

The qualities of Pope's mind and character are very completely reflected in his verse. Hence his life needs careful study. The question may be discussed why he shares with Shakespeare the distinction of being more frequently quoted than any other poet; and how far it is true that in him rhetoric predominates over poetry. In this connection a comparison with Byron will be

interesting. The opportunity should be taken to make clear the distinction between poetry and eloquence, and to elucidate the apparent paradox of the self-consciousness of rhetoric, which presupposes an audience, and the freedom from it of poetry, in which the poet has no aim but to express himself—self-consciousness of course needing the contrast of another personality as a background. A further note on this subject will be found at the end of the chapter.

On turning to the prose of this period the teacher should make Defoe the text for a history of journalism, the main facts of which are readily accessible. Defoe's life will throw much light on his multifarious productiveness; and an account of his principal works will show us the journalistic type of mind in full activity, with its rapidity, realism, slovenliness, and unscrupulousness. It is assumed that everyone in the class will have read *Robinson Crusoe*, and remember it sufficiently to appreciate its most marked characteristic—its verisimilitude, which is in part due to its literary defects, want of compression, unnecessary detail, and garrulousness.

The life of Swift, like that of Pope and Defoe, is of great importance for the right understanding of his work. His character, reflected in his work, repays careful study. We have included in the list of texts the *Battle of the Books* and the *Voyage to Lilliput*; the teacher may prefer some other part of *Gulliver's Travels*. A specimen of his poetry should also be read. The point at issue between Bentley and the rest of the world with

regard to the so-called *Letters of Phalaris* should be stated. The later parts of Gulliver should be looked at to show how the moderate satire of the earlier portions of the book grows savage and venomous towards the end. It is not necessary or desirable to enlarge on the unpleasant side of Swift's character and work. But it is worth while to note that his sincerity and minuteness of observation made his verse less conventional than much verse of his time; while his prose has the best qualities of Dryden's with far more force and distinction. Note that Swift and Johnson are the two great minds of the age; Swift the genius warped and diseased, Johnson the sane and normal intelligence. Note further that Swift's satire is animated by hatred, not the desire to reform; it corrodes and does not cleanse; and that the great art of *Gulliver's Travels* lies in his firm and skilful building up of a consistent fabric on the foundation of an impossible hypothesis; and lastly how his powerful and original genius sets him apart from many of the tendencies of his age.

It is a relief to turn from the gloomy ferocity of Swift in his later years to the cheerful wit and playfulness of the *Coverley Papers*, which form our next text. The teacher will no doubt introduce it by an account of the literary ventures of Steele and Addison, and of the beginning in the *Tatler* of periodical literature as distinct from the mere newspaper. The points to be noticed in connection with these writers are: (1) Addison's prose style, which continues the traditions of Dryden

with more deliberate art, attaining to an appearance of ease, as Horace in verse; (2) his artistic handling of character—well-marked types whose idiosyncrasies are allowed to unfold gradually; (3) the influence of Steele and Addison on society through their writing—their remarkable appeal to higher standards of taste and morals in a corrupt age; (4) the contrast between Steele and Addison—Addison correct in conduct and style, Steele less rigid but more generous, broader, less refined but more human; (5) hence comes the difference between their satire and their characters in fiction. Addison is gentle in tone, but malicious; his Sir Roger is constantly made ridiculous, and is a self-important fool; Steele is more genial, and his satire has no sting; his Sir Roger is more sensible and human. This point should be brought out in reading the *Coverley Papers*.

NOTE ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN POETRY AND RHETORIC.

Poetry and rhetoric appeal alike to the emotions, aim at exciting the imagination, and at pleasing the ear, and often use the same diction and figures of speech. It is not always easy for the inexperienced to distinguish between them. The difference between them arises from this: that the poet's primary object is to express himself, the orator's to impress others; the poet, so far as he is conscious of an audience, desires to give pleasure, the orator to persuade; the poet

identifies himself with his reader or hearer, the orator feels the need of conciliating him. Hence the poet is not only free from self-consciousness, but he is spontaneous, independent of a hearer, and sincere ; while the orator cannot escape self-consciousness altogether, cannot dispense with an audience, and need not be sincere. Poetry, in other words, is its own justification ; oratory is a means to an end. When the poet becomes self-conscious he sinks to rhetoric ; when the rhetorician forgets himself he rises to poetry.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHNSON, GOLDSMITH, AND THE NOVELISTS.

JOHNSON'S life is far more important for the teacher and student than his work, of which we recommend that only specimens should be read. Boswell's *Life* is, of course, indispensable; yet it is far too long to be read in class, and it is not the sort of book which can conveniently be used for home work. The better plan will be to place it in the hands of the class (in the marvellously cheap edition of Mr. Fitzgerald, published by Messrs. Sands), and to read the selection indicated by the editor in a note at the end (the teacher should take the precaution of verifying and correcting the references to pages beforehand, as many are wrong and involve search and loss of time), and to trust that some at any rate will be incited to a fuller study. The general character of the age will easily be recognised—sound common-sense, which did not always recognise its limitations. Most characteristic of it and of him is Johnson's famous refutation of Berkeleian immaterialism. The best comment on his satires will be found in his model,

Juvenal. If the teacher points out the transition from Horace, the genial man of the world, to Juvenal, the stern reformer, and reads some lines from Gifford's translation of the third and tenth satires, it will be clear why Johnson imitates Juvenal rather than Horace. The absence of the personal note will be observed in strange contrast to Pope's spitefulness. An epitome of the story of *Rasselas*, and a brief extract will make clear its heavy and improving nature. His hand is heavy also in the *Rambler* and *Idler*, and should be compared with Addison's light touch. Of Johnson the critic we have already seen something. He supported the school of Pope with all the weight of his learning and solid reasoning; perhaps criticism is better postponed, as being uninteresting to boys, and outside our range; it will suffice to point out that Johnson's merit lies in his consistent application of principles, which, however, we no longer find broad enough to found on them a complete theory of poetry. Johnson's prose style deserves careful attention. Read a short passage of Dryden, and of Sir Thomas Browne, and then see what Johnson has done with prose. He has made it heavy, antithetical, verbose; given it dignity but failed to give it charm. The extracts from Boswell's *Life of Johnson* will reveal in Johnson's character the secret of his influence upon his generation—a subject for discussion afterwards. Two points are to be noted in connection with Boswell—that he invented the new biography, which is neither a mere narration of facts nor a panegyric, but a life self-revealed through

documents and reported conversations ; and that opinion is divided on Boswell's own character and ability—some regarding him as a mere helot with a note-book, others as a man of considerable sense and penetration. It is a question on which the views of an intelligent class might perhaps be interesting.

We now come to the novel. Some definition will be essential. It is generally held to involve three elements : a story of real life, some delineation of character, and a love-interest. The teacher should trace its descent from the Romance, which lacked reality and characterisation (the original meaning of the word ' Romance ' might be given with its changes), the novel in the sense of a brief tale usually turning on a jest or contretemps, and the Spanish tale of low life and criminals. Of the first we have had examples in Malory, Lyly, Sidney; the second contributed little but the name. The third contributes the element of realism, but is not as a rule suitable for study in schools. The teacher might quote Thomas Nash's *Jack Wilton* and Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. Of the various books which have been wholly or partly read, the question should be raised how far they come under the definition of the novel, as at present understood. It will be seen that *Robinson Crusoe* has no plot, and no love-interest ; *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Gulliver's Travels* are not stories of real life, the *Coverley Papers* have no plot, though they have the element of character. Boys do not now read *Gil Blas*, or they would have an excellent introduction to the English novel—a story of real life

and adventure, but not based on crime or the marvellous.

Of Richardson we would select *Pamela* or *Sir Charles Grandison*. *Clarissa* cannot be dealt with so as to make it suitable for school use without destroying it. Whatever novel of Richardson or Fielding is selected should be read out of class; and it need not be said that Richardson will need abbreviating and Fielding expurgation (suitable editions are published by Routledge). The teacher should point out how Richardson's previous experience led him to choose a narrative in the form of letters, and should indicate the nature of the three stories (softening *Clarissa*, of course). He will draw attention to the excellence of Richardson's insight into character—at any rate female character—in the making, and his inartistic prolongation of the story after the dénouement; and to his theatrical men—the ridiculous Mr. B.; Lovelace, the melodramatic villain, always calling the attention of his friends to his villainy; Belfort, the reformed rake, who sends lectures and sermons to Lovelace by post, but does not take steps to procure Clarissa's release; Sir Charles Grandison, the prig. The class will see what the novel owes to Richardson—the one element of careful character-drawing. Note Richardson's lack of humour, his prolix and sloppy style, his oily morality. For plot we must look to Fielding. It would be best to describe the genesis of *Joseph Andrews*, and to read *Tom Jones*. Note Fielding's weakness—his insipid heroines and perfunctory love-making—and his far more numerous merits; careful plots, real

life, crowded stage, abundant episodes (perhaps too long sometimes) and knowledge of men. His Homeric similes should be compared with Swift's and illustrated from Homer ; and his introductions must not be forgotten, in which we have him talking to the reader on any subject that occurs to him, in playful monologue ; the class will see in him a forerunner here of Thackeray. The teacher may also think it worth while to discuss another point in which Fielding resembles Thackeray—his greater sympathy with the bad than with the good characters. If Thackeray's better characters are slightly ridiculous at times, Fielding's are less real than his others. Probably the student of humanity finds vice more interesting. Virtue is normal ; it is the deviation from the normal which attracts attention. Finally, let it be pointed out that Fielding gave the novel the form which it has kept since, except for occasional variations.

It is doubtful whether Smollett and Sterne should be mentioned at all ; if they are, let the teacher read an extract or two from *Peregrine Pickle*, *Humphrey Clinker*, and *Tristram Shandy*. In *Peregrine* they will see the high spirits of Fielding passing into ferocity, and monstrosities for human beings ; but Smollett gives us for the first time the type of comic sailor who appears to think only in nautical terms. *Humphrey Clinker* is milder, and reverts to the epistolary form, and may have influenced Miss Burney, whose *Evelina* might also be looked at. The class should be made to see how much Miss Burney reflects Richardson in her tone and her hero—though her men are more real

than his—and Smollett in the rough and farcical humour ; and surpasses both in the breadth of her interest in character. Extracts from *Tristram Shandy* should be chosen with a view to show Sterne's freakish humour, often studied and mechanical, dilatory narrative, without thread or connection, and the oddities which serve him as characters. These three authors may suggest reasons why the novel did not at that time fill the place in modern literature which was in store for it ; but had to wait for a fresh impulse, given to it later by Jane Austen.

The teacher may find it necessary to omit these last three writers ; but he cannot pass over the life and work of Goldsmith. We must read the *Deserted Village*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and *She Stoops to Conquer*, to gain an idea of Goldsmith's versatility. The teacher will pass lightly over his poetry, pointing out, in view of the change that was taking place, that Goldsmith belongs to the classical school, though with more freshness and less artificiality than many, and, while he describes accurately, has no feeling for nature except for its human interest. But the *Vicar of Wakefield*, a more important work, displays equal individuality. The points to be noted about it are its absence of love-interest and plot, except of the most rudimentary kind, and the improbability of the story, combined with excellent and natural character-drawing. *She Stoops to Conquer* is allied to the *Vicar* in its naturalness, and accurate presentation of well defined types of characters whose troubles are the result of their qualities. Let the class

note how Goldsmith's character is in contrast with Johnson's in some ways and is reflected in his work—his humour, simplicity, and kindliness; and also mark the characteristic difference in their style; Goldsmith is Johnsonian with a difference —a lighter hand, more urbanity, more music. His prose at its best is very nearly perfect. It will be difficult to get through the *Vicar of Wakefield* in school, and it should be added to the list of books for home reading.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REACTION.

It will be proper, before tracing the steps by which the supremacy of the classical school was overthrown, to look back and reiterate what classicism was. We saw the classical poets deliberately giving up their freedom, restricting themselves almost entirely to highly-wrought work in one metre, and tending to express themselves in an artificial dialect. We saw that they were no longer impelled to give utterance to fresh thoughts crowding upon them in an age when life was full of interest, nor to give free play to their imagination, but deliberately aimed at the perfect expression of the commonplace. Thus freedom and exuberance were exchanged for method and restraint. Further, we saw a tendency to narrow the sympathies; on the one hand, their subject is man rather than men, and man such as civilisation and the age of Anne had made him; on the other, nature is less an object of interest than a necessary setting. It is not true that the classical poets do not describe accurately, for much of their description—as far as it goes—is accurate enough; but nature, like man, tends in their works to be generalised. Thus

for human nature in its complexity and external nature in its variety they substituted artificial life and conventionality. The reaction means the recovery of freedom and the extension of the range of sympathy ; but it means a good deal more. It means that nature becomes henceforth the direct and primary interest of poetry. Hence the appearance of the novel, though its development was arrested for the moment, is significant ; for it was destined to take to itself much of the inheritance of poetry. The teacher should explain how it is that external nature comes into poetry and art so late and at first so subordinately, not becoming an absorbing interest till the forces of nature are in some degree tamed, and cease to be an object of terror. A note on the different ways in which poets have regarded nature will be found in Appendix A.

We shall see that the poets of the eighteenth century instinctively threw off metrical restrictions ; we shall see their widening sympathy and increasing love and study of nature ; but in diction they were in many cases still bound by convention, and such of them as escaped had to work out their own freedom. Nor do they appear to have been, as a rule, deliberate in their departure from accepted canons, and the rules of a critical system which Johnson's loud voice and great authority maintained during his life against all comers. The classical school found their rules in the works of ancient classical writers ; but in reality their models were far more restricted. Aristotle's rules are based on an analysis of exist-

ing Greek literature; they are the statement of limitations actually observed by great writers. It was the Romans, with their relatively weak imagination, and their passion for regularity and order, who turned observed conditions into rigid rules binding on all future literature; it was the later Romans whom the classical school followed, Horace rather than Catullus, Seneca rather than Sophocles. It was not till a more catholic interest in the classics was revived, that revolt became formal and intentional, and the new romantic school was born. Hence we must expect throughout this period of transition to find poetry not very sure of itself, testing its disused wings, and taking but short and tentative flights; and we shall note with interest every revived metrical form, every sign of renewed interest in the greatest works of the past, whether English or Greek (an interest often misdirected and sadly deceived by spurious antiquities), and every indication of growing breadth of view and sincerity of utterance.

Of Thomson we read *Winter* and the *Castle of Indolence*—the former in rather dull and monotonous blank verse, the latter in the Spenserian stanza. The class will note that the diction is still very conventional, and the blank verse is poor and lacks cohesion. We have all the tricks of the classical school—epithets profuse and ineffective, apostrophe, personifications, Latin words, swains, etc.; yet we have real landscape poetry, nature no longer formal, but carefully observed and described, even if it is not yet alive. Thomson, then, belongs in thought to the next age, in style to his own. On

the other hand, we shall see a want of polish, and frequent lapses into prose. In the *Castle of Indolence*, written twenty years later, we shall see better versification, and less artificial diction, but his moralising and shallow philosophy belong to the past. His Pegasus moves awkwardly in his heavy trappings, yet it has wings. Note the portrait of the poet in the *Castle of Indolence* from the hand of Lord Lyttelton ; and illustrate it by what we know of the poet's life and character. Note, too, the return to allegory, and the old-fashioned diction. Draw attention also to the portrait of Collins in the *Castle of Indolence*.

Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* is a better and slightly earlier imitation of Spenser in his eponymous metre. It is worth while to read a few stanzas, to show how skilfully the metre is used, and how fresh and natural is the style. It is a burlesque of course, but only in the sense that it used a stately measure and stately language to describe things quite simple and commonplace. Shenstone had also ventured on anapaests in " My banks they are furnished with bees." The works of Collins and Gray observe a fuller study, and their amount is so small that they can be read through in a short time.[1] Both of them will be found typical of the reaction. In the *Persian Eclogues* we shall find Collins as yet in bondage. In the odes we see freer metres, fine description, and the new lyric note, not heard again till Blake and

[1] They may be obtained with the poems of Johnson and Goldsmith, in one small volume published by Routledge at a shilling.

Burns, but thereafter not ceasing. The teacher may find it necessary to explain the meaning of 'Lyric,' which will probably have been forgotten. Points to be noted about Collins are: (1) his use of personification, which may be compared with Johnson's. Johnson takes a single human quality and speaks of it as of a person; Collins sees it, and makes his vision live. (2) His power of conveying melancholy by mere sound, in which he anticipates Wordsworth. (3) Like Spenser he is a poet's poet, that is, he lives more exclusively in a world—a twilight world—of his own, peopled by creations of his own imagination, in which the ordinary reader cannot so clearly see his way. Collins might be made the occasion of a discussion on the affinity between genius and madness. (4) His precision of statement and economy of words. Collins unites in a measure the merit of the classical and of the romantic schools; he is an artist in words. A discussion will no doubt show some defects—lack of humour, obscurity, narrow range. Gray resembled Collins in many ways, as the teacher should point out. Both were trained by the study of Greek and of older English authors; both have a real feeling for nature, yet, like the Greeks, and unlike the Romantic poets, feel the human interest more deeply, and both use allegory and personification, and are pervaded by melancholy; but Gray's emancipation, except in metrical forms, was less complete. We shall see his diction indeed becoming less artificial as we proceed. Note the careful structure of his *Pindaric Odes*, with their strophes, anti-strophes, and

epodes—the real ode, as against the spurious odes of Cowley, Dryden, and Pope; and also the tenuity of his thought, especially in his more popular poems—popular because commonplace. Other things to be observed are Gray's humour, his somewhat cold perfection of form, in which he is like his predecessors, his lyric note, for he sees things through the medium of his own temperament, and yet is without lyric tenderness or passion; his clear-cut world, wherein who runs may read, for the way is always plain; and his polish. Gray has nothing to tell us of life—but he tells it very well. Gray's *Letters* may be obtained with his poems, published by Routledge. They should be compared with those of Cowper; the two are among the best letter-writers of the language. Gray's prose is excellent, especially in description, and is lightened by a charming humour. He is perhaps the first writer in our literature who finds mountain scenery full of charm, not merely of terror.

The pseudo-antique poetry of MacPherson and Chatterton deserves mention, less for its own sake, than for its importance as indicating the tendency of this time. A specimen or two should be read, and the teacher will perhaps think it desirable to give briefly the proofs which establish its spuriousness. Of like tendency is the publication of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, many of the ballads in which will already be familiar. A sonnet of Thomas Warton might be read—the sonnet reappearing in an incorrect form, and without much inspiration; and his brother's

criticism of Pope might be quoted, as a sign of the times. Smart's *Song to David* may also be looked at, if only because for once in the half-hearted eighteenth century, poetry in it bursts all bounds, and genius and madness unite not in melancholy but in rapture.

We can hardly dispense with a specimen or two of Blake, who, in some respects anticipates Coleridge and Wordsworth. The points to notice in him are his almost complete freedom from artificiality of diction, and unfortunately from classical correctness; his clear lyric note; his poetry of childhood, and his mysticism, gradually stifling his poetry; and the fact that, like Smart, he lives in a world of his own where sane people are apt to be bewildered. The question whether he could have influenced Wordsworth is well worth considering.

In Burns again we have the lyric note, but without a trace of mysticism or melancholy or madness; the class should note his highly-wrought metres (the teacher might point out his indebtedness for these to Fergusson and Ramsay), his frequent use of jingle instead of rime, his sensibility—the luxurious indulgence of useless pity, which was a vice of the time—and his discovery that the natural facts of daily life, told in simple words, afford ample material for poetry. In this he anticipates Wordsworth; but Wordsworth thought about life and Burns lived.

Crabbe takes us back again to the classical school, between which and Wordsworth he forms a curious link. He writes in the rimed and closed

couplet, and his diction is classical; yet his observation is close, and he describes at first hand, and his interest is mainly with the lower classes. He should be specially compared with Goldsmith, to whom he forms the antithesis. Where Goldsmith idealises he sees the darker side of life. His poetry, like that of Burns and Wordsworth, is based on the facts of life, but he is an aesthetic as well as moral pessimist.

To Cowper we give a more extended study, reading as many of his poems and letters as time permits. It need not be said that his life is very important for an understanding of his work. Cowper is another link between the two schools, yet in a very different way from Crabbe. Notice that he begins with the couplet and passes to blank verse, and compare his blank verse, sweet and adequate as it is, with that of greater masters; notice his didactic aim, and his gentle, impersonal satire. Note, too, his subjects—the titles of the books of the *Task* should be given. The great point to bring out about Cowper is that he frees us from the stock-pot of the classics—relics of former banquets in other poets, boiled down together. Poetry is reduced to its elements and built up afresh; Cowper observes accurately and describes faithfully what he observes, and gives free play to whatever thoughts his observations suggest. His poetry is hence made up of the things around him. For this reason he is the poet of the garden and the fireside. His view of nature needs to be realised—it is a plaything like his pet animals, but he has no kinship with it. The teacher might also con-

sider why his hymns are so poor—even his religion lacked fire. Compare them with the hymns of J. H. Newman in the *Dream of Gerontius*, or with any part of the *Rhythm of Bernard de Morlaix*, as translated by Dr. Neale. A singular point to be noted also, which becomes very clear on reading the letters, is that what in Wordsworth was deliberate, in Cowper was merely accidental. He enlarges the range of poetry and works himself free from classical diction, without ever realising whither the literary current of the time was bearing him ; so that he speaks with respect of Johnson's judgment, where Milton is not concerned, and is even anxious for his approbation, which he could not have gained without sacrificing all that was most characteristic of him. Cowper's letters should be compared with Gray's and with one or two of Johnson's—indeed, the comparison may be extended. It would be hard to find two men more completely in contrast in every way than Cowper and Johnson. Note particularly about Cowper's prose its ease and simplicity, without laboured antithesis and balanced clauses. His letters also, as much of his verse, illustrate the return of humour. The teacher should point out how widely Cowper's humour differs from that of his predecessors, in that it permeates his whole work. Gray, for instance, had humour, but it is much less fundamental than Cowper's. The connection of humour with sympathy and with melancholy should be pointed out, and its distinction from wit, of which Cowper had little or none. A note on this subject will be found in Appendix B.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

It is obviously impossible in the time available for lessons in literature to make a thorough study of the nineteenth century; the number of names is far too great and the task of selection exceedingly difficult. On the other hand, many of the books read in the lower forms will have been selected from this century; and we shall perhaps be doing enough if we take a few typical writers and use them to connect together the authors with whom boys are already more or less familiar. Thus the nineteenth century may be dealt with in a final term, the work of which will close the course; and in this case we shall have to rely mainly on comparatively brief selections; or if time permits, the nineteenth century might itself form the subject of a year's work, which should in that case precede the full course outlined above, as it will be more easily intelligible, on the whole, to younger boys, and more homogeneous, and therefore suitable for a fourth or fifth form. Nor will any confusion result if we first gain a clear idea of what the history of our literature finally brings us before we go back to see what was the course of that history and how

the literature of our own or of our fathers' day came by natural succession from the first beginnings. The authors, then, whom we should choose for the illustration of the nineteenth century are Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Jane Austen, Scott, Lamb. Of all these poets, of course, there are numerous selections; or a sufficient number of specimens for more summary work may be obtained in *The English Parnassus*, edited by Messrs. Dixon and Grierson and published by the Clarendon Press.

We begin by noting that the tendencies which were at work during the eighteenth century, modifying poetry in a manner of which the poets themselves were wholly or partially unconscious, first find definite expression in Wordsworth, and are formulated as an acknowledged theory of poetry; and the life of Wordsworth will show us a phenomenon which is the very inverse of that which we saw in the case of Johnson. Johnson's authority was unquestioned, yet the principles he preached were passing away, and he saw them tacitly rejected. Wordsworth was a voice crying in the wilderness, derided by those who heard; yet his teaching was destined more and more to prevail. The teacher should then try to make precise the meaning of the terms Classicism and Romanticism—not an easy matter, since no hard distinction exists. Probably the analogy of architecture will show as well as anything their respective restraint and freedom. Set a picture of the Parthenon by the side of a picture of any Gothic

Cathedral, and we see the direct and formal expression of a single beautiful thought contrasted with the unfettered play of discursive fancy ; yet in the best examples we shall see this much of Classicism—that there is one dominant feature which all the others help to throw into relief, or one dominant motive which the most wayward fancy in some way serves to illustrate.

Next, the causes of the Romantic Revival should be touched on. It is easy to exaggerate the influence of the French Revolution ; but the teacher is not likely to make the mistake of ascribing the movement to it. Rather he will show his pupils in the Revolution and the Romantic Revival parallel derivatives from one source. The Classicists had "felt the weight of too much liberty," and had submitted to restraint, but almost from the first nature began to reassert herself. The breaking up of the old political and social order may have quickened men's minds and made them more open to new impressions ; and so in both cases we find a return to nature, a wider sympathy, deeper interest in men, as distinct from man, the sense of freedom, and impatience with meaningless limitations of it. Nor should the teacher lose sight of the influence of German poetry and philosophy, for which Coleridge is partly to be thanked ; for Classicism had never gained so much ground in German literature, and transcendentalism, whether German or English, is more akin to Romanticism than was the materialistic philosophy of the time ; and, connected herewith, and more intelligible to the youthful mind, must be mentioned the reli-

gious revival, which led men to take a more spiritual view of the world and of nature. It is significant that the Church Missionary Society was founded in 1797—the year before the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. It remains to point out that with such an origin the later Romanticism is necessarily very different from that of Elizabethan times. The Elizabethans had no literary theories behind them ; they evolved their principles gradually, profoundly modifying their art as they did so ; but it is henceforth impossible for a writer to be altogether independent of theories and schools of criticism ; even in rejecting them he is influenced by them. Hence poetry cannot again be quite so naïve and spontaneous as in the early days of the Renaissance. Again, between the sixteenth century and the nineteenth stands modern philosophy, preoccupied with questions and problems which had hardly begun to trouble our forefathers, or at least cast but momentary shadows over their lives. We have theories of life as well as of poetry, and our literature is more consciously a criticism of life than theirs. Lastly, so long as life is full of interest poetry is concerned primarily with human life and less directly with its background in nature, and while this is so poetry is the more natural voice and speaks to all men ; but the poetry of life recedes before advancing civilisation ; poetry, by way of reaction, becomes a refuge for the few from the prose of life, its complexity and artificiality. Hence poetry becomes increasingly absorbed in external nature, to which it gives a minute and careful study unknown before, while it ceases

to be read by the many, just because material interests have become more insistent, and the struggle for life more serious. Hence the human interest of life finds a more prosaic setting, and the novel takes the place of poetry as the literature of the people.

We should begin the actual study of Coleridge and Wordsworth by reading from the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge's account of the genesis of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the special functions of the two poets therein. Whatever selection of Wordsworth's poems is adopted for use in class, the teacher will probably find it necessary to select still further ; the excellent selection in the *Golden Treasury* will contain too much, and a great deal which is without interest for boys. Passages from the longer poems must indeed be read, for otherwise we shall obtain a wrong and incomplete idea of Wordsworth ; but the shorter poems should form the main material, and among them, of course, some of the sonnets. It is worth while to explain why this is so—his discursiveness and prolixity, together with a tendency to monotony in the use of blank verse, made him less successful in longer poems.

There are five subjects which the teacher should discuss with his class after reading Wordsworth—apart, of course, from his characteristics as a poet. (1) His poetical affinity. We are apt to regard Wordsworth as a reformer, self-generated, who swept away the poetic lumber inherited from Pope—all the conventional paraphernalia of swains, nymphs, poets who were shepherds, and

shepherds who were poets and so on, and by mere force of his genius and originality made poetry simple and natural. Yet he necessarily owed very much to his predecessors ; to Milton not only the form of his verse but something of his austerity ; to Cowper his extended poetic sympathy, his surrender to the currents of reflection set in motion by simple and often trivial objects, his absorbing interest in nature ; to Burns his simplicity of diction. (2) Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction. The teacher is advised to read what Coleridge says on the matter in the *Biographia Literaria*, as well of course as Wordsworth's own statement in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Probably the conclusion he will come to will be that Wordsworth rediscovered the truth that the diction of poetry should be the natural expression of poetic thought and not a conventional or factitious dialect, and that he overstated it, perhaps from obstinacy. When Byron says that Wordsworth

> "both by precept and example shows
> That prose is verse and verse is merely prose,"

he is right as to the precept and wrong as to the example. The class should notice that Wordsworth never fully carries out his own doctrine, and departed further and further from it as he grew older. The whole question may be reconsidered when we come to Tennyson and Browning. (3) The so-called pantheism of Wordsworth should be carefully distinguished from true pantheism. The metaphysical conception of pantheism—the denial of the finite, as atheism is the denial of the infinite

—is rather difficult for boys; but at any rate, if the term is used at all, it should not be allowed to mislead. Wordsworth gives us rather a philosophic animism, which is a very different thing. (4) His view of the influence of natural objects is worth discussing. It is stated in its most exaggerated form in the verse:

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> Will teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can."

Did Wordsworth really believe this, or was he overstating his case again? The class will observe that Wordsworth's own knowledge of men is what might have been expected; it is confined to simple peasants and children; that the influence of landscape increases as civilisation grows more complex, and that the lesson which Wordsworth's doctrine really conveys is that of the "wise passiveness" which enables us to find in nature what we bring to it. (5) Was Wordsworth a great poet? The teacher will find the question discussed by Matthew Arnold in the Introduction to the *Golden Treasury* selection; we may apply the same tests; has he the qualities of truth, force, originality, vivid and rich imagination, command of language? Or we may define a great poet as one who conveys profound emotion, or great thought in words which convey it adequately and make an indelible impression; and so test him by his best work. It is desirable, perhaps, to point out that Wordsworth suffers from his lack of self-

criticism ; much of his work is flat and unprofitable, and peculiarly uninteresting to boys, and he himself appears to have been unaware of it ; but the dullest boy can hardly fail to be moved by his best work, just because of its simplicity.

Our selections from Coleridge will, of course, include the *Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, the *Ministry of Frost* ; something also from his earlier and from his later periods, to illustrate the rise and decline of his poetic powers, in connection with which special attention should be devoted to the facts of his life ; and to illustrate also the transition from Classicism to Romanticism. In reading the poems named above, reference should be made to Coleridge's management of the supernatural in the *Ancient Mariner*, and to the moral—which is strained ; in *Christabel* to the curious limitation of the poet's power of imagination—he moves freely amidst the weird and supernatural, but cannot re-create the past ; Sir Leoline is a modern valetudinarian, and his anger is theatrical —and to the metrical experiment. Coleridge goes back to the oldest system of counting accents instead of syllables ; and was followed by Scott and Byron in their narrative poems. The dreaminess of *Kubla Khan* will be better brought out by a comparison with Byron's poem *The Dream*. The images in *Kubla Khan* melt into one another and are always hazy ; in *The Dream* they are clear and distinct, mechanically separated by the recurrent line "A change came o'er the spirit of my dream." *The Ministry of Frost* should be compared with Wordsworth's poems *On the*

Influence of Natural Objects and to *Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower.* Notice throughout in reading Coleridge the traces of languor, due to disease and opium, after a joyful adolescence, and how it gradually destroyed his resolution and power of work. The teacher will not fail to point out his debt to Wordsworth, who delivered him from classicism; Coleridge largely shares Wordsworth's view of nature and of poetry, and his theory of diction; but their very different use of the supernatural should be noticed; and again Coleridge, unlike Wordsworth, saw that the influence of nature depends on the mind of the beholder. Specially interesting is the contrast between the two poets in their view of childhood. The teacher should compare *We are Seven* with the lines in *Christabel* beginning "A little Child, a limber elf"—not forgetting that the first verse of the former is by Coleridge. The difference in tenderness and in real understanding of childhood will be obvious; to Wordsworth childhood is a mental study; to Coleridge a thing of beauty and delight.

If a year can be given to the nineteenth century, the first term will be well filled with Wordsworth, Coleridge and Lamb. Of the last, no doubt some letters and essays will have been read at an earlier stage; but it is very necessary to consider Lamb in close connection with Wordsworth, to whom he is in some sense complementary, since he is for the town what Wordsworth is for the country, the poet of town life, the minute observer and careful recorder of the common sights of the town, the

streets, the stage-coach, the faces of the passers-by. Like Wordsworth he reaps "the harvest of a quiet eye," the aftermath of thought and emotion coming by way of association. In the main, Lamb must be kept for home reading; and it will probably be best to confine ourselves to the *Essays*. Lamb's humour is the best possible illustration of what humour really is—a form of insight which is allied with sympathy. Besides his humour, the qualities of Lamb which need to be emphasised are his quaintness of thought, of observation, and of learning, fitly wedded to quaintness of style; his detachment—he watches the stream of life, but does not plunge in; and his leisureliness. We should compare Lamb's freakishness with that of Sterne—the freakishness of a child with that of a monkey—and his laughter on the verge of tears, his pathos which laughs at itself, with the flaccid sentimentality of Sterne. The occasion might be taken to explain the real meaning of pathos.[1] Further, Lamb's prose style should be compared with Johnson's. Both abound in Latinisms; but in Johnson they give weight; in Lamb they have acquired levity, and are humorous; while his more serious utterance is vernacular. Note, too, the wonderful cadence of Lamb, for which Johnson's prose is too loud and resonant. Lastly, the teacher might recur to the analogy and contrast between Lamb and Browne. Both show a natural quaintness of thought; but Browne is serious and Lamb humorous; Browne

[1] Pathos is the merely sad, consciously realised and dwelt on, as distinct from the physically painful and the terrible.

solemn but not pathetic, Lamb pathetic but not solemn. Both take us into their confidence, but Browne shows us his mental processes, Lamb his emotions. Both have a Latinised style, but in Browne it is natural and impressive, in Lamb chosen and quaint; and both build up their sentences with clause after clause. They show, too, the qualities of leisureliness and detachment (note that Browne is unaffected by the civil war, and Lamb by the French Revolution), and of quaint learning which they weave into the fabric of their prose.

A second term might be occupied with Byron, Shelley, Keats and Jane Austen. Of Shelley the *Adonais* should be read in full, and some of the shorter, with specimens of the longer poems. The *Golden Treasury* selection will make a good text-book, but a smaller selection should be made from it. The *Adonais* should, of course, be compared with *Lycidas* and *In Memoriam*—the former cold and academic, the latter full of deep, though restrained sorrow, while Shelley's poem is passionate, yet impersonal. Note the pictures of himself, Byron and others—a good instance of Shelley's lack of humour. Byron, seen through Shelley's eyes, should also be observed in *Julian and Maddalo*. With this as a delineation of madness may be compared *Lear* and the last part of *Maud*. It will be seen that Shelley's madman is not mad but only hysterical. Points to be noted about Shelley are: (1) His view of nature—Wordsworth's animism charged with a passion foreign to Wordsworth's nature and rising at times, as in the *Adonais*, to an

exalted Pantheism ; and his preoccupation with the wilder and more elemental aspects of nature, the mountain and the cloud. (2) The essentially lyric character of all his poetry—genuine passion free from self-consciousness or introspection and colouring the whole of his universe. (3) The extraordinary richness and beauty of his similes, with their artistic defect that they are often less intelligible than that which they illustrate. (4) The strange combination of a passion for humanity with ignorance of men and lack of interest in them, and the consequent unreality of his men and women ; either unsubstantial phantoms, or shadows of the poet himself.

Byron also may be read in the *Golden Treasury*. It matters little what selection is made as long as it is representative of the various forms of his work. His poetry, except some parts of the satires, is not, as a rule, very interesting to boys as poetry ; its reflexion of his personality should be brought out. Byron may be used to illustrate the difference between wit and humour, and to a large extent between rhetoric in verse and poetry ; but care must be taken to do justice to the comparatively small amount of really great and almost incomparable poetry which may be found in him. A question for the class to consider is how far his professed love of nature is a pose, or the obverse side of his hatred of men ; how far in the narrative poems, such as the *Prisoner of Chillon* and *Mazeppa*, which will no doubt have been read before, there is genuine sympathy. Byron's relation to the Romantic Revival is worthy of

careful consideration. He ridicules Wordsworth and his theories, and professes to admire Pope; and in so far as he aimed at directness, not suggestiveness, he is classical. Again, his sympathy is hardly wide enough for romanticism; while his satire links him with the classical school, though it is personal rather than didactic. On the other hand, his work is too slovenly for classical models, and he had no power of composition; his poems are never artistic wholes, unless they are also very short; and his nature was not capable of submitting to restraint. He found something akin to himself in wild and desolate scenes; but otherwise nature hardly touched him. Classicism is largely a matter of form, and Byron missed its best teaching; romanticism is largely a matter of insight and sympathy, and Byron lacked these.

Byron and Shelley, it should be noted, stand a little apart from the rest of their generation. Both were influenced by the French Revolution more deeply and permanently than Wordsworth and Coleridge, and did not live long enough to outgrow the influence; and both were too profoundly individualistic to have successors. And again, no two poets could be more unlike one another. The teacher should draw attention to the contrast between them—Byron, the type of morbid intellectuality, the warped brain perverting the emotions; Shelley, of emotionalism dominating the intellect; Byron representing the worse side of the Revolution—hatred of superiority—as its driving force; Shelley, the worthier side, the love of humanity, and passion for free-

dom ; Byron the realist and pessimist, Shelley the idealist and optimist ; Byron an adherent of the classical school by profession, Shelley a romanticist by instinct ; Byron slovenly in his workmanship and too impatient for revision, Shelley the natural artist, where style came by divine right ; Byron with his personal grievance against the world, his futile quarrel with life, Shelley with his profound philosophy and serene faith (this especially needs to be asserted, for most schoolboys stigmatise Shelley as an atheist, apparently because of his youthful indiscretion at Oxford) ; finally, Byron, in whom egoism is at war with poetic genius, who rarely escapes self-consciousness and is most himself in satire (note particularly how his flashes of true poetry are free from his prevailing self-consciousness), and Shelley, whose egoism is of the unconscious kind which finds its reflection in the whole world without, and its fullest utterance in lyric songs.

If Byron and Shelley are a little apart, Keats is in the direct line of succession. Romanticism, which in Wordsworth is deliberate, in Keats is instinctive ; hence he comes nearer to Spenser and the Elizabethans. We should read a little of *Endymion*, contrasting it with the *Faerie Queen*, and noting the difference between the two poets—Keats intent on outward beauty, Spenser on inner meaning ; some of the shorter poems, including the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and a book of *Hyperion*, comparing it with the *Paradise Lost*. It will be felt that Keats is not an epic poet ; he had not the grand manner and could not sustain interest.

Moreover, he is too simple and direct in feeling for so highly artificial a style as epic (artificial in the sense in which modern Gothic architecture is artificial [1]), and too much occupied with the beauties to be found by the way to steer a straight course. He leads us through a beautiful country, but leads us nowhere. Keats' versification deserves special study. His heroics revert (like those of Shelley in *Julian and Maddalo*) to earlier type, the couplets being open, triple rimes, dissyllabic rimes and Alexandrines being admitted. His blank verse is admirable, if less sonorous than Milton's; his use of ottava rima, the sonnet metre and the Spenserian stanza is very skilful, and his intricate stanzas in the *Odes* are very fine. Two points should be discussed in reference to Keats—his likeness to Shelley and his Grecism, or Greekness. Beyond the profusion of imagery there is little real resemblance between the two poets. Keats is more sensuous than Shelley—or rather the sensuous is not in him the garb of lofty thought; and there is no trace in Keats of Shelley's humanity; yet Keats' men and women, or gods and Titans, are far more real. Even in their eye for nature they differ; Shelley gives us the mountain and the cloud, the distant scene, Keats the path before us. Byron says that Keats contrived to write about the gods "much like a Greek"; and Shelley affirms that "he was a Greek." What should this imputed Hellenism involve? Simple directness

[1] Note also that the epic proper is concerned with human beings, not with gods; hence the difficulty of sustaining interest is much greater in the exotic epic of Milton or Keats.

of expression, untrammelled by formal criticism, and unconscious of literary history ; an appreciation of beauty of form never divorced, even in the more sensuous of the Greeks, from the human interest ; an inheritance as it were of legend and mythology, never wholly renounced, which gave a certain concrete shape to their speculation into the unseen, and a culture which expressed itself naturally in plastic art and especially in sculpture. Keats is direct in expression ; but his appreciation of beauty of form is not linked with human interest. Without knowing Greek, he had studied Greek myths ; but his use of them is much more romantic than Greek—they are suggestions rather than symbols. He was influenced by art, especially sculpture, and had little literary training ; hence the pictorial and statuesque is prominent in his work. A metic he may have been ; but his claim to full Hellenism cannot be sustained.

With Jane Austen we take up again the history of the novel. There will not be time for more than one of her books, and that must be for home reading. *Pride and Prejudice* is the best ; but perhaps for young readers *Northanger Abbey* will be more interesting. It is not long ; and it has the further advantage of throwing some light on the history of the novel from Miss Burney's time. The interval is filled by improbable romances, with characters remote from those of daily life, and strange, if not impossible happenings, and these are ridiculed in *Northanger Abbey* and to some extent parodied. The place of Jane Austen in the Romantic Revival should therefore be made clear ; she

returns to Nature, like Wordsworth ; as he found poetry in common things, so she found romance in the uneventful lives of middle-class people in the country. She descends of course from Smollett and Miss Burney, who had introduced a new element into fiction—the humours of the vulgar. Jane Austen with surer insight and deeper humour, and the same close observation, gives us characters instead of manners. Thus she is the parent of the modern novel of character, and the forerunner of Thackeray, whom in some ways—especially in her use of irony and her subtle analysis of motive—she resembles ; but Thackeray is more vehement in satire, and his personality is more insistent. A study of Jane Austen's life will help us to understand what she did, and her limitations ; her world was a small world, and she had not sufficient force of imagination to carry her very far beyond it, and her men are hardly more real, though more interesting, than Richardson's ; but she describes faithfully the dull middle-class provincial society in which she lived, and saw and depicted clearly the real nature of at least the women around her.

We have left Scott, Tennyson and Browning for a third term. Of Scott as poet little need be said, and perhaps nothing read at this stage. We may assume a knowledge of the narrative poems. They should be compared with Byron's, who drove Scott off the field. Yet Scott has far more power to tell a tale and hold the attention. His narrative is far more natural than Byron's, and maintains a higher poetic level—though, of course, is inferior to Byron in force, depth and occasional felicity,

as a gas-lamp to a flash of lightning. The chief point for us to notice is that Scott's poems are rimed romances, and thus akin to the novels. Scott carries on the tradition of the romance with its stirring adventures and absence or subordination of love-interest, and is the parent of the modern novel of adventure as Jane Austen is the parent of the novel of character. Of the *Waverley Novels* such a selection must be made as will best illustrate Scott's strength and weakness. He invented the historical novel, as Marlowe the historical play ; and coming just at the time when scientific history begins, and having his head full of antiquarianism, which sometimes, though not often, failed him, he was able to re-create the externals of the past without trouble to himself, though not always without tedium to the reader ; while the characters which should animate the mediaeval scene are not very clearly differentiated from those of Scott's own day, and his heroes and heroines are colourless. Of these qualities, *Ivanhoe* will furnish a good example ; as also of Scott's prose style—a style copious and clear, but without distinction or grace, and often slipshod and even vulgar. *Ivanhoe* contains a store of journalistic phrases, and much bad grammar as well. Another novel should be chosen to illustrate Scott's real greatness as a writer of historical romances. Though the Ivanhoes and Quentin Durwards of his own creation have no life or individuality, he can at least bring into clear relief the personality supplied to him by history. For examples of real historical characters clearly conceived and finely

drawn, we may read *Quentin Durward* or the *Fortunes of Nigel*. Finally, though Scott invented the historical novel, his greatest achievement was really in the novel of character. In the *Antiquary* or *Old Mortality* we shall find him at his best, depicting with humour and gentle satire the eccentricities and oddities of his contemporaries and countrymen, especially among the lower classes—wielding the pencil of Teniers in the spirit of Addison and Steele. In these characters the class will notice most clearly the difference between Scott and Jane Austen, where they are working in the same field—Jane Austen with her delicate and minute work, absolutely faithful within narrow limits; Scott with his broad strokes, and vast range of sympathy, content to describe men as he finds them without morbid anatomy of the soul. The teacher may also take this opportunity of pointing out what it is that gives permanence to the characters of Scott or Shakespeare, so far as they have it, namely, the union of the individual and the type. A mere type cannot live; and a mere individual cannot live for ever; only the character which is at once individual and typical is immortal.

The selection from Tennyson should include *Tithonus* and the other poems based on Greek legend, the *Passing of Arthur*, the *Dream of Fair Women*, the *Palace of Art*—these two of course being compared with Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, and with Bacon's *Essay of Building* respectively—some stanzas of *In Memoriam*, and, perhaps, the last part of *Maud*. The teacher

should point out the affinity of Tennyson with Keats and others. Keats he resembles in his combination of highly-wrought form with Romanticism—though, of course, Tennyson has a wider range—and in occasional over-sweetness ; Spenser, in stateliness and picture-making ; Milton, in his sonorous verse and epic manner ; Coleridge, in his haziness and languid melody ; Wordsworth, in his subjective view of nature ; Theocritus, in his idyllic manner—the epic manner transmuted into conscious art. Other points to be noted about Tennyson's work are : (1) The representative character of his thought and his philosophy, which sum up the speculations and vague beliefs of his day, combined with a singular distinctiveness and originality of form. (2) His essentially lyric note in nature poetry—the passion which colours all the world in its own hue. Nature is observed and described for its own sake, for the delight it gives, not for its moral. (3) He has necessarily left behind the animism of Wordsworth and the pantheism of Shelley. Both views of nature are incompatible with the notion of law imposed from without, and Tennyson views nature as a manifestation of law ; and his view of nature includes natural processes as discovered by science. He is the first to realise the poetic possibilities of scientific fact. (4) Tennyson, like Coleridge, was incapable of projecting himself outside his age. His Ulysses and his Arthur are modern in the same sense as Sir Leoline. And though his characters are clearly conceived and firmly drawn, they move a little stiffly, and the poet is hardly at his ease in

narrative or dramatic poetry. Lastly, the question should be discussed, whether Tennyson was a great poet or not. Those who, in spite of Tennyson's union of word-painting and word-music, deny his claim to greatness, assert that he is too pretty—that is, that his effects are on too small a scale, which is no doubt true of much of his very early work; perhaps his later work—from 1842 onwards—will be acquitted on this count; or he is condemned as too shallow. Yet the thought of Tennyson, if not profound, is true, noble and not obvious. Probably the objection is partly due to the smoothness of Tennyson's verse; there is a feeling that one who writes so smoothly cannot be profound; similarly Browning's profundity is over-rated because of his ruggedness. Tennyson's sentiment at any rate is not shallow. The decision would seem to turn on the further question whether profundity is necessary to poetry or whether poetry may not attain to greatness by giving expression in a beautiful form to the feeling and thought of its own generation.

There remains only Browning. The mass of his work is so great as to make it impossible for us to do more than illustrate from some few of the shorter poems his chief characteristics. The *Epistle of Karshish, Johannes Agricola, Rabbi ben Ezra* will illustrate his philosophy of life and his profound psychology, and his essentially dramatic force; *Mr. Sludge* or *Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau* or *Bishop Blougram's Apology* will show his sympathetic understanding of charlatans, self-deceivers and those hovering between right principles and

wrong practices and trying to reconcile them. It is important to include one at least of such poems in our selection, because they enable us to see that Browning's knowledge of moral turpitude has not brought cynicism; he approaches human nature with as much reverence and tenderness as Wordsworth approaches external nature. Again, such poems as *In the Villa Garden* and *Amphibian* show the art of Browning—the least artistic of all great poets—at its best; the intense personal feeling of his lyrics seems to soften his rather harsh voice. The *Epilogue to Asolando* and many parts of his lyric and dramatic work furnish examples of one of his worst faults; his uncouth diction is not inappropriate in much of his work; for dissections, whether of bodies or souls, need not be performed to soft music; but in more elevated passages it diverts attention without exciting pleasure.

The comparison between Browning and Tennyson is easy and obvious, and need not be enlarged on here, though it is a useful subject for an essay or for oral discussion; but a word may be added on Browning's obscurity, because it is apt to repel the young; while an understanding of its causes will show that it is not so great as at first it appears to be, and will also perhaps encourage younger readers to overcome it. Browning's obscurity, then, lies not in the words or the sentences, but in the sequence of thought; and this comes from his curious and miscellaneous learning, from his power of catching imperfect analogies which escape the less subtle, and from his rapidity of transition. Browning, in fact, is essentially a

Romanticist working in the sphere of thought, rather than of sensuous impressions; and in his rapidity or "breathlessness" he is analogous to Shelley. One simile to Shelley suggests another, and we are hurried away to picture after picture; one thought to Browning leads by processes of suggestion invisible to us to another and another, and in our effort to follow we are carried off our feet.

If, at the conclusion of our course, the subject of poetic diction is again considered, with reference to the various poets read, it will probably be seen that the propriety of poetic diction, so long as mere beauty of sound is duly secured, depends on two things. (1) The natural tendency of men to use an ascending scale of expression to correspond to an ascending scale of feeling. Thus the language of prayer differs notably in some points from that of ordinary speech. We do not habitually live on the higher levels which we reach in poetry; hence we feel the incongruity between the unmodified speech of daily life and the rarer and more elevated mood. (2) There are certain words and phrases which have mean or sordid associations, which therefore jar upon us. The whole question of diction really turns on the range of such words and phrases; for the controversy on the first point may be considered closed; no one now maintains Wordsworth's theory. On the other hand few would think it more poetical to speak of "the short tube that fumes beneath his nose," than to write plainly "his pipe." But when Tennyson in *The Brook* writes "cent for

cent" instead of "cent per cent," one feels that he properly avoids the sordid associations of the latter phrase. It must be remembered that both these statements have an obvious converse; the language of poetry is inappropriate to prose just so far as that of prose is inappropriate to poetry.

APPENDIX.

A. THE TREATMENT OF NATURE IN POETRY.

(1) As has been pointed out, Nature is not found as a subject of poetry or painting until late, except in a subsidiary and accidental way. Primitive man, confronted with a vast and heterogeneous mass of objects, often hostile and dangerous, does not sort out his impressions, and in the struggle for existence he has no time to discriminate between the living and the inanimate powers which are arrayed against him. Nature, so far as it is realised at all, is regarded as the manifestation of spirits. Hence the first stage is the Animistic (see Tylor : *Primitive Culture*). Naturally there is little to quote ; but this view of nature is at the back of such legends as those of the Sirens and of Scylla and Charybdis, and in them survives into later literature ; *e.g. Odyssey*, xii. l. 234 *sqq.*

For the monotheistic Jew the many powers of nature are one ; but the feeling is much the same. The wind is God's voice ; " the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness ; yea, the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Cades," Ps. xxix. v. 8. Further illustration is unnecessary. It is not nature itself, but the power behind it and manifested in it

which engages the mythologist and the psalmist alike.

(2) When we reach the Epic stage, nature begins to be interesting, but only in so far as it is familiar. Outside the familiar, it is still grim and terrible ; if the poet tells of wild and savage scenes it is with a shudder ; he sees no beauty in them, but merely the scene of man's life-long contest. Compare *Beowulf*, xxii. l. 1408, and the description of the storm in the *Odyssey*, v. l. 291 *sqq*. Though the wilder aspects of nature are described, it is only for their effect in enabling us to realise the great deeds of the hero. But it is the well-known that Homer paints with affection—mostly by a significant adjective—" misty deep," " unharvested sea." And there is little selection or sense of proportion ; all things are of equal poetic moment ; poetry is diffused, not concentrated ; and the description is purely objective, without reflection. See *Beowulf*, xvii. l. 1131, and also the one detailed description in Homer which depicts for us a vineyard, orchard and kitchen garden, without even a flower but the blossom of the vine (*Od*. vii. l. 112 *sqq*.).

With these two stages may be compared the treatment of nature in early religious art.

(3) The Lyric view of nature is closely connected with these through early religious poetry, which naturally takes a lyrical form ; that is, the inspiration is not from without, but from within, not from the excitation of the senses by external beauty, but from the stirring of the heart through emotion. The lyric poet gives utterance first to his own feeling; so far as that which is without con-

cerns him, he sees it as it were through a coloured glass, through the medium of his own emotion. Possibly an analogy may be found in the symbolic use of natural forms in ancient religious art, as the Egyptian lotos, etc.

The lyric view, of course, is not a passing phase. Familiar examples are the *Song of Solomon*, Wordsworth's *Stray Pleasures*, Tennyson's Choric Song in *The Lotos-Eaters*, Browning's *A Serenade at the Villa*.

(4) The Hellenic view and (5) the earlier Romantic view show us a love of nature for its beauty, but always in subordination to the human interest. They differ in that the Hellenic view is more direct and gives us ideal beauty of form; Hellenism is a refined animism, and clothes the powers of nature in shapes of beauty. Romanticism is rather suggestive and spiritual, and tends—as in Spenser—to become allegorical, and to find an inner meaning under outward forms. Compare Aristophanes, *Clouds*, l. 275 *sqq.*, or Sophocles, *O.C.* ll. 668-693, with the *F.Q.* bk. I. c. i. stanzas 7-10. But no rigid line can be drawn. Milton is often Hellenic (see *L'Allegro*, l. 69, and *Il Penseroso*, l. 65) and Sophocles and Vergil are Romantic. Yet, if we read Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach*, we shall see that there is still a difference :

> "Sophocles long ago
> Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
> Into his mind the ebb and flow
> Of human misery; we
> Find also in the sound a thought,
> Hearing it by the distant northern sea."

In Arnold the mood is brought to nature; in Sophocles it is more spontaneous; to the one the sound of the sea suggests momentarily "the still sad music of humanity"; the other has that always in his ears.

These ways of looking at nature find some analogy in later religious art, in Titian, Dürer, the Van Eycks, Memlinc.

(6) The Hedonistic view of nature is a phase of these two. Nature is still regarded for its human interest; but the interest is on a lower plane, concerning the body rather than the mind. It is valued as ministering to human comfort and enjoyment. This view is found most fully in Horace. It will suffice to quote *Odes*, I. xvii. and IV. vii. Compare Fitzgerald's *Omar*, x. and xi.; Marlowe's *Come, live with me*. It appears more often in Chaucer than in modern poets; and it may be likened, in painting, to the work of the Dutch and Flemish schools and the school of Watteau.

(7) Closely connected is the Idyllic view, which finds parallels in the same schools of painting. Tired of life in towns, of formalities, of the burden of civilisation, men turn to the fields, where life is simple and easily idealised. The idyllic mode gives us rustic life consciously arranged in pictures. Theocritus is still Epicurean, but of a higher type, with a real sense of beauty and of the picturesque; his delight in nature is artistic as well as physical. Tennyson has many examples of this mode (see the *Palace of Art* and *Oenone*).

(8) The Conventional view, whereby nature is

degraded to be a mere background for man, and is trimmed and tamed till it resembles the world of external life no more than a Dutch garden resembles the Garden of Eden. Though Pope could observe and describe with accuracy, yet he exemplifies, as do many of his contemporaries, this mechanical handling of nature. In painting we shall find an analogy in the work of Van Dyck and his school, whose landscapes are treated without interest and thoroughly conventionalised, being a mere adjunct to the picture.

(9) The Naturalistic view gives us nature accurately observed and carefully described, with interest and even reverence, but without passion and without any sense of inner meaning or the consciousness of any principle of life or unity. This view of life is exemplified in the work of Thomson. We may turn to Holland again for analogies, in such landscapes as those of Hobbema, the Ruysdaels, and Cuyp.

(10) The Spiritual view of nature, wherein nature becomes a living whole, a manifestation of God to man, but something more—for it was that to Pope and Cowper; it acquires a spiritual existence, giving it meaning and dignity, and claims sympathy and affection. So it is seen by Wordsworth and by many modern landscape painters, as, for instance, Constable and Turner.

B. WIT AND HUMOUR.

Humour is so marked a quality of English Literature as a whole, however wanting in some conspicuous instances, that it is desirable to give young readers a clear notion of what it means and of how it differs from the far less English quality of wit. Most boys regard humour as a form of facetiousness, and are bewildered when they find that the term is applied as readily to that which moves to tears. Some such considerations as these may serve to clear up the matter ;—humour is in ultimate essence, perhaps, the same quality which informed Sophocles :

"Who saw Life steadily, and saw it whole."

It is the sense of proportion, which sets things in their proper perspective. Hence humour has an eye for limitation ; it brings to light a latent contrast or incongruity. Wit, on the other hand, brings into an arbitrary relation of resemblance things that are really different. Humour seizes on a real property of things and displays it, and hence helps to reveal what is hidden ; wit focusses its light on the trivial and accidental and leaves the rest in darkness, and therefore contributes nothing to our understanding. Again, humour is sympathetic, because it proceeds from understanding ; and wit is too superficial for sympathy. We laugh with the humorist, but at the witticism. Humour is with a man always and modifies

his whole outlook, and is therefore independent of an audience; wit expires in the utterance, and no man can be witty by himself; in a word, humour means a point of view, and wit a point in view.

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