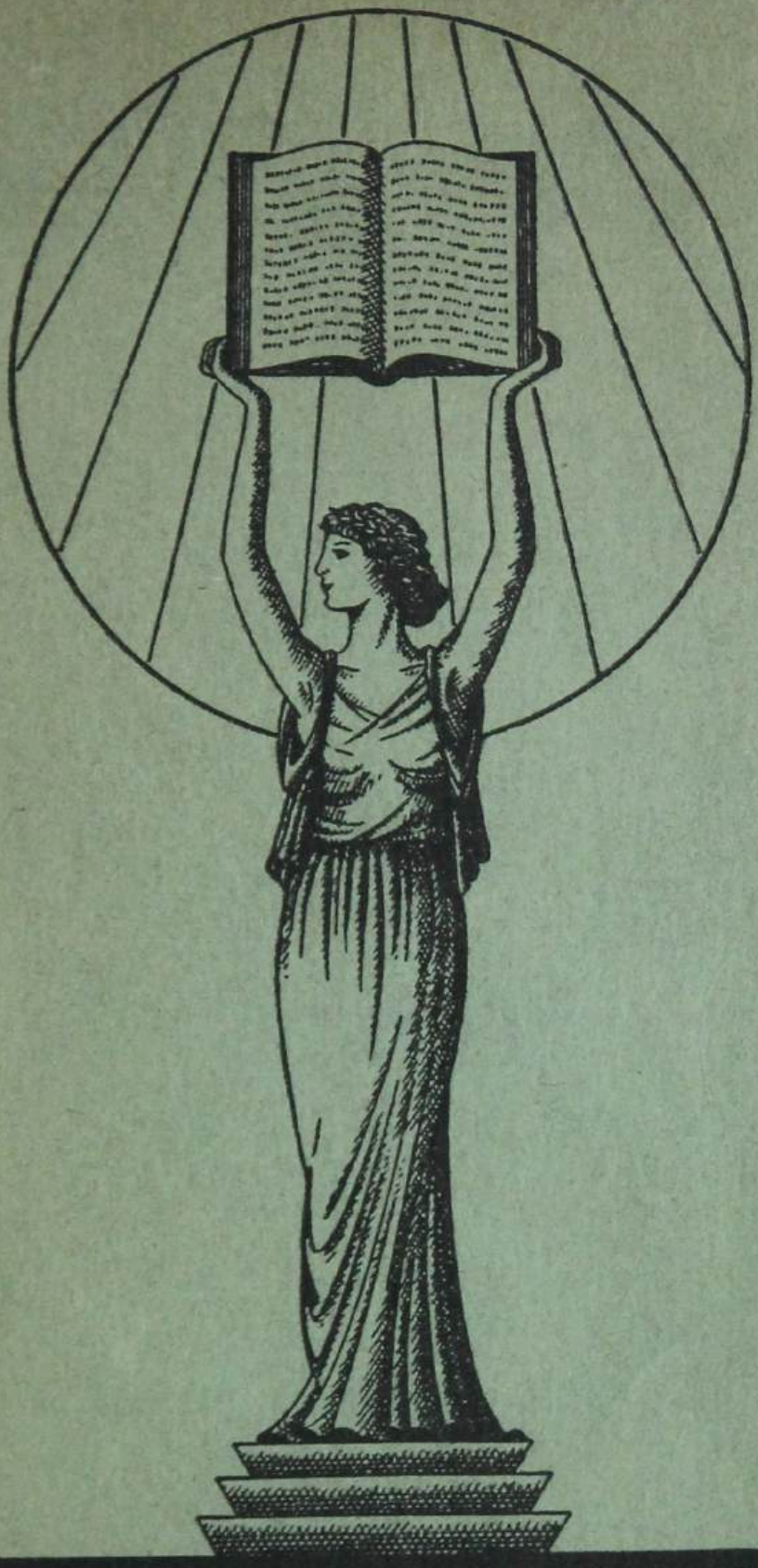

DAILY READING GUIDE TO ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY J. A. HAMMERTON

Daily Reading Guide to English Literature

BEING A CHRONICLE OF GREAT WRITERS FROM THE TIME OF CHAUCER TO THE PRESENT DAY WITH A CASUAL COMMENTARY

BY J. A. HAMMERTON

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FOREWORD

THERE is a variety of ways in which an Outline of English Literature may be written. I would not have it thought that the plan here followed is my idea of the best. But I do think that, having regard to the end in view, there is much to be said in its favor.

At no point in the writing of the ensuing pages do I imagine myself as addressing any other than 'the common reader,' a person, in the Johnsonian phrase, 'uncorrupted by literary prejudices.' My intention is to tell that person, in the simple form of a loosely strung chronicle and commentary, which are the chief writers of English poetry and prose, which of their works are, in my opinion, the most worthy of being read and which call for no more than a 'nodding acquaintance.'

This I have sought to do in as lively a manner as might be held compatible with the nature of my subject, for I am conscious that no duller matter can be offered to the common reader than literary history.

FOR that reason also I have refrained from any effort to follow the rise and fall of this or that school of poetry or prose, to explain the symbolists as against the realists, or to unify my sketch of literature with contemporary influences of national life by carrying on an examination of general history in its actions and reactions upon the literary history of the race. That is a concern of the student who has more than the enjoyment of our literary heritage in view. I do not write for him in these pages.

AND yet I feel that there is a multitude of readers for whom the task I have discharged in this work, however indifferently, was worth while: to get an intelligent notion of the great writers who have enriched our literature in poetry, in general prose—the essay, travel, biography, history, philosophy—and also in imaginative prose, is surely something which the aforesaid common reader will value as an aid to self-culture. That is what I dare to say he is offered in the following chapters.

I WOULD add that in writing this Outline I have relied for the choice of names set down mainly upon my memory, believing that in this casual way I was more likely to produce something informed with personal preference than if I had made out from available works of reference lists of names and marshaled my facts and comments upon these into orderly paragraphs of duly proportioned lengths. Nor when I quote, as I often do, from some other writer of criticism is it for lack of opinion of my own, but rather that my preferences may thus be reinforced with the opinions of those who have had acceptance aforetime.

J. A. H.

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I

POETRY AND THE EARLY POETS

GREAT poetry embodies the sublimest expression of the human mind. Of all forms of expression used by mankind poetry is the most natural and direct; and the heart of a people always responds to it in times of exaltation. Even those who confess they are unable to read poetry cannot escape its influence; since there is in the nature of mankind the stuff of poetry, which must at times manifest itself in all our lives.

But what is really meant by poetry is not merely the ingenious arrangement of words and phrases into lines beginning with capital letters and ending with words of similar sound: it is one of the elemental things of nature, like electricity, and perhaps, in its deeper significance, no better understood.

The Aeolian harp may be taken as an illustration. This stringed instrument of the ancients, placed where the wind could blow upon it, gave forth sweet sounds. Man made the instrument, but nature produced the music; neither acted alone—it was a relation of interdependence.

So with poetry: it is not merely Shakespeare or Milton who plays upon our feelings and our senses when we read his poems. He offers the magical, emotion-fraught words, and we the sensitive hearts; but it is the soul of all remembered emotions and aspirations in each one of us—the very 'rhythm of life'—that attunes these words to the needs and possibilities of each individual nature, and thus applies poetry.

The poet in this sense is the maker of the Aeolian harp, nature (as the winds and the stirrings of our emotions) the player, and we the hearers, more or less acute, who catch or miss the sounds, according to our varying susceptibilities. Take the word 'home' as an example. In no two minds does this monosyllable of four letters awaken absolutely similar ideas: 'The old home,' 'Home, sweet home,' 'Home is home'—how colorless and inexpressive the word and these phrases are when coldly analyzed; yet how they may stir the pulse and quicken the memory when met with in poetry, and even in prose! And why? Simply because we associate our personal joys and sorrows with this index word and its connotations, and so become in a manner joint artificers with the poet.

Hence the great poet is he who most successfully awakens in us, not only his, but our own thoughts and memories, by using the most expressive language in voicing his own thoughts and emotions. Thus emotional language is essential to poetry. There is wonderful power in mere words. Tennyson all his life was affected by the words 'Far, far away.'

As a boy they moved him poignantly. Who would ever have quoted Keat's famous verse: 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,' if he had left it, as originally written, 'a continual joy'?

WHILE this may help but a little way towards the understanding of poetry, it warrants the assertion that by men first discovering the power to utter words potent to awaken responsive emotions in their fellows—having fitted first of all their own emotions, of which the words were an essential part—began that intercommunion of souls which, in the course of ages, creating for itself certain conventions of form, shaped itself finally into what we know as poetry.

In the earliest recorded history of our own land the bard had his place in the social scheme; and to a far greater degree than in our own time was the national need of poetical expression recognized, the poet articulating what his fellows felt but dimly and were quite unable to body forth. The bard was then, as now, both historian and prophet, interpreting his age to itself and to posterity.

These old Gaelic singers, in the early centuries of the Christian era, were often warriors as well; but many of them were more akin in their social status to the modern professional men of letters than any poets or historians in the intervening ages. The need of singers to arouse enthusiasm for battle, to celebrate victories, to mourn over defeats and commemorate the fallen heroes, was as great in the rude days of Oisin and Merlin as—to use a homely illustration—the need of the political pamphleteer and leader-writer in modern electoral times; but more dignified, more in tune with nature.

Thus, in our own land, as some twelve centuries earlier in Greece, when Homer celebrated the Trojan war in the first great poem of imperishable genius, the beginning of poetry as a literary expression was associated with the hero and heroic deeds. In the ancient poetical books of the Bible it was associated with the divine aspirations of the soul, and the real beginning of English poetry was also religious, much of the poetic energy of our race, first expressed by Caedmon in the seventh century, being informed by a deep devotional spirit which has remained a characteristic of English poetry.

Geoffrey Chaucer

ONLY those who wish to specialize in this branch of learning need seriously examine the writings of William Langland, Laurence Minot and the lesser poets between Caedmon, who died about 675, and Chaucer, who died more than seven centuries later.

If one were to begin the study of poetry with the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340-1400), it is doubtful whether one's progress would be immediate and sustained. For the study of Chaucer requires some degree of cultured love for poetry, which is not so necessary to the immediate enjoyment of Shakespeare or Tennyson.

A reader who may have no pretension to a cultivated literary taste can take up a play of Shakespeare's, a poem of Tennyson's, and fall forthwith under the spell of the poet's music, his imagination, his wisdom, his humanity, as both of these geniuses speak to us in our own speech.

But not so with Chaucer and the writers of the later medieval period. While the body of the language in which Chaucer wrote is the essential English with which we are all familiar, it is different in so many little ways that the reader never quite accepts it as his own tongue, but always finds in it a quaint and somewhat foreign flavor. For this very reason, however, there is the more need that we should familiarize ourselves with the English of Chaucer, as it is with him that our language first gains classic distinction.

Some critics, more hasty than wise, have condemned Chaucer for introducing so many French words into our vocabulary. While this complaint may seem at first thought to be capable of ready proof, we have to remember that in Chaucer's day the rude and vigorous Anglo-Saxon speech of the common people had absorbed from the Norman-French of the aristocracy numerous words and idioms not yet quite assimilated, but later to be so, and vastly to enhance the beauty and expressiveness of the language. Thus Chaucer was no affected writer, but one true to the speech of his day, which we know as Middle English. While Chaucer sounds 'quaint' to us, he was doubtless as clear and unaffected to his contemporaries as Tennyson to his, clearer than many of our present day poets. Lowell says pithily:

> He found our language lumpish, stiff, unwilling, too apt to speak Saxonly in grouty monosyllables, but left it enriched with the longer measure of the Italian and Provençal poets. He reconciled, in the harmony of his verse, the English bluntness with the dignity and elegance of the less homely Southern speech.

It will repay us to take the little pains necessary to understanding Chaucer's own language before we begin to read him. There have been many efforts since Dryden's to put Chaucer's verse into modern English, and it is astonishing how much of the original quality both Dryden and Wordsworth contrived to re-dress in the garb of modern verse. It was mainly from their versions that the abridgement of The Canterbury Tales in The World's Great Books was compiled, but it is undeniable that something of the Chaucerian simplicity and charm eluded even these poets of genius in the process of modernizing and it is really worth while to study the Father of English Poetry in his own idiom, since that is so easily acquired. Skeat's text is accepted as the best, but Cowden Clarke's The Riches of Chaucer, in which the spelling is modernized and the rhythm accentuated, is a commendable version.

THERE is no poet more human than Geoffrey Chaucer, hardly one with whom a reader would feel more willing to have had personal acquaintance. His intense humanity comes out so inevitably in everything he wrote—although his person is never obtruded in any unnecessarily egoistic fashion—his sympathy with his fellows, his delight in nature's ways, his jovial humor, his reverence, his occasional ribaldry and his sorrows for his follies—all these qualities make his a most lovable personality.

Although a great creative artist, Chaucer's genius was awakened by the influence of Continental literature with which, as a scholar, he early made acquaintance, the French poets and the Italian poets and story-tellers being familiar to him in

the original, and largely drawn upon by him for his material.

His heaviest debt is to Boccaccio, his great Italian contemporary, whom, as well as Petrarch, he is popularly supposed, though on very slender evidence, to have met during a diplomatic mission to Italy. It is also probable that Dante's Divina Commedia had considerable influence on him, while his verse-form was derived from the trouvères of France, who for more than two hundred years before him had been composing those epic poems which the jongleurs carried about in manuscript or in memory and recited in castle halls.

Yet, with all his borrowings, and even when he seemed only to have translated, Chaucer, like all great artists, so wonderfully transmuted by his genius the material wherewith he worked that it was re-created. Boccaccio himself, from whose Decameron Chaucer drew so much for his Canterbury Tales, and whose Filostrato he so closely follows in Troilus and Criseyde, took his stories from the popular medieval fiction of his time and gave them classical form. But the greater artist mind of Chaucer is revealed in The Canterbury Tales, where every personage tells a tale that is suited to the teller's character, taste, or condition of life; there is no such dramatic fitness observed in the Decameron.

It is with The Canterbury Tales that the name of Chaucer is always associated in the popular mind. But great though it is in many ways, absolutely characteristic of the poet, as a composite whole it is doubtful if it can be placed before his Troilus and Criseyde, which may be considered the fine flower of Chaucer's genius: one of the most exquisite poems in the English tongue.

The Canterbury Tales

THE plan of The Canterbury Tales is so familiar that it is not necessary to do more than outline it in a very few words. A company of pilgrims, journeying to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, foregather in Southwark at the Tabard Inn, where the poet, himself supposed to be starting on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, meets them and proposes to make one of the company. The landlord of the Tabard also offers to join the party and to act as guide. It is he who suggests that in order to beguile the tedium of the journey each pilgrim shall undertake to tell two stories, both going and returning, and that the teller of the story which is voted the best shall, on the return to the Tabard, be entertained to supper at the common cost of his or her fellow pilgrims: for the company is of both sexes.

Although Chaucer did not set himself the task of relating every one of these stories told by the pilgrims, the twenty-four tales and prologues of which the work consists form only a fragment of his design, but a glorious fragment, which for nearly two hundred years remained the unequaled gem of English literature.

But it is neither with The Canterbury Tales, nor yet with his classic story of Priam's son and the false Cressida (which Shakespeare also took for one of his plays) that the reader should take his first taste of Chaucer's poetry. Rather let him begin with those exquisite little poems comprising The Legend of Good Women, in which Chaucer re-

lates the tragic lovestories of Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Ariadne and other classical heroines. These are each of a length sufficient to attract the reader who is not yet familiar with the poet's manner and to prepare him for the longer works.

It is a safe assertion that the reader who has borne Chaucer company through only two or three of these poems will require no counsel to cultivate acquaintance with the writings of this merry, wise and gentle poet, who was at once a scholar, a lover of books and ancient lore, and withal a lusty Englishman rejoicing in the world out of doors and all the ways of nature.

And, as for me, though that my wit be lyte,
On bokés for to rede I me delyte,
And in myn herté have hem in reverence;
And to hem yeve swich lust and swich credence,
That ther is wel unethé gamé noon (none),
That from my bokés maké me to goon (gone).
But hit be other up-on the haly-day,
Or ellés in the joly tyme of May;
Whan that I here the smalé foulés singe,
And that the flourés ginné for to springe,
Farwell my studie, as lasting that sesoun!

In these lines from the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women I have merely put an accent on the 'e' where in modern verse that vowel would be mute, and re-spelled two rhyming words, yet, allowing that perhaps half-a-dozen words more require explanation, the readers who cannot follow Chaucer in this quotation must be few. Even so, however, I do not think it wise that anyone should make his first acquaintance with English poetry by reading Chaucer, and I deal with him at this stage only because of the historical sequence to be observed in this survey. In my opinion one's taste for poetry had better be ripened somewhat by acquaintance with Shakespeare or the more modern writers before seriously taking up Chaucer; but, be assured, Chaucer, once taken up as a task, will be continued as a pleasure.

Chaucer's Contemporaries

So commanding is the figure of Geoffrey Chaucer in English medieval literature that more than two hundred years have to pass before another stands beside him on the same plane, and even then it might be argued that it is a relation of master and disciple, for Spenser acknowledged Chaucer as his master. But they have really little in common, and there is more reason for believing Spenser's masters to have been the Italians, Ariosto and Tasso. Thus the poets who come between Chaucer and Spenser are not of any great account to the general reader, though several of them are worthy of study by those who aim at a more intimate knowledge of our literature.

In John Gower, Chaucer had a fellow-poet and a friend who was only secondary in importance because it was his fate to live under the shadow cast by his great contemporary. Not that Gower had else been a great writer, for his limitations are so well defined that he is one of the authors over whom there is small reason for critics to disagree. He may be described as a man of great talent, ripe scholarship and character, but not a man of genius. In sheer craftsmanship he was even Chaucer's superior, and perhaps in scholarship also, yet he lacked that divine fire which lifts the genius above considerations of craft.

Gower wrote three large works, in the French, Latin and English tongues. The first is no longer in existence; the second, which is composed in Latin elegiac verse, describes the Wat Tyler rising, and thus has some value in the eyes of the historian, though it possesses none for the reader of poetry. His English work is his greatest, and has been reprinted in popular form within recent years. It is entitled Confessio Amantis (A Lover's Confession), and is most tedious reading. Its interest is mainly for the philologist, and it may very well be passed over by the general reader. Gower died in 1408, and his effigy on his tomb in St. Saviour's, Southwark, shows him with his head pillowed by his three ponderous and forgotten works.

Also contemporary with Chaucer was John Barbour (1316-95), the first great Scottish poet, whose chief work, The Bruce, is a national epic written in octosyllabic verse, remarkably spirited, full of movement and observation, and accepted by authorities as historically accurate; so that Barbour has the double value of historian and poet. The original is perhaps a little more difficult to read than Chaucer, whom Barbour resembles in his love of nature; but as the historical value of the work is at least equal to its poetical, there need be less hesitation in making its acquaintance in a modernized version. Most collections of Scottish poetry give considerable space to lengthy passages from The Bruce. The following few lines from the original illustrate its style. They occur in the description of the launching of Bruce's galleys, with his little army of three hundred men, from the island of Arran, to cross the Firth of Clyde to Turnberry:

> This wes in Ver,[1] quhen wynter tyde,
> With his blastis hidwyus[2] to byde
> Was our drywyn,[3] and birdys smale,
> As turturis[4] and the nychtyngale,
> Begouth rycht sairely to syng,
> And for to mak in thair singyng
> Swete notis, and sownys ser,
> And melodys pleasand to her.

[1] Spring. [2] Bitter Blasts. [3] Overpast. [4] Turtle-dove.

Barbour, who was Archdeacon of Aberdeen for about forty years, made several journeys through England and France, chiefly, it has been thought, to collect material for his books.

Literary Leanness of the 15th Century

Notwithstanding the splendid start which Chaucer had given to our literature, the fifteenth century was very barren of great writers. That English poets of the caliber of Thomas Occleve, who was thirty years old at the time of Chaucer's death, John Lydgate, a dull imitator of Chaucer, and Stephen Hawes, a writer of prolix allegories, and, in Scotland, Henry the Minstrel, could achieve popularity, is proof of the poverty of the period in works of imagination.

King James I of Scotland made good use of his long imprisonment in England by writing many poems, and notably The King's Quhair (Book), which are models of good English, graceful in style, and at times approach close to Chaucer both in music and imagination. The student should read, in this connection, Washington Irving's fine essay, A Royal Poet, in The Sketch Book.

John Skelton (d. 1529) cuts no contemptible figure in fifteenth-century literature, despite the adverse criticism to which he has always been sub-

jected. 'Beastly Skelton' is how Pope dismisses him, and Puttenham in his Arte of English Poesie—which, published in 1589, was one of the critical works that accompanied the Elizabethan literary revival—says of him: 'Being indeed but a rude rayling rimer, and all his doings ridiculous; he used short distances and short measures, pleasing only the popular eare.' All this notwithstanding, Skelton was the English Rabelais, with a good deal of the Frenchman's learning, his unrestrained delight in word-play, something of his satire, much of his coarseness and his joviality. Still, I do not commend him to the average reader for he is too robustly outspoken for the taste of our time.

William Dunbar, the Scots poet, who belongs almost equally to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was, like Skelton, a priest. But Dunbar, on the whole, shows a better balanced character, and although he can rival his contemporary in coarseness when he cares—which is much too often—he displays public spirit in his satires, grace and wit in his allegories, and is at times capable of real pathos. Born about 1460-5, most of his life was spent at the Scottish court, and his most famous poem, The Thrissill and the Rois (The Thistle and the Rose) was an allegory on the marriage of James IV with Margaret, eldest daughter of Henry VII. It is supposed that he accompanied the ambassadors who went to England to arrange the marriage. Dunbar died about 1513. About this time Gawin Douglas, Archbishop of Dunkeld (c. 1474-1522), was writing some animated poems, especially The Palice of Honor; he also rendered the Aeneid into Lowland Scots, this being the first translation of a Latin classic published in Britain.

Sir Thomas More & the Twilight of Poetry

But unless we were to include Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) among the poets who belong to the dim twilight of the Middle Ages though coming so near to the bright sunrise of the Elizabethan renaissance, there is hardly any name until we come to Sidney or Spenser that can be said to have much significance for the general reader. And More's Utopia, written in Latin, is not poetical in form, so that it would be a deliberate straining of words to include him with the poets.

It is difficult to imagine him as the friend of John Heywood (1497-1580), a poor rhymer who is only interesting to the student as being one of the first to introduce into the drama subjects drawn from everyday life, and thus to hasten the end of the old morality plays. A writer more lacking in every literary grace it would be hard to find, and the fact that he was the favorite jester of Henry VIII indicates the low standard of taste prevailing at that time. Sir Thomas More and he may have been friends chiefly because they were both ardent Catholics.

Sir Thomas Wyatt and his friend Henry, Earl of Surrey, were, however, poets whose works are worthy of attention and who, as the English originators of amatory verse, will always call for some notice. The ordinary reader may be content to make their acquaintance in anthologies.

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42) wrote many graceful sonnets and lyrical poems characterized by a grave courtliness rather than the

light touch of the true love-poet, while the Earl of Surrey (1517-47), though of a livelier temperament and a true lover, did not excel him in the quality of his verses. Wyatt introduced the sonnet stanza, terza rima and blank verse into England from Italy. Surrey was the first of English poets to write any considerable poem in blank verse, into which he translated books II and IV of Virgil's Aeneid.

With Wyatt and Surrey, which latter the great French critic H. A. Taine, in his history of English Literature, describes as 'an English Petrarch,' our language had acquired greater literary possibilities than it had before possessed: 'Those who have ideas now possess an instrument capable of expressing them,' and to what purpose this instrument was used we shall now proceed to inquire.

II

THE ELIZABETHANS

1. The Lyric Poets

WHEN we turn our attention to the poetry of the Elizabethan age, it is as though we were looking with unskilled eyes upon a starry heaven, so bewildering and so brilliant are the names that glitter in the literary firmament of that wonderful area—Shakespeare, the 'bright particular star.' With the awakening of the English nation to a new and grander perception of national patriotism, the dusky clouds of medievalism had been suddenly dispersed by the bright sun of a new day.

It is indeed hard to resist the temptation which besets every writer on the Elizabethans to let rhetoric displace criticism, to decorate one's chronicle with 'purple patches.' But here the necessity to condense is so imperative that I must content myself with dealing very briefly with most of the poets that now call for attention; and as in almost every case it will be necessary for the reader to make direct acquaintance with their work, there is the less need for biographical or critical detail. This may be thought an unprecedented method to adopt, but I am ready to defend it on the ground that in a practical guide to English literature it is more necessary to deal at some length with those writers who, while sufficiently important from the historical point of view, are not urged upon the reader for his personal study, than with those whose works must be read.

There was nothing miraculous in the outburst of poetry which heralded and accompanied the Elizabethan age. If from the time of Chaucer the genius and imagination of the country had languished, scholarship, at least, had ripened; and the medieval age did not pass away without leaving a legacy to the age that followed, since the English language had assumed, in the poetry of Wyatt and Surrey, a greater perfection of form than it had hitherto possessed. This was now to be used by writers imbued with loftier idealism than that of the age of chivalry and old

romance. But for some little time yet we would naturally expect to find the older notions of life still actuating writers who, chronologically, are to be reckoned Elizabethans. This is true in some measure of Spenser and his friend and patron, Sidney, both of whom were born some four years before the accession of Elizabeth.

Sidney and Spenser

ALTHOUGH the figure of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) is one of the most familiar in literary history, it is not unreasonable to suggest that this is due as much to his remarkable qualities as a man as to his literary gifts. Sidney's poetry does not merit so much consideration as his prose. Wyatt and Surrey could write sonnets as good as his, but he was the first to write the prose of art. Francis Turner Palgrave, an unerring judge, could find only one little love ditty of Sidney's to include in his Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics. Yet Sidney was a poet of no mean parts, somewhat affected, it is true, but destined to live in several of his sonnets, such as that beginning, 'With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies,' and another, 'Come sleep, O sleep, the certain knot of peace.' But since the days when Sidney was lauded as a genius by his admiring contemporaries so much good poetry has been written that readers of to-day need not fear the charge of philistinism if they are content merely to make his acquaintance in a volume of selections.

Sidney's friend, Edmund Spenser (1552-99), was a poetical star of much greater magnitude. Indeed, Spenser is esteemed by many the finest of English poets before Shakespeare, though his great contemporary, the unhappy Christopher Marlowe, was to exercise far more influence over the greatest of all poets.

I frankly confess I am one of those who have found it a tedious task to read The Faery Queen, most celebrated of Spenser's poems, and so I hesitate to urge it upon others. When Pope was only twelve years old he read it 'with infinite delight,' and Southey confesses to having read it thirty times over, while Dryden gave it untempered praise; but it is doubtful if the enthusiasm of these eminent admirers is alone sufficient to induce the ordinary reader to bear Spenser company through the six books of The Faery Queen.

The Tedious Faery Queen

IN THE plan of the work we still find that characteristic of medieval literature: a set scheme of stories told for some given purpose, as in The Decameron and The Canterbury Tales. The Faery Queen is supposed to be holding her annual feast, of twelve days' duration, and on those twelve days twelve different complaints are submitted to her. To redress the wrongs thus brought to her knowledge she commissions twelve knights, each of whom is noted for a certain virtue, and his doings are celebrated throughout a whole book. But in addition to such heroes as the Knight of the Red Cross (Holiness), Sir Guyon (Temperance) and the lady-knight Britomartis (Chastity), there is the superlative figure of Prince Arthur, in whom all knightly virtues are combined and who, appearing in every book, is designed as

the general hero in quest of Gloriana, or Glory.

There can be no manner of doubt as to the eminent place of Spenser among the English poets, for he is an obvious master of epic poetry, his invention inexhaustible, the rhythm of his verse the very perfection of poetic form, his imagination so rich and sensuous that Campbell aptly called him 'the Rubens of English poetry.' Despite all this, and despite the fact that he is Milton's acknowledged master, it is true that he is not, on the whole, a poet for the general reader; and, let the critics say what they may about the critical shortcomings of Macaulay and Hume, there is more honesty in the statement of the latter than in the enthusiasm of many perfervid admirers when he writes:

> The tediousness of continued allegory, and that, too, seldom striking or ingenious, has also contributed to render The Faery Queen peculiarly tiresome; not to mention the too great frequency of its descriptions and the languor of its stanza. Upon the whole, Spenser maintains his place upon the shelves among our English classics; but he is seldom seen on the table.

Macaulay, too, is very human when he complains that 'we become sick of the cardinal virtues and deadly sins, and long for the society of plain men and women.'

Spenser has been called 'the poet's poet,' which means that to get the best from him the reader himself must be of so poetic a temperament that 'the linked sweetness long drawn out' of his poetry does not cloy, but rather whets and stimulates the mental appetite. Nevertheless, Spenser is a poet with whom the common reader should at least make acquaintance, as some knowledge of his writings is essential to the proper appreciation of Elizabethan literature. His first great work, The Shepherd's Calendar, a tuneful but joyless and affected pastoral poem, with little of the warm humanity we find in Chaucer, is to be regarded as the opening paean of that mighty chorus which we call the Elizabethan poetry.

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618) is only incidentally a poet. He belonged to an age when every man of note seems to have had some literary talent, and his verse is graceful, free from the more pronounced affectations of the period, but of no extraordinary quality. More noteworthy are his prose writings.

Sir John Harrington (1561-1612), the translator of Ariosto, the Italian poet, need only be mentioned; none but specialists in the period will care to acquaint themselves with his work. And the same may be said of Edward Fairfax (c. 1580-1635), though all scholars who can speak with authority are agreed that his translation of Torquato Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered is admirable, and much superior to Harrington's rendering of Orlando Furioso.

A Warwickshire man and a friend of Shakespeare, who entertained him and Ben Jonson at Stratford a few weeks before his death, Michael Drayton (1563-1631) was a lyric and descriptive poet of very unusual qualities. He was not a great poet, though certain of his contemporaries formed the most extravagant estimate of his merits. His chief work was conceived and carried out on a plan that made it hopeless of continued popularity. It was called The Polyolbion, and may be described as a topographical account of England, displaying wonderful learning, but

utterly mistaken in its medium, which should have been prose.

Drayton is seen to better advantage in The Baron's Wars, a long poem, which, though uninteresting on the whole, abounds in passages of great spirit. In short, he is a poet worthy of some attention, even from those who are not making a special study of the period.

One of the most accomplished minor poets of his age was William Drummond (1585-1649), of Hawthornden, near Edinburgh, the friend of Drayton and of Ben Jonson, the latter of whom visited him in 1618-19—an occasion which Drummond turned to literary profit by making his Notes of Jonson's Conversation; a very interesting chapter of literary history. Examples of Drummond's sonnets are found in most anthologies. Samuel Daniel (1562-1619), whom Jonson described as 'a good, honest man, but no poet,' wrote many beautiful sonnets greatly admired by Drummond.

The Too Decorative Donne

John Donne (1573-1631) was the greatest preacher of his day, and protagonist of the 'metaphysical' school of poetry. His Life is one of Izaak Walton's masterpieces. Donne's poems do not possess any great interest for the general reader. His chief characteristic is extravagant imagery, which even in purely amatory verse may be very displeasing, but when used to invoke the Most High it becomes offensively inappropriate. Thus, in his Hymn to Christ written 'at the author's last going into Germany,' and opening with several grotesque conceits, he goes on in this strain:

I sacrifice this island unto Thee,
And all, whom I love here, and who love me;
When I have put this flood 'twixt them and me,
Put Thou Thy blood betwixt my sins and Thee.
As the tree's sap doth seek the root below
In winter, in my winter now I go
Where none but Thee, th' eternal Root
Of true love, I may know.

Surely this is an example of the vilest taste.

George Wither (1588-1667) was the most prolific writer of the time, and his work is very unequal, so that the curious way in which it has suffered neglect and revival is not surprising. Dryden was by no means unfair when he wrote of him:

He fagotted his notions as they fell,
And if they rhym'd and rattled, all was well.

But he will always be remembered, if only for that exquisite lyric beginning:

Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?

Thomas Campion (c. 1567-1620), poet, critic and musician; Robert Herrick (1591-1674)—it is curious to note, by the way, that the lyric poets were longer lived than most of the dramatists of this period—one of the sweetest singers in our language, whose Hesperides is a collection of unrivaled lyrics; Francis Quarles (1592-1644), immensely popular in his own day and after as a writer of religious poems, whose Emblems, Divine and Moral, are still worthy of attention; and George Herbert (1593-1633), like Quarles, one of the least objectionable of Dr. Donne's school of metaphysical or allegorical writers, and a better than his master, were the only other lyric poets born before the close of the sixteenth century with whose works the general reader need concern himself. I can

but note the names of Thomas Watson, Phineas and Giles Fletcher, William Browne, Sir John Davies and Thomas Carew, 'that delectable versifier,' among the many other minor poets and versifiers born in the sixteenth century.

I HAVE not followed the usual plan of dividing the Elizabethan age into two periods, but have deemed it more convenient for the progress of this study thus to review at once the poets who are epic, as Spenser; narrative, as Drayton; or lyric, as Sidney; reserving the dramatic writers for separate consideration. Naturally, some of the dramatists wrote lyrical verse also, Ben Jonson's 'Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes' being one of the most engaging songs in our language, but we must regard them as essentially dramatic poets. Perhaps the arrangement is somewhat arbitrary, since there was no great distinction between the lyric poets of the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, and there was necessarily much overlapping of writers; but it serves at least to give us some idea of the poets of the lesser order immediately preceding, contemporary with, and following Shakespeare and the Elizabethan dramatists.

The ordinary reader may be content to study all the poets I have mentioned in volumes of specimens. There is no reason why he should set himself the task—for such it would be in a very real sense—of studying all their works, or, indeed, all the works of any one of them, as a fair conception of their respective merits and their united influence on the literature of our country may be obtained by reading some of their longer poems and a selection of their minor pieces.

III

THE ELIZABETHANS

2. *The Earlier Dramatists*

THE drama, so long and bitterly condemned by the puritanical, is not only one of the world's oldest and noblest arts, but one that had its origin in religious worship. The art, which produced in Shakespeare the greatest genius of all time, was in ancient Greece an evolution of pagan ceremonial, and in its modern revival it might be described as a graft on the priestly propaganda of medieval times.

It is not part of my purpose to attempt any study of the Greek drama, or to do more than make such incidental references to it as may be necessary in discussing English drama. But let us be clear on this point: the art of the dramatist, in both the ancient and the modern world, has attracted the mightiest intellects ever devoted to creative literature, and, in proportion to the whole body of the drama, the works of absolute genius which it contains outnumber those in any other division of literature.

IT is necessary to state this in the most emphatic manner, as a measure of prejudice against every-

thing associated with the theater still endures; the legacy, on one side, of puritanism, and the outcome, on the other, of the sterility of our stage throughout most of the Victorian era. Of late years and despite the setback which it received during the period of the Great War, the English drama, in a literary sense, has been showing signs of renewed strength. Still, it is mainly to the printed page and not to the theater that we must turn to study the drama. It may be said that this is as it should be, since the dramatist, not less than any other poet, is for the study. But the fact remains that what is called 'a drama for the closet' is no drama at all; the play which cannot be acted is for that reason no play, and, equally, the play which is only tolerable when acted is not literature.

Our drama might almost be said to have begun and ended in one great burst of glory; for if all that has been written since the last of the Elizabethans, with a few exceptions, were to be wiped away, our dramatic literature would not be greatly impoverished. The evolution of the English drama is sometimes ascribed to the old 'mysteries' invented by the medieval clergy for the purpose of giving the ignorant mob some smattering of Biblical knowledge. These crude representations of sacred history gave place gradually to the 'morality' play, wherein the teachers of the people endeavored to visualize before their dim intelligences the Christian virtues. From this it was but a step to the stage representation of the common life, and that step had been taken before the reign of Elizabeth, Heywood's interludes forming a link between the morality play and the drama proper.

George Gascoigne (c. 1525-77) was one of the earliest dramatists and a poet of no mean place among the Elizabethans, his spirited satire, The Steel Glass, being the longest and one of the most virile compositions in blank verse before Milton. But it is evident in his dramatic work that he was influenced not so much by the disappearing morality play as by the ancient classical drama; his Jocasta is an adaptation from the Phoenissae of Euripides, while his Comedy of Supposes, whence Shakespeare borrowed for his Taming of the Shrew, was a prose translation of Ariosto's comedy, I Suppositi.

Indeed, it is hardly correct to speak of any 'link' between the modern drama and the morality play, as in all countries the rise of the drama was the outcome of a revival of learning which led the writers to look back across the ages and to find their models in the ancient classical drama, the machinery of the stage, however, being ready to their hand as it existed for the purpose of the 'moralities.' The first regular comedy in our language, Ralph Roister Doister, by Nicholas Udall (1506-56), Master of Eton, was modeled on the comedies of Plautus and Terence, while Sackville and Norton's Gorboduc, our first regular tragedy, produced on January 18, 1562, was modeled on the tragedies of Seneca.

Comedy shaped itself into true dramatic form earlier than tragedy, and the art owed well-nigh as much to such writers as Greene and Peele as tragedy did to Marlowe. Most of the early dramatists were poet-scholars, men who had been educated at Oxford or Cambridge and who to

not fallen a victim to a vicious and irregular life at the early age of twenty-nine, and had his splendid powers ripened and been exercised with the restraint of a maturer judgment, he might have stood no more than a step behind Shakespeare himself. When Marlowe was killed in a wretched tavern brawl Shakespeare's dramatic genius was still in the bud, though both poets had been born in the same year.

Marlowe was the son of a poor Canterbury shoemaker, and may have owed his education at Cambridge University to some wealthy relative. He graduated M.A. in his twenty-fourth year, but for two or three years he is supposed to have been in London intent on becoming a dramatist. Records of the production of his works are somewhat confused, as none of his plays was printed in his lifetime. Tamburlaine the Great, supposed to have been his first, though disfigured by much bombast and fustian, is alive with real drama, and its style is instinctive with poetic feeling. His other chief works are Doctor Faustus, Edward II, The Jew of Malta, and The Massacre at Paris. It is generally agreed that Edward II is the best historical play in our language after Shakespeare, and Charles Lamb is not unduly enthusiastic when he says, 'the reluctant pangs of abdicating Royalty in Edward furnished hints which Shakespeare scarcely improved in his Richard II, and the death scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted.'

His greatest work is Doctor Faustus, founded on the legend of the German magician who, for twenty-four years of unrestrained life, sold himself to the devil both body and soul, which is also the theme of Goethe's Faust. 'There is,' says Hallam, 'an awful melancholy about Marlowe's Mephistopheles, perhaps more impressive than the malignant mirth of that fiend in the renowned work of Goethe. But the fair form of Margaret is wanting; and Marlowe has hardly earned the credit of having breathed a few casual inspirations into a greater mind than his own.'

Neither of the other two productions I have named is worthy of the poet's undoubted genius, and perhaps the opinion of Thomas Warton, the erudite eighteenth century historian of English poetry, gives the best criticism of Marlowe's work:

> His tragedies manifest traces of a just dramatic conception; but they abound with tedious and uninteresting scenes, or with such extravagances as proceed from a want of judgment, and those barbarous ideas of the times over which it was the peculiar gift of Shakespeare's genius alone to triumph and to predominate.

Marlowe's plays are now little read, but every student with any pretension to literary culture should be conversant with his Doctor Faustus and The Jew of Malta, as well as with his Edward II. His beautiful lyric, The Passionate Shepherd to his Love, will be familiar to most readers.

IV

THE ELIZABETHANS

3. *Shakespeare and an Outline of Shakespeare Study*

IF WE were to shear away every name in English dramatic poetry but that of Shakespeare, we could still claim for it such pre-eminence, especially in tragedy—the highest form of drama—that not even the glorious art of Greece could be said to transcend it. Indeed, tragedy, which sprang from the worship of the god Dionysus, or Bacchus —the altar and the chorus of the pagan temple having their counterparts in the Greek theater—and rose into supreme poetic form in the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, may be said to have culminated in the works of Shakespeare: the four greatest tragedies in the world are Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear. But it is the unmatched glory of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) that he achieved the highest in both tragedy and comedy.

As Coleridge points out very aptly, Plato in his Symposium had, two thousand years before, framed 'a justification of our Shakespeare' when he argued that 'it was the business of one and the same genius to excel in tragic and comic poetry, or that the tragic poet ought, at the same time, to contain within himself the powers of comedy.' This in Plato was prophetic, as it laid down a canon utterly opposed by all the ancient critics and quite unsupported by any example from the Greek dramatists, to whom tragedy and comedy were incompatible elements, having but one quality in common—ideality.

> Both were alike ideal; that is, the comedy of Aristophanes rose to as great a distance above the ludicrous of real life as the tragedy of Sophocles above its tragic events and passions; and it is in this one point of absolute ideality that the comedy of Shakespeare and the old comedy of Athens coincide. In this also alone did the Greek tragedy and comedy unite; in everything else they were exactly opposed to each other. Tragedy is poetry in its deepest earnest; comedy is poetry in unlimited jest.

Here we see at a glance why Shakespeare's was the one intellect which, while comprehending all human passions and emotions, could equally express all.

IT WILL hardly be expected of me that within the compass of a few pages I shall attempt a study of Shakespeare. Betterton, the first great tragedian, at the end of his career, when performing Hamlet for the last time, said that he had seldom in fifty years, and with all his continuous study, discharged that rôle without finding in the character some new beauty to express which before he had not noticed, and this not less in his last performance of it. If this be true of only one of the multitude of characters created by Shakespeare, one might devote a lifetime of study to his works, and leave them unexhausted at the end. Nay, many men of great and original talent have done so, and many more will do the same. For Shakespeare and his writings are not to be regarded as a great author and a de-

partment of study, but as a life and a literature.

So limitless is the literature which has grown around the name of Shakespeare in all the languages of European culture, that only a man of the ripest scholarship and linguistic attainments can hope ever to obtain more than a partial knowledge of this mighty genius. But that is in no way to deter the common reader from entering upon the study and enjoyment of a series of works which, if one read no others, would furnish the mind with the very essence of intellectual joy and make its owner a person of culture. It is not the least of Shakespeare's distinctions that he commands the devotion and life-long service of the best scholars while he entertains the most ordinary reader and the common playgoer.

The Facts of Shakespeare

ALTHOUGH it is often said that some half-dozen facts are all we possess with certainty of the poet's life, the untiring industry of biographers and critics, especially during last century, not only in England but in Germany and in France, has supplemented the few historical facts with so much inferential knowledge, that there is no difficulty in realizing for ourselves an adequate conception of the man, and in understanding the poet, to the best of our individual capacities.

Almost alone among his contemporaries Shakespeare was not a university scholar; but it is fair to suppose that he received his education at the free school of Stratford, being under fourteen years of age when his father, who had hitherto been prosperous and prominent in the public life of the town, fell upon evil times and had to withdraw his son in order to put him to a trade. It has been thought that he was apprenticed to a butcher, though some critics, on the strength of the legal knowledge displayed in his works, have supposed him to have been for a time an attorney's clerk.

But on similar grounds it might be argued that he had meant to be a gardener, or had thoughts of the ministry. He was not eighteen when he married Anne Hathaway, a yeoman's daughter, eight years older than himself; and three or four years later, now the father of three children, and a social failure in his native town, he came to London, where in 1592 we find him an actor and a rising playwright. It is in this year that Greene, in his Groatsworth of Wit, jibes at him as a 'rude groome,' who 'supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you'—the sneer of a practised dramatist at a younger and more promising member of his craft.

SHAKESPEARE attained to no great distinction as an actor, but his connection with the stage brought him in the way of literary work in the shape of altering old plays, retouching the writings of other dramatists when the manager employing him desired to revive their plays. Playwrights were then in the habit of selling to theatrical managers for a few pounds the entire copyright of their plays, and as actors thought it prejudicial to their interests that the plays should be published, only a few plays of the period, and those chiefly in unauthorized versions, were printed during the lifetime of their authors.

None of those which Shakespeare revised could be 'old,' in the sense that now attaches to old plays, as the theatre itself was only in its infancy when Shakespeare was a young man, the first tragedy, Gorboduc, having been written but three years before his birth.

Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays

THE chronology of his earlier dramatic works has undergone many changes at the hands of different critics, from Malone, in 1778, to Sir Sidney Lee, in 1898, but there is no great difficulty in deciding upon the approximate order of the 37 plays attributed to him, or in distinguishing those of which he was only part author. As Sir Sidney Lee observes:

> The subject matter and meter both afford rough clues to the period in his career to which each play may be referred. In his early plays the spirit of comedy or tragedy appears in its simplicity; as his powers gradually matured he depicted life in its most complex involutions, and portrayed with masterly insight the subtle graduations of human sentiment and the mysterious workings of human passion. Comedy and tragedy are gradually blended, and his work finally developed a pathos such as could only come of ripe experience. The meter undergoes emancipation from the hampering restraints of fixed rule, and becomes flexible enough to respond to every phase of human feeling.

For this reason the works of Shakespeare are best read in something like chronological order. It is well, therefore, to begin, not with the plays, but with the two long narrative poems, Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece, as the former, published in 1593, was almost certainly the first effort of Shakespeare's muse, and the latter, appearing in the succeeding year, did much to establish the fame of the young play-actor, whose name was becoming familiar to patrons of the theater as an adapter of plays.

These were the works which first won him renown among his contemporaries and, apart from their great poetic beauty, they are interesting to us for that reason. They are elaborately classical and typical of the Pagan Renaissance, because the influence on the Elizabethans was that of ancient Greece and Rome.

Here may be set forth the names of the plays in their order, following Sir Sidney Lee's arrangement, and marking with an asterisk (*) those of which Shakespeare was only part author:

1. Early Dramatic Work

Love's Labour's Lost	1591	*Henry VI (Second Part)	1592
The Two Gentlemen of Verona	1591	*Henry VI (Third Part)	1592
The Comedy of Errors	1592	Richard III	1593
Romeo and Juliet	1592	Richard II	1593
*Henry VI (First Part)	1592	*Titus Andronicus	1593
		The Merchant of Venice	1594
		King John	1594

2. The Development of Dramatic Power

A Midsummer-Night's Dream	1594-5	Henry IV (Second Part)	1597
All's Well that Ends Well	1595	The Merry Wives of Windsor	1597
The Taming of the Shrew	1595	Henry V	1598
Henry IV (First Part)	1597		

3. Maturity of Genius

Much Ado About Nothing	1596	Julius Caesar	1601
As You Like It	1599	Hamlet	1602
Twelfth Night	1600	Troilus and Cressida	1603

4. The Highest Themes of Tragedy

Othello	1604	*Timon of Athens	1608
Measure for Measure	1604	*Pericles	1608
Macbeth	1606	Anthony and Cleopatra	1608
King Lear	1607	Coriolanus	1609

5. The Latest Plays

Cymbeline	1610	The Tempest	1611
Winter's Tale	1611	*Henry VIII	——

Now, it is not suggested that the student of Shakespeare is to procure himself a good edition of the plays and poems and read them through precisely in the order given above. But it is well, so far as it may be practicable, to read Shakespeare with more regard to the chronological order of the plays than to their grouping as comedies, histories and tragedies—the arrangement adopted in so many popular editions of the poet.

Many influences will condition the reading of the plays; especially theatrical representation, for no student of Shakespeare should miss any opportunity of seeing his plays performed on the stage by good companies, and there are few towns of any considerable size where such opportunities do not occur occasionally. He is a poet for both the stage and the study, and those who tell us they can enjoy him in the study but not in the theater do him an injustice and themselves no credit, as they should be able to enjoy him equally in both.

It will sometimes happen that the reader may have an opportunity of seeing a Shakespearean play which he has not read, and which, if he were following the above order of reading, he would not be likely to read for some time. The opportunity must not be lost, more especially if it be one of the plays, such as Cymbeline or Coriolanus, less frequently staged than others.

The play should be read before seeing the theatrical representation of it, and again immediately afterwards. No one following this course will fail to be struck by the revelation of the subtler passages which results from witnessing a play, already familiar by reading, in its natural atmosphere of the stage. It was said of a great tragedian that to see him act was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning. The phrase was not quite happy, as it is not well to read anything by lightning flashes. But what the critic meant was true: that the actor often interprets passages of the poet, which thus become illumined as by a flash of bright light to the student who may have missed their significance when reading the play.

Shakespeare's Sources

In very few of the popular editions of Shakespeare's plays is any hint given as to the sources whence the poet derived his subjects—sometimes, indeed, his very thoughts and words. But no adequate understanding of Shakespeare can be arrived at without these data, and the reader is counseled to study Shakespeare in some of those editions which give each play in a separate volume, with an introduction and notes by a competent scholar, and in some cases the full text of the original stories from which the poet has drawn the foundations of his work.

It is in this way only that a true critical estimate of the dramatist can be formed; but at the same time we are not to place ourselves unreservedly in the hands of the critics and commentators. It is always better, no matter how we may blunder in the first instance, to come by our own opinions in our reading, through the exercise of our own intelligence. What we have found out for ourselves is of far more value to us and the development of our mind

than what we have received without question from any teacher.

IN SHAKESPEAREAN study, we must accept a vast amount from the expositors of his text, but in doing so we can at the same time cultivate our own critical faculty by pursuing a course which will bring that into action; and to this end we cannot do better than read a play for the first time in an edition that is not annotated. In this way we are forced to form some independent judgment, and it is not of the slightest importance to the end in view whether that judgment be right or wrong; the conscious effort has been made, and only thus shall we ever attain to critical aptitude.

After we have received our own personal impressions of the poet's appeal to our understanding, and formed our own blundering opinions of his work, we can, with far more profit to ourselves, place ourselves in the hands of a scholarly editor, whose notes, elucidations and parallel quotations, will enable us to shape in our own mind an adequate conception of the poet's work, from which will be eliminated the mistaken notions formed in our first unguided reading, but in which will be retained the tested results of independent judgment. This method of reading is not limited in its application to the study of Shakespeare, but it is better adapted to the study of the dramatists and the poets generally than to that of the writers of prose.

The Mystery of The Sonnets

SHAKESPEARE'S mind, and his life through his mind, can best be understood by following the sequence of his works. His sonnets should be read with the plays of his second period, as most of them were written in the year 1594, though the collection was not published until 1609. A whole library of books has been devoted to the discussion of the 'mystery of The Sonnets.'

I do not deem it necessary to deal with the subject at any length, being persuaded that Sir Sidney Lee, by the rare intelligence and precision of his critical method, has disposed of all the popular and fantastic theories of these poems. His conclusion goes rather to support Professor Minto's theory as to their being written to show Shakespeare's contempt for the extravagant vogue of the sonnet among his contemporaries, than to further any of the other popularly accepted notions of their origin.

If not written as a 'tour de force,' then The Sonnets were no more than an experiment in the fashion of the hour, and the profound autobiographical value many have supposed them to possess is largely imaginary. Some of them were indited to the poet's patron, the Earl of Southampton; many have no relationship whatever to any others in the collection, and the common idea that sonnets 1 to 126 are 'addressed to a beautiful young man of high station,' and 127 to 154 'either addressed to or referring to a married woman of dark complexion, highly accomplished, fascinating, but of irregular conduct,' is no longer tenable in the light of Sir Sidney Lee's researches.

The tale of Shakespeare's work from 1592 until his final retirement to Stratford in 1611, supplies most that we know of his life. He had

become part-owner of the Globe Theatre, the leading London playhouse, in 1599. His income, which in his later years must have been about £600 per annum in the money of the time, and equal to at least seven or eight thousand pounds today, was derived chiefly from his share in this theater. Two years earlier he had purchased New Place, the largest house in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he died April 23, 1616.

V

THE ELIZABETHANS

4. Shakespeare's Contemporaries in the Drama

THE greatness of Shakespeare could not be better illustrated than by contrast with the character of Ben Jonson (c. 1573-1637). In almost any age Jonson would have been accounted a writer of the most extraordinary parts. His scholarship was profound—indeed, Shakespeare's learning is, by comparison, almost superficial—but in all his serious efforts to produce a supreme dramatic work he gives evidence of scholarship only, and not of that divine, ineffable quality which makes the poetry of Shakespeare as harmonious a part of the world's intellectual life as seed-time or harvest is of its physical life. It is hard to determine how he came by his vast learning, as we have evidence of only a few weeks spent at St. John's College, Cambridge, in his sixteenth year, after leaving Westminster School.

In his youth he worked for a time, to his never-forgotten disgust, at his step-father's trade of brick-laying, and he was a soldier in the Low Countries when only eighteen years of age. It has been asserted that at nineteen he returned to Cambridge and completed his studies, but this theory rests rather on the desire to explain his wonderful knowledge of the Latin poets than on any direct evidence. He was as injudicious as his great contemporary in contracting an early marriage, and perhaps poverty, as much as inclination, led him to become an actor, but his acting would seem to have been quite undistinguished.

STEEPED in the works of the pagan poets, his native genius was undoubtedly more lyrical than dramatic in inspiration, though he gives evidence of a certain saturnine temper which, inclining to tragedy, but modified by the former impulse, expresses itself in satire. It was with a comedy, however, that he first essayed to win success on the stage, and Every Man in His Humour, produced in 1596, and performed two years later by the company of which Shakespeare was a member, had a large success, which led him to follow it with Every Man Out of His Humour.

Both are admirable comedies and, like his two tragedies, Sejanus and Catiline, follow classical models; but the author is so obviously subjected

to the strict rules of classical composition that his work lacks spontaneity and natural grace in the comedies and tenderness in the tragedies.

This is the fault of all his plays: they are overlaid with the weight of his learning; made coldly accurate by the careful observance of his models; and neither in tragedy nor in comedy does he sound the depths of human emotions. Though the character is always perfectly observed and represented, he does not take us to the hidden springs, as Shakespeare does, not so much by art as by intuition, even in his lesser works.

For these reasons Jonson's dramatic works earned small popularity in his time and have ever since been dead to all but students of literature. Every Man in His Humour has occasionally been revived on the stage, but never with lasting success. Such prosperity as Jonson enjoyed came from the composition of masques, which, in his time, were a favorite amusement of the Court and the aristocracy. The masque is a form of stage entertainment midway between a pageant and a play. It may be said to have been originated by the introduction into royal processions of masked, or disguised, persons representing allegorical or fictitious characters. This developed into entertainments resembling the tableaux vivants, still popular in our own time, in which Henry VIII is known to have delighted.

Under Elizabeth the masque rose into extreme popularity, and most of the dramatists, with the notable exception of Shakespeare, set themselves to supply their lordly patrons with such entertainments. They were written in both prose and verse, the dialogue being interspersed with songs, and afforded opportunities for the display of gorgeous costumes and scenic decoration quite foreign to the stage of the time, where no attempt was made at scenic effect or accuracy of make-up. Women also took part in these private theatricals, whereas on the stage all the feminine parts were performed by boys or young men. The finest example of this class of poetic composition is Milton's Comus, written for the Earl of Bridgewater, and acted at his residence, Ludlow Castle, in Shropshire, on Michaelmas Night, 1634. In Comus the masque as an acted entertainment may be said to have culminated, for it died out under the Commonwealth and has never been revived.

Some of the best specimens of Jonson's verse are to be found in his masques, but his exquisite little song, Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes, is one of fifteen lyrics in a collection entitled The Forest, published in 1616.

Jonson, in his personal character, had some traits which suggest likeness with his great namesake of the eighteenth century, and 'rare Ben' anticipated Samuel's satirical treatment of the Scots, as he came near to having his ears clipped for making fun of King James's countrymen in Eastward Ho, a drama in which he collaborated—a rare thing for him, as he was vain of personal achievement—with Chapman, Marston and Martin. He died August 6, 1637, having experienced loss of friends and of favor in his later years. His gravestone, in Westminster Abbey, is

inscribed, 'O Rare Ben Jonson.'

Beaumont and Fletcher

COLLABORATION was a favorite method of work among the Elizabethan, as it is in our own time with the French, dramatic writers. The most noteworthy example of the practice was furnished by Beaumont and Fletcher, who were so intimately associated in their lives that they had house and clothes in common. Both were of gentle birth, scholars and men of genius. Their plays—chiefly comedies—were even more popular than Shakespeare's, being, if anything, more in harmony with the temper of their time. Francis Beaumont (1584-1616) probably became acquainted with his friend John Fletcher (1579-1625) at the meetings at the celebrated Mermaid Tavern, frequented by Shakespeare, Jonson and the wits of the time, as celebrated by Beaumont in his verses to Jonson:

> What things have we seen [been
> Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have
> So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
> As if that every one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life.

The dramatic writings of this celebrated pair are full of fancy and bright pictures, although they reflect with more indelicate detail than seems necessary the manners of their age. Fletcher had probably the greater share in the composition of the plays which bear their joint names, and alone he wrote at least twenty, Shakespeare being thought to have collaborated with him in The Two Noble Kinsmen, while Fletcher had a hand with Shakespeare in the writing of Henry VIII.

IT IS hard to differentiate between Beaumont and Fletcher, though it seems easy enough by comparing their individual and their joint productions; but perhaps it is not wrong to say that the one had a more strongly marked lyrical gift, while the other was essentially dramatic in his inspiration. Both men were immensely popular with their contemporaries, and theirs will ever remain among the great names of Elizabethan drama. By way of summing up their characteristics, I cannot do better than quote this comparison from Campbell's Specimens of the British Poets:

> There are such extremes of grossness and magnificence in their dramas, so much sweetness and beauty interspersed with views of nature either falsely romantic or vulgar beyond reality; there is so much to animate and amuse us, and yet so much that we would willingly overlook, that I cannot help comparing the contrasted impressions which they make to those which we receive from visiting some great and ancient city, picturesquely but irregularly built, glittering with spires, and surrounded with gardens, but exhibiting in many quarters the lanes and haunts of wickedness. They have scenes of wealth and high life which remind us of courts and palaces frequented by elegant females and high-spirited gallants, whilst their old martial characters, with Caractacus in the midst of them, may inspire us with the same sort of regard which we pay to the rough-hewn magnificence of an ancient fortress.

Many names must now be dismissed briefly, though most of them are almost as worthy of some detailed notice as Beaumont or Fletcher.

Philip Massinger (1583-1640), who was laid in the same grave as Fletcher, at St. Saviour's, Southwark, was so variously associated with Fletcher and other dramatists in play-writing that it is difficult to form an estimate of his individual work. But he is certainly no less

gifted in comedy than Beaumont and Fletcher, and in tragedy he displays real power. His only play that has held the stage is A New Way to Pay Old Debts, a brilliant and mordant comedy.

John Ford (b. 1586) was a dramatist of real tragic power, to whom only the darker emotions of the heart seemed to appeal, for his plays are somber and unredeemed by the finer feelings of fancy and imagination. His Perkin Warbeck is a good historical drama, and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, revived in London in 1924, is a remarkable tragedy. He collaborated in several plays with Thomas Dekker (c. 1570-1641), a prolific and able writer, both of tragedy and comedy, who in turn was associated with John Webster, of whose life hardly anything is known.

Webster was a dramatist of extraordinary power in tragedy, and over his works gloom, profound and chilling, seems ever to brood. The Duchess of Malfi is his greatest play, and must rank with the finest of the period; but it is easy to understand how he had scant favor from contemporary audiences.

Thomas Middleton (c. 1570-1627) wrote many charming comedies, while William Rowley (c. 1585-1642), an actor-playwright of no remarkable qualities, collaborated at various times with the five last-mentioned dramatists, and also with Thomas Heywood, who had a large share in the writing of 220 plays up to the year 1633, and is believed to have lived until 1648. A Woman Killed with Kindness has real pathos and simplicity to distinguish it, and may be accounted the best of Heywood's plays.

John Marston (1575-1634) was a poet of most unequal achievement, associated with Jonson and George Chapman (1559-1634) in the production of Eastward Ho, as noted above. Chapman was greater in comedy than in tragedy; All Fools is an excellent play of the former class, while his tragedies are usually marred by bombast and fustian. His great achievement was the translation of Homer's Iliad and the Odyssey into rhymed verse of fourteen syllables. These translations, despite numerous faults, are in many ways unsurpassed by Pope's more familiar versions of the same works, and are well worthy of every reader's attention.

With James Shirley (1596-1666) we reach the last of this school of dramatists; for though he was but a boy when the reign of the virgin queen ended, his early associates were the later Elizabethans and all the influences on him were Elizabethan; he had come to manhood at the time of Shakespeare's death. Charles Lamb says of him:

> James Shirley claims a place amongst the worthies of this period, not so much for any transcendent talent in himself, as that he was the last of a great race, all of whom spoke nearly the same language, and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common. A new language and quite a new turn of tragic and comic interest came in with the Restoration.

This, rather than Campbell's somewhat perfervid panegyric of the dramatist, is a proper view of Shirley, for while the tragic and pathetic passages of his plays, which are chiefly tragi-comedies, are often distinguished by great tenderness and true feeling, he fails, on the whole, to rise to the level of his models, Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson.

The Spirit of the Elizabethan Age

On our knowledge of, and sympathy with, the poets from Chaucer to Shirley will depend much of our understanding of English literature. The Elizabethans especially are the beacon lights of the English spirit, if the metaphor will pass. To know them well is to have the whole character of England illumined for our better appreciation. They represent more directly than any body of writers in England, before or since, the spirit of their time and country. This is not an overstatement. I am well aware how vividly the spirit of the eighteenth century is reflected in the writers of that period. But that was not the real genius of England; it was a passing phase; whereas the spirit of the Elizabethan age is no passing phase, but the very pulsing of England's heart.

In a sense, the Elizabethans are more 'in touch' with us of this later day than are the writers of the eighteenth century. We shall even find that the literature of the Victorian age, rich to abundance though it is in great writers and in great works, is not so thoroughly in tune with the English spirit as is that of the Elizabethan. For the creators of the latter were poets to a man, and the poet is ever the truth-teller. He is not so apt to temporize with passing moods and whims as the prose-writer is; he utters himself with greater freedom, fearless, because 'It is in me, and shall out.'

It was the glory of the Elizabethan age to be the epoch in which—with the awakening of all those varied energies that have since made the British Empire the unmatched wonder of the world's history—there lived, surely by no mere chance, but inevitably, a splendid company of poets whose poetry enshrines for all time the English spirit—patriotism, heroism, idealism, the love of liberty, beauty, nature, domesticity.

That the Elizabethan poets were as capable of expressing grossness as of voicing the noblest aspirations of the soul is no argument against them. Every country has its standard of good taste; an ocean wider than the Atlantic separates the English of today in matters of taste from their nearest neighbors across the Channel. And every age of any one country has had its own standard of good taste. That of the Elizabethan was different from that of our day; just as that of fifty years hence promises to be strangely different from the standard of fifty years ago.

The Elizabethan poets—since, for all their superiority to the multitude, they were still men of their time—necessarily reflect in their writings the looseness of their age in the treatment of morals. It does not follow that they were one degree less moral than we are today; but they spoke of subjects which with us it is bad taste to discuss. They were, for that very reason perhaps, the more honest; and sincerity is the master-note of all the great Elizabethans; indeed, sincerity is the one infallible test of all enduring literature.

Sincerity lifts everything in which it is present on to a higher plane, and where we find it associated with other qualities of a derogatory kind —as we do in some, if not all, of the Elizabethan poets—it still remains a great preservative, purifying, vivifying the poet's work, in spite of all.

And it is Shakespeare, again, who towers above his glorious company of contemporaries in his comparative freedom from all besmirching elements, but by that token he is, as I have already hinted, really less the mirror of his age—but more the mirror of the English spirit—than, for example, Beaumont and Fletcher. He is the most modern writer in our language. It would seem that in one fruitful moment the genius of England gave birth to a poet who interpreted his country to itself and to the world once and for all time: his thought and language are the everlasting mind and utterance of his race at its highest. His contemporaries are small when ranged beside him, yet mighty in their individual and collective strength.

I MAY now take leave of the Elizabethans by quoting the summary with which Taine begins his study of the theater in his History of English Literature:

> Forty poets, amongst them two of superior rank, as well as one, the greatest of all artists who have represented the soul in words; many hundreds of pieces, and nearly fifty masterpieces; the drama extended over all the provinces of history, imagination and fancy—expanded so as to embrace comedy, tragedy, pastoral and fanciful literature—to represent all the degrees of human condition, and all the caprices of human invention—to express all the perceptible details of actual truth, and all the philosophical grandeur of general reflection; the stage disencumbered of all precept and freed from all imitation, given up and appropriated in the minutest particulars to the reigning taste and public intelligence: all this was a vast and manifold work, capable by its flexibility, its greatness and its form of receiving and preserving the exact imprint of the age and the nation.

Such is the Elizabethan drama, the most important of all periods of English literature, not to the student only, but to the general reader who desires to possess a reasonable knowledge of our great literary heritage.

VI

THE DRAMATISTS SINCE SHAKESPEARE

NO COMPARISON is possible between the drama of the Elizabethans and that of their immediate successors. It is all contrast—the contrast, one great critic has said, of Hyperion and a Satyr. I would not go so far as that. One has to remember George Meredith's eulogy of Congreve. But all the brilliancy of the comic dramatists of the Restoration cannot blind us to the fact that when women made their first professional appearance on the English stage, the chief theme of the plays that were written at that time was coarse ridicule of the marriage state, to the end that the ribald laughter of a dissolute Court might be provoked and the cheap cynicism of 'the man of the world' encouraged in its vacuity.

The reader who would make closer acquaintance with the writers for the Restoration stage cannot do better than start his studies by reading Macaulay's brilliant disquisition on The Comic Dramatists of the Restoration, in his Essays, written originally as a review of Leigh Hunt's edition of the Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar. Here I shall attempt nothing more

than the sketchiest review of the more noteworthy figures of that period.

The first name to engage our attention is that of Sir William Davenant (1606-68), whose work well reflects the spirit of reaction against Puritanism, although much of it was unworthy of his better parts. His 'heroic play,' The Siege of Rhodes, is the germ of English opera, and he introduced many accessories to the theater, among them the orchestra.

It was at Davenant's suggestion that John Dryden (1631-1700) wrote an absurd adaptation of The Tempest, and a capital blank verse tragedy, All for Love, on the lines of Antony and Cleopatra. Dryden adapted the heroic couplet to the English drama. His characters are, in the main, abstractions; he uses noble language to convey ideas full of extravagance. But his tragedies of Don Sebastian and Cleomenes, together with the comedies of Marriage à la Mode and The Spanish Friar, contain much that is eminently readable. Avowedly, he wrote plays not because the work was congenial, nor because he thought of posterity, but to make money. Considering the volume and variety of his literary output in other directions, it is remarkable that his position as a dramatist stands as high as it does. The student will not miss his Essay on Dramatic Poesy.

Only the reader who cares to familiarize himself with the indifferent for the sake of the picture of contemporary manners to which it may give completeness need spend time with the plays of Etherege, D'Urfey, Shadwell and Aphra Behn, all of whom reflect the least agreeable features of a licentious time.

When we turn to William Wycherley (c. 1640-1716), however, we are in company with genius, and if he can compete with any of them in indecency, he at least offers compensations. Wycherley was one of the two great lights of Restoration comedy. Said Evelyn:

> As long as men are false and women vain,
> Whilst gold continues to be virtue's bane,
> In pointed satire Wycherley shall reign.

Like Dryden, Wycherley made a rather feeble first effort at writing for the stage. Also like Dryden, but with greater success, he sought and found inspiration in France and Spain. He may be described as the originator of our comedy of manners. 'He was a ruffian,' says Sir Edmund Gosse, 'but a ruffian of genius.' The only thing original about Wycherley, in the opinion of W. C. Ward, 'the only thing which he could furnish from his own mind in inexhaustible abundance, was profligacy.' He was a faithful mirror of his own time. His chief comedies are The Plain Dealer and The Country Wife. The one is founded on Molière's Le Misanthrope, and is praised by Hazlitt as 'a most severe and poignant moral satire'; the other loses our respect and much of such admiration as its workmanship claims when compared with its sources, Molière's L'Ecole des Maris and L'Ecole des Femmes. Wycherley's own life provides the most effective satire on the social ideals of his period.

The Witty Congreve

It was in the works of William Congreve (1670-1729) that the comedy of manners attained its

apogee. The Old Bachelor, The Double Dealer, Love for Love, The Mourning Bride and The Way of the World were all written before their author was thirty years old. Then came sinecures and literary sterility. Congreve was, and remains, a master of repartee and polished insolence. He wrote better than Molière; but Molière's stage method and dramatic style preserve his plays alive, while those of Congreve, if we except Love for Love, which has been described as the finest prose comedy in the English language, are consigned to the study. Macaulay writes:

> In every point Congreve maintained his superiority to Wycherley. Wycherley had wit; but the wit of Congreve far outshines that of every comic writer, except Sheridan, who has arisen within the last two centuries. Congreve had not in a large measure the poetical faculty; but, compared with Wycherley, he might be called a great poet. Wycherley had some knowledge of books, but Congreve was a man of real learning. Congreve's offenses against decorum, though highly culpable, were not so gross as those of Wycherley, nor did Congreve, like Wycherley, exhibit to the world the deplorable spectacle of a licentious dotage.

Thackeray declared that 'the Congreve muse is dead, and her song choked in Time's ashes.' 'See,' he exclaimed, 'there's the cup she drank from, the gold chain she wore on her neck, the vase which held the rouge for her cheeks, her looking-glass, and the harp she used to dance to! Instead of a feast we find a gravestone, and in place of a mistress a few bones.'

Some phrases from the Congreve comedies long since passed into the common speech: 'Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,' 'Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, nor hell a fury like a woman scorned,' 'Married in haste, we may repent at leisure' are among them.

What Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) lacked in grace he had in coarse wit and facile inventiveness. The epitaph—

> Lie heavy on him, earth! for he
> Laid many heavy loads on thee,

alludes to his achievements as the architect of Blenheim and Castle Howard, not to his authorship of The Relapse, The Provoked Wife and The Confederacy.

With Vanbrugh may be compared George Farquhar (1678-1707), who, in some directions as a dramatist, improved on his predecessors in cogency of construction, and whose incidental verse indicates a power that—possibly for reasons connected with a hand-to-hand existence—was never fully cultivated. The famous line from his Twin Rivals—

> Necessity, the mother of invention

—is singularly apposite to its author.

Horace Walpole said of Farquhar's plays that they talk the language of a marching regiment in country quarters. He wrote best what he wrote last, The Recruiting Officer and The Beaux' Stratagem. He marks the transition from Restoration licence towards the cleaner, if more conventional, stage methods characterizing the reign of Queen Anne and the early Hanoverians.

In Thomas Otway (1651-85), it has been well observed, 'there is no relief, no pause from the war and clamor of passion.' He lived tragically, wrote tragedy, and died young. Gloomy as are his plays and devoid of lyrical beauty, they reach the heart by sheer force and knowledge of human nature. 'More tears,' said Scott, 'have been shed probably for

the sorrows of Belvidera [in Venice Preserved] and Monimia [in The Orphan] than for those of Juliet and Desdemona.' Otway is a strayed tragedian, belonging by genius, if not by time, to the Elizabethans.

RATHER than allow this chapter to resolve itself into a mere catalogue of names and dates, I shall mention but one other of the Restoration dramatists in Nahum Tate (1652-1715), whose version of King Lear, in which Cordelia survives and marries Edgar, actually held the stage until the middle of last century. It was now the time of Shakespeare's partial eclipse. For although we constantly hear of Shakespeare's dramas being performed, the versions presented would have disconcerted the original begetter of the plays, and he would have found the children of his brain as strangely 'translated' as his own immortal Nick Bottom when he awoke in the wood.

The many-gifted Colley Cibber (1671-1757) was probably a better actor than playwright, yet it was Cibber's version of Richard III that was performed down to the beginning of the present century, and may still linger in provincial repertories, for all I know. These late seventeenth century playwrights must at least have had a sound conception of their craft.

Thomas Southerne's (1659-1746) drama founded on Aphra Behn's Oroonoko was another instance of the vitality I have noted, but the astonishing career of The Beggar's Opera in our own day eclipses everything in the history of the English stage. That this prose farce, written by the poet John Gay (1685-1732) at the suggestion of Swift, as a burlesque of the Italian opera, then newly fashionable in England, should not only have won instant success with its witty dialogue and dainty lyrics—there were 69 of these arranged to popular airs of the day—but that after its revival on June 5, 1920, it should have drawn all London for three and a half years to a suburban theater suggests that it is informed with some rare and individual charm.

The Arid Accuracy of Addison's Cato

I DOUBT that to-day an English audience would tolerate the arid accuracy of Addison's Cato, a blank verse tragedy on the classical model, which, first produced at Drury Lane on April 14, 1713, made a hit, eight editions of the book being sold in the first year. Voltaire hailed it as 'the first reasonable English tragedy.' I have remarked that this was the period of Shakespeare's partial eclipse, and I would add that Voltaire could talk great nonsense on occasion. But Cato reads well and is worth reading if only to discover how deficient the rich and elegant scholarship of the eighteenth century could be in the elusive quality of genius which illumines not only Shakespeare's own plays but those of most of his contemporaries. There is some true eloquence in Cato and two immortal lines:

> 'Tis not in mortals to command success,
> But we'll do more, Sempronius; we'll deserve it.

In its dramatic taste the age of Queen Anne favored the tragic, as a change from Restoration comedy, but Richard Steele (1672-1729), though full of faults as a dramatist, gave a start to the prose comedy of

manners, which grew in favor in the days of the Georges until it culminated in two masterpieces which are unexcelled and enduringly fresh after a century and a half: She Stoops to Conquer and The School for Scandal.

NEITHER of these famous plays is a perfect work of art; both are open to criticism in many ways; but both have that 'blithe wine or bright elixir' which makes immortal, while many a work of perfect art lies dead for lack of it. There was scarcely any literary form at which Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74) did not try his hand, and so great a master of English was he, so winning is the character that disengages itself from his writing, that he never failed to interest or to please his readers. He was not at all a man of the theater, yet his two comedies, The Good Natur'd Man and She Stoops to Conquer, have justly been described as the greenest spots in the dramatic history of the period to which they belong and as exhibiting 'wit without licentiousness; humor without extravagance, brilliant and elegant dialogue, and forcible but natural delineation of character.'

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) was one of the most astonishing personalities in the history of the British stage. A man of superlative gifts, he might have adorned any age of history, and had his genius been tempered with discretion and reinforced by industry his life had been happier and the debt to him of his own and many a later generation the greater. Nevertheless, we have, in his four comedies, The Rivals, The School for Scandal, The Critic, and The Duenna, a legacy for which we must be grateful: not in a generation do we get more than one play so good as The School for Scandal. To the graceful humor of Goldsmith, Sheridan added the wit without the grossness of Congreve, and he set the model of witty dialogue for the English stage. His fault as a dramatist is that, like another and a greater of our own day—Bernard Shaw—he does not create characters but uses his dramatis personae as so many masks for the witty expression of himself.

WHEN the nineteenth century opened, Shakespeare was coming into his own again. Goldsmith and Sheridan were widely popular, and there was no lack of minor playwrights striving pathetically to create masterpieces. The taste of the day was for the tragic and the heroic, with the darkly romantic: the scene was being set for the entry of Byron. James Sheridan Knowles (1784-1862), a cousinly relative of Sheridan, came nearest to achieving greatness, working on the Shakespearean model, and many of his plays take a virile hold on the imagination of an intelligent audience. He wrote more than a score, The Hunchback, produced at Covent Garden in 1832, being, perhaps, the most finished of his works, although Virginius, as produced by Osmond Tearle, was a favorite of my own youth, and has a greater dramatic intensity. When Hazlitt wrote in 1825 that Virginius, staged at Covent Garden five years before, was 'the best acting tragedy that has been produced on the modern stage,' he was probably stating a truth. The rest of his brief eulogy of Knowles: 'the first tragic writer of the age,'

'produces a perfect work of art,' and so on, is pitched in much too high a key. Still, Knowles is worth reading and any revival of either of the plays mentioned—now a rare occurrence, I fancy—would be worth seeing.

I shall name only two more of the early nineteenth-century dramatists: Joanna Baillie (1762-1851), whose life was one of the most interesting in the literary annals of last century, and whose Plays on the Passions contain some fine poetry if they are deficient in dramatic form; and Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821), an actress and industrious playwright who is remembered to-day by her novel A Simple Story.

The Popularity of Drama

THE dramatic form was highly popular in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the literary drama, as distinct from the acting drama, had notable recruitment in Byron and Shelley, of whose works I shall write later on. Ion, a Greek tragedy by Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795-1854), and Philip van Artevelde, by Sir Henry Taylor (1800-86), are both works for the reader rather than for the playgoer.

One of the most popular of the dramatists of the nineteenth century was Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton (1803-73), whose plays, The Lady of Lyons, Money, and Richelieu, despite their artificialities of sentiment, can still exert a hold upon the public. This is also the case with such plays as Caste and Ours, by Thomas William Robertson (1829-71); Masks and Faces and It is Never too Late to Mend, by Charles Reade (1814-84); Still Waters Run Deep, by Tom Taylor (1817-80); Black-Eyed Susan, by Douglas Jerrold (1803-57); London Assurance and The Colleen Bawn, by Dion Boucicault (1822-90); and The Two Roses, by James Albery (1838-89).

Comedy lightened into burlesque and extravaganza on the one hand, the work of Planché, the brothers Brough, Henry James Byron and others; and on the other into comic opera, of which those written by Sir William Schwenck Gilbert (1836-1911) are incomparably the best. The association of Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) with Gilbert in that memorable series of comic operas was one of the happiest things that distinguished the English stage of the nineteenth century. In the history of the theater there has been no more precious contribution to human enjoyment.

WHILE comedy was degenerating, the purely literary drama was again receiving some noteworthy additions in Strafford, A Blot on the 'Scutcheon and The Return of the Druses, by Robert Browning (1812-89); but Lord Tennyson (1809-92) did more than add to the 'drama of the closet' in such poetical plays as Queen Mary, Harold, and Becket, for those were acted with a fair measure of success and proved that the poet could create character in poetic dialogue: of all means the most difficult.

William Gorman Wills (1828-91) was a better dramatist than Tennyson, however, and there was also a literary quality about such plays as Charles I, Jane Shore, and A Royal Divorce, as I recall them on the stage, which might have made them tolerable in the study. Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) in

his lyric dramas and poetic tragedies could have had no drooping eye on their ultimate staging, as they are all void of acting qualities; and the proper place of Rosamond, The Queen Mother, Bothwell, Mary Stuart and the rest of them is among his collected poetry, where I confess I have even found some of them heavy going, despite their abundant metrical charm. I should have said the same of the poetic plays of the Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges (b. 1844), had not their author affirmed that he meant them for the stage. As plays, then, they are of the still-born variety, and I shall not say if we may congratulate ourselves that, having failed of an opportunity to see them performed, we can still read them in that quietude of our studies for which they were not intended!

The Drama at a Low Ebb

THERE need be no hesitation in affirming that the closing quarter of the nineteenth century saw the English drama at a low ebb; but, as happens so often in human mutations, it also saw signs of a revival which, still a little uncertainly perhaps, is endowing the British stage with a new and rich interest for all persons of literary taste. The two most distinguished figures among the dramatists were Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (b. 1855) and Henry Arthur Jones (b. 1851); both supreme craftsmen, but neither what is implied by the word 'literary.'

It is true that a real 'man of letters' had brought his brilliant gifts of ironic criticism and character drawing by means of witty dialogue to the enrichment of the fin-de-siècle theater, in Lady Windermere's Fan, and four other plays in which the literary and the dramatic are delightfully blended; and if Oscar Wilde (1856-1900), who will rank in literary history with the tragic and hapless ones, like Villon and Marlowe, like Verlaine and Francis Thompson, did no more than show that an audience could be held by charm which was not only, nor largely, dramatic, yet that was a great thing. Despite all the insolence and vanity of this unhappy man his service towards the literary revival of the British stage was unforgettable; it is now seen in a clearer light since the unpleasant personality of the man himself has passed into the limbo of forgotten follies and only his artistry endures.

Stevenson and Henley

THE promise to which I have alluded above was best seen in the work of two of the younger dramatists: James Matthew Barrie (b. 1860) and Stephen Phillips (1866-1915). I can call to mind no others even in those 'wonderful 'nineties,' when so many literary men were hankering after the flesh-pots of the theater. Stevenson and Henley had jointly had their ineffectual dips in the great lucky bag with their Admiral Guinea, Beau Austin, and Deacon Brodie: 'the theater is the gold mine,' said R. L. S., but it was a vein he could not work. And there was in those days, I remember now, a charming piece of Anthony Hope's, The Adventure of Lady Ursula, that seemed to presage a new master of stage comedy—who stayed his hand. Nor must I forget Jerome K. Jerome (b. 1859), who had several good comedies, characterized by sentimentality rather than sentiment, to his

credit, but he did not produce The Passing of the Third Floor Back until 1907, when the literary revival of the stage had already begun. For the rest I recall the names of F. C. Burnand, Sidney Grundy, George R. Sims, Henry Pettit, Robert Buchanan and Haddon Chambers, none of them appealing in a literary way except Buchanan's. Burnand, it is true, was an author of attainments, but his stage work was chiefly 'adapted from the French.'

Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones

PINERO and Jones took to printing and publishing their plays, with the idea, perhaps, that type gave a certain 'literary' illusion to things that were printed and bound up like books. But when I peruse Dandy Dick and Saints and Sinners in the printed page I find myself wishing I could see them again on the stage; especially with Mrs. John Wood as Georgina in the former. The fact is that these two most able dramaturges are essentially and exclusively 'men of the theater.' Their plays when read distil no literary essence; they depend largely for effect on stage direction, their dialogue requires the emphasis of the actor's voice. In short, they demand too much from the reader.

Yet I esteem Henry Arthur Jones a great playwright, and Sir Arthur Pinero stands securely by virtue of The Second Mrs. Tanqueray among the great creators of stage characters. His long succession of brilliant comedies contains an illuminating criticism of contemporary manners. In the spring of 1925 I saw the revival of Pinero's Iris, and admired again the deftness of his stagecraft, though here and there the mechanism had gone a trifle rusty and it was clear that the play had originally been constructed for audiences less sophisticated than they were in 1925. The Lie, by H. A. Jones, I saw when it was produced in 1923, and this play showed the dramatist's old command of his medium.

Let artists babble about their art as much as they please, let them affect to despise the material rewards which artistic success may bring, you will usually find them edging towards the vicinity of the money bags. It would be a simple matter to show that in all ages the arts have flourished or waned according as the vulgar material rewards were great or small. The growing popularity of the theater, which became very noticeable at the opening of the present century, so vastly enlarged the chance of fortune from a single successful play that the lure of the stage has now become irresistible, and few are the authors of note who have not tried their hand at dramatic composition.

Those of us who admired the splendid dramatic quality of Stephen Phillips's verse in Paolo and Francesca had hoped that here was a new poet with the right sort of stage experience who would bring many distinguished things to the theater; but his star set all too soon and left us with this great promise unfulfilled.

J. M. Barrie and the Stage

ON THE other hand, that of J. M. Barrie which had risen in the 'nineties has shone with increasing radiance until it blazes in the first magnitude. Of all the literary men

whom the glittering prizes of the theater have attracted, none has gathered more abundantly, or more deservedly, than Sir James Barrie, Bart, O.M.

When at the age of twenty-five he settled down in London to the career of letters, early in 1885, after nearly two years of literary work on a Nottingham paper, we were on the eve of a revolution in public taste, which has profoundly affected literary forms. The Nonconformist conscience was still so potent that the word 'novel' smelled a little suspiciously, and the thing so designated could be read on a Sunday only under fear of divine displeasure. As for the theater, no one fit to partake of 'the ordinances of the church' would set foot in it, and certain low resorts known as music halls were out of bounds to all decent folk.

But few things in modern literary history are more noteworthy than the way in which J. M. Barrie, after contriving to win to his standard the whole army of religiously-minded readers with his humorous and sentimental sketches of life in the most restricted of Scottish religious communities, made himself master of the very difficult art of the theater, and marched confidently to the conquest of an entirely antipathetic public. Nay, even the godless 'music halls' changed themselves into respectable 'variety theaters' so that on their vast stage this new Wizard of the North might be able to display his mastery of the short dramatic sketch to immense audiences of fellow citizens representing all shades of religious, moral and nonmoral opinion.

Barrie scored his first stage success in 1892 with Walker, London, a charming light comedy, fresh and amusing, with a real foretaste of the Barriesque in the whimsical notion of the newly-married barber going off on his honeymoon without his bride.

Once he was fairly under way with the stage he had but small conceit of his story-telling gifts and we have had no book from him that matters since The Little White Bird in 1902, and that is chiefly of interest as containing the germ of his great stage masterpiece, Peter Pan. But who shall chide him for abandoning book-writing in order to give to the stage what it so greatly needed in that long series of comedies which includes The Professor's Love Story, 1894, The Little Minister, 1897, Quality Street, 1902, Alice Sit-by-the-Fire, 1905, What Every Woman Knows, 1908, A Kiss for Cinderella, 1916, Dear Brutus, 1917, and Mary Rose, 1920?

The success of all his plays is of the same essence as the success of his books—a quality of humor that is entirely free from artifice and is peculiar to J. M. Barrie. There is no recipe for it, as there is for the Gilbertian, or for that of Mark Twain. For that reason it is as difficult to define it as to get a will-o'-the-wisp to pose for a portrait. But it conforms to the everlasting definition of all true humor in disclosing a deep and abiding sympathy with all lowly forms of life. It is also a form of amused self-criticism, as though the author were 'chuckling' to himself not only about things around him and the fancies of his brain, but about his ego whom, by virtue of his humorous outlook on the world, he can regard with an affectionate detachment.

Barrie's best work is probably known to us by now. George Bernard Shaw (b. 1856), his senior by four years, has confessed that he is conscious of a drying of his founts. But Back to Methuselah, 1921, and St. Joan, 1924, two of his masterpieces, were produced when he had passed the present age of Barrie, so that the little genius from Thrums may still have some surprises for us up his capacious sleeve.

George Bernard Shaw

It is not easy in a little space to say anything helpful about Bernard Shaw. He is the most elusive genius of our age. Just when we suppose we have got him quite snugly catalogued among the great cynic-wits, we discover that he is essentially a serious person, that he does not write with his tongue in his cheek, and that he does sometimes wear his heart upon his sleeve. And when we try to fit him in among the serious contributors to thought and progress we are so assaulted by his intellectual horse-play, that we hesitate again, and probably wind up by making a special niche for him, with a panel inscribed 'Unclassified.' A teasing fellow. And one must be very careful what one says of him, for in his charmingly frank and genial way he may retort, 'Bosh!' Not that I fear the truth—if he thinks that's it—even from G. B. S., but I would liefer say what I thought would have the approval of one who has given me so much refreshment in the theater and in the study.

The trouble is that in the course of a volume I could convey with some degree of intelligibility to my readers the notion of Shaw and his work which I have formed for myself, but to state it effectively in a paragraph or two would call for a gift of epigram equal to that of Shaw himself. I must therefore take refuge in generalities.

Of all dramatists, Shaw seems to me the least dramatic. He starts wrongly in always having some point of view he wishes to expound: most of his plays are propaganda pamphlets turned into dialogue for persons to repeat seated or standing in different positions on a stage. Sometimes the 'curtains' are merely arbitrary stops, as though the super-talker (who is usually Shaw himself), seated 'off' and prompting each speaker in turn, had suddenly decided that the audience should have a breathing space to go out into the foyer and think over the brilliant stuff the persons on the stage have been talking to each other.

But notwithstanding these notorious defects of the Shavian manner I, for one, can assert that, having sat through most of his plays, I never begrudged any of the hours I listened to that much criticised flood of stage dialogue. Nay, I am not at all sure, when the critics, like a crate-full of parrots, kept telling me that Saint Joan was 'the greatest play since Shakespeare,' that I had as much profit of that masterpiece as I had from You Never Can Tell, or from Getting Married, both by comparison with Saint Joan, formless and undramatic.

The Studied Wit of G. B. S.

Shaw, we are told, hates to be admired for his wit and loathes to hear the laughter of his audience at his mordant passages, which he has written in all seriousness of soul. Who believes that will believe any-

thing. Shaw is no unconscious humorist: his witty passages are as much an affair of studied touches as the make-up of a Mrs. Warren. From his earliest days he was resolved to be original and never to say a thing simply and quietly that might be said complexly and showily. He was always out to stir up strife, to get reactions from lethargic minds by shocking them into awakenment.

But to suggest that he was nothing more than one who attracted attention by being unusual would be absurd. He has always been an independent thinker, one who has wrestled with the problems of life in the loneliness of his own heart, and sought solutions earnestly. I am as entirely persuaded of his seriousness when he is serious as I am willing to be caught with his chaff when he is minded to indulge in his 'intellectual horse-play.'

In Shaw the literary drama which has been gathering strength and purpose since the late 'nineties may be seen at its brightest, and Saint Joan has certainly shown us that this undramatic playwright, an he will, can be as dramatic as any. His Caesar and Cleopatra is one of the wittiest comedies ever written for the English theater. What a wealth of intellectual pleasure is stored for us in the numerous volumes of his plays, with their fascinating prefaces! Sometimes I am not quite certain whether the preface or the play has given me the greater satisfaction.

From Shaw to Hardy is a far cry: two contemporaries less influenced by each other it would be difficult to name. Thomas Hardy (b. 1840) is sixteen years the senior, but he comes late into the field as a dramatist with The Dynasts, completed only in 1910, and then it is a work of immense design which, though cast in the form of poetic drama, is really a mixture of epic and prose narrative, the 'stage directions' being essentially part of the whole. In my chapter on The Poets of the XIX Century I deal further with The Dynasts. Shaw's Back to Methuselah is much more a rational work of the theater than The Dynasts, though a condensed version of the latter was staged in London with some success in 1914. The Three Wayfarers was a short play by Hardy, produced some years earlier, but it does not count, nor do the later dramatic adaptations of his novels by other hands.

The 'literary' character of the stage was now becoming evident, and if we eliminate the war years when any trash found footing for a time, it was steadily strengthening in that quality. Alfred Sutro (b. 1863) produced play after play in which the literary and dramatic were effectively united: The Walls of Jericho, John Glayde's Honor, and The Choice are three I recall as having witnessed with enjoyment.

John Galsworthy (b. 1867) turned to the theater in the same year, 1906, as he made his first noteworthy success with a novel—The Man of Property—though he had been writing novels since 1898. His first play was The Silver Box, and he has steadily cultivated the stage in the intervals of novel-writing, so that now he has a long series of successful dramatic works, such as Justice, The Pigeon, The Skin Game, and Loyalties, to his credit. In all

that he has written for the theater the same earnestness of purpose that distinguishes his fiction is present, and though there is the relief of humorously observed characterization there is never any effort to be amusing: Galsworthy stands for seriousness in all things, but the dramatic instinct which is strong in him never fails to awaken the interest of his audience in the social perplexities he sets out to elucidate. It is a high degree of art that enables an author to be serious without ever being dull. Galsworthy's plays rank among the best of the contemporary theater.

William Somerset Maugham (b. 1874) who also started as a novelist, became one of our most admired playwrights, rivaling Barrie and Shaw in popularity: Jack Straw, Penelope, Caroline, and The Circle being comedies that follow familiar lines but present contemporary character with unfailing freshness of treatment and humorous observation.

John Drinkwater (b. 1882) can afford to ignore the sneers of those who have complained that his Abraham Lincoln is not a play but merely biography presented in dramatic form. The dramatist has gone to biography for his material, but Shakespeare went to history for much of his, and as a quarry there is no distinction between history and biography. In any case, it is an achievement to take certain commonly known facts of a man's life and so to present these in stage dialogue that they hold the attention and enlarge the sympathies of widely-contrasting audiences, as I can personally testify from witnessing the production of Abraham Lincoln in London and also in Chicago. The lives of Peg Woffington, Garrick and Kean had served as subjects for comedies years ago, yet Drinkwater really opened a new vein in his series of fine plays based upon biographical data: Oliver Cromwell, Mary Stuart, Robert E. Lee.

With such dramatists writing for the stage who shall say that its standard to-day is not appreciably higher than at the beginning of the 'nineties of last century? And the list of playwrights whose work is of literary quality might be extended considerably. Such extension would have to include Arnold Bennett, Israel Zangwill, St. John Ervine, Clemence Dane, A. A. Milne, Frederick Lonsdale and Edward Knoblock; but it is no part of my plan to enlarge upon the dramatists of to-day; having in this sketchy way brought the reader through the centuries of change, and, I shall hope, impressed him with the pleasure to be derived from our dramatic writers from the Elizabethans onwards.

VII

THE POETS: FROM MILTON TO BURNS

HAVING just come from a rapid flight across three centuries of British drama, from the time when Shakespeare's audiences at Blackfriars stood in the open-air pit, or sat in the airy galleries, to that when plays by unseen actors are broadcast to the ends of the earth by the magic of wireless, and having now to re-cross three hundred

years and take up the tale of our English poetry from John Milton (1608-74), if I find myself a little 'heady' from such aerial hurtlings athwart the Realms of Gold, I hope I may not unduly convey that feeling to my readers. But I am conscious that here and there in my narrative a slight staccato movement may betray an anxiety to cram as much information as possible into the least space, and I would have the reader account that to me for virtue, as it is done to serve his ends and not to pleasure my own taste in literary style.

The period that now comes under review is one in which the lessons urged by the critical school of Ben Jonson bore fruit. The greatest name among the poets of the age that witnessed the rise of the Commonwealth and the downfall of the Stuarts is that of the author of Paradise Lost. John Milton, 'God-gifted organ voice of England,' was the son of a scrivener who had been disinherited by his father for changing his faith to that of the Reformers.

Though he wrote verses at the age of ten, and paraphrases of the Psalms (including the well-known 'Let us with a gladsome mind') as a schoolboy, we find him in the sonnet 'On Arriving at the Age of Twenty-three' lamenting his 'late spring.' Milton's Early Poems were chiefly inspired by the pastoral surroundings of Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where, after leaving Cambridge, he spent five years under the parental roof. L'Allegro and Il Penseroso are mirthful and pensive poems respectively, as their titles imply. In the former occur the familiar lines:

> Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
> Nods and becks and wreathéd smiles.

In the latter is the phrase 'the cricket on the hearth' and the oft-quoted reference to

> . . . Storied windows, richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light.

Comus is a masque, beneath the exquisite allegory of which may be discerned the poet's political bent, and the whole is rich with promise of the work by which its author is most widely known. Lycidas is an elegiac poem composed in memory of a college friend. It breathes such a contempt for the corrupt holders of ecclesiastical benefices as to make one wonder why it was not made the subject of a Star Chamber inquiry. Having pondered these poems, the student should read the beautiful lines, 'At a Solemn Musik.'

The works mentioned were composed between the years 1631 and 1637, when, to quote the glowing words of Sir Edmund Gosse, Milton 'contributed to English literature about two thousand of the most exquisite, the most perfect, the most consummately executed verses which are to be discovered in the language.' The further reference which the same critic makes to Milton at Horton, 'without associates, without external stimulus, Virtue seeing "to do what Virtue would by his own radiant light," ' as being one of the most extraordinary phenomena which we encounter in our literary history, is happy proof of what I have ventured to assert in my opening chapter. For here surely was an instance of great thought taking shape in great language, germane to the thought.

PARADISE LOST is the best known of all Milton's writings. Though owing something, doubtless, to Spenser's Faery Queen, it is not only the

irst English epic; it is unapproached ave by Tennyson's Idylls of the King. There are various forms of his particular class of poetry; its oreign masters are Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Ariosto and Dante. Milton's riginal conception was of a drama n the Arthurian legends. Perhaps he Civil War which intervened be-ween the conception and the per-formance of the work supplied sufficient motive for a theme of a more sublime and solemn character han those associated with the Round Table. But, as Milton's great editor, Professor Masson, re-minds us, Milton inherited, as it were, a subject with which the imag-ination of Christendom had long been fascinated.

Paradise Lost is more than the outpouring of a richly-stored mind saturated in the classics and the Bible. It is an epic that has no par-allel in any language.

It is an epic of the whole human species—an epic of our entire planet, or, indeed, of the entire astronomical universe. The title of the poem, though perhaps the best that could have been chosen, hardly indicates be-forehand the full nature or extent of the theme; nor are the opening lines, by them-selves, sufficiently descriptive of what is to follow. It is the vast comprehension of the story, both in space and time, that makes it unique among epics, and entitled Milton to speak of it as involving

'Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.' It is, in short, a poetical representa-tion, on the authority of hints from the Book of Genesis, of the historical connection be-tween human time and aboriginal or eternal infinity, or between our created world and the immeasurable and inconceivable universe of pre-human existence.

The Lesson of Paradise Lost

MILTON'S Ode on the Morning of the Nativity, written in his Cambridge days, conveyed the the-ory that the pagan gods were fallen angels. Paradise Lost deals with the Rebellion in heaven, the Creation, the Temptation, and the Fall. But that Satan is the hero I make bold to disbelieve, despite even Masson's dictum. Milton was too full of hu-manity—witness his twenty years of patriotic service—to idealize the Evil One. It is Man himself he sings. Certainly the deepest interest at-taching to both Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained is inspired by the study of the character of Satan as the tempter of man and the tempter of Christ. But this interest arises from the object, or subject, of each encounter. The implicit lesson is twofold. On the one hand, we are brought to a consideration of the misuse of a divinely-given freedom; on the other is enforced the conclu-sion that God is 'Grace Abounding.'

Samson Agonistes was Milton's last work. It is a drama on the Greek model, founded on the Book of Judges, but, as the author ex-pressly states, not designed for the stage. It is the work of one whose cause had been nobly fought for and hardly lost. The thoughts uttered by Samson came from the heart of the poet who wrote them. The work is severe in style, and derives its highest value from the parallels it offers between the lives of Samson and Milton of himself.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the study of Mil-ton's work. To Milton may be ascribed Spenser's eulogy of Chaucer as 'a well of English undefyled.' Yet, like Achilles, he had one defect; he had no sense of humor.

Some of Milton's Contemporaries

THE minor poets who were Mil-ton's contemporaries shall be considered very briefly. As I pro-

gress with this work I perceive that, sketchy as I meant my Outline to be, it grows still fainter in some parts; for the temptation to linger on the great names and with the more engaging subjects—a temptation from which I do not pray to be delivered!—tends to a certain crowding when the lesser names present themselves. A short book is usually better than a long one and to string out lists of names is no part of my business here. Hence I do not scruple to omit mention of many a name in order to preserve a steady mean of interest in my references to those that urge themselves upon my consideration.

Thomas Randolph (1605-34) need not detain any but the advanced student. Edmund Waller (1606-87) lives as the author of 'Go, Lovely Rose' and 'Lines on a Girdle,' lyrics which, as Waller's editor, Thorn Drury, says, 'might almost be chosen from English literature to serve as examples of the charms of simplicity and directness.'

Sir John Suckling (1609-42) is saved from oblivion by a song beginning 'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?' and a ballad upon a wedding, containing the pretty simile:

> Her feet beneath her petticoat,
> Like little mice crept in and out,
> As if they feared the light.

Sir Richard Lovelace (1618-58) wrote a poem, 'To Althea, from Prison,' the first two lines of whose last stanza are fairly common property:

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

Richard Crashaw (1613-49), a transcendentalist, and author of The Flaming Heart, is responsible for the familiar phrase 'That not impossible she.' Sir John Denham (1615-69) is the writer of a contemplative poem, Cooper's Hill, which supplies an early model of the rhythmical couplet. Abraham Cowley (1618-67) is chiefly read to-day for his prose, though, in his own lifetime, he was one of the most popular poets of the day. He belonged to what Johnson called the 'metaphysical' school of Donne. Cowley's Pindaric Odes prompted the Alexander's Feast of Dryden.

Samuel Butler (1612-80), in his inimitable satiric poem, Hudibras, which was written in ridicule of the Puritans, displays much learning as well as wit. Andrew Marvell (1621-78) was a friend of Milton, played the part of laureate during the Protector's life, and wrote a Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland, which Trench commends to English students of Horace. Marvell's lines on the Emigrants in the Bermudas are even better known than the Horatian Ode. Henry Vaughan (1622-95) has been aptly styled a 'George Herbert in worsted stockings.'

John Dryden

SECOND in importance only to that of Milton in the period under review is the name of John Dryden (1631-1700). England's greatest satirist in verse, his influence upon his contemporaries was tremendous and his critical deliverances are reverenced to-day. He excelled as a dramatist and as a writer of prose. For the moment, however, I am concerned only with his poems. One of the first of his characteristics that strikes us is his alertness to the significance of events in the world outside of his library. Witness his

Annus Mirabilis (the wonderful year of 1666), wherein he celebrates the English victories over the Dutch at sea and the benefits of the Great Fire of London.

In Absalom and Achitophel Dryden directed the whole weight of his powerful intellect to the undoing of the Earl of Shaftesbury's scheme for inducing Charles II to nominate his illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, as his successor to the Throne against the lawful claim of the King's brother James, who was a Romanist. At this time, it should be remembered, Dryden, though soon to adopt the Romish faith, was strongly Protestant, as may be proved by reference to Religio Laici, the work that followed Absalom and Achitophel. Taking as his model the story of Absalom's revolt against David—as Milton had taken his models from the Bible for Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes—Dryden named the various parties to the Monmouth plot after the characters in the second Book of Samuel. The portrait of Shaftesbury, beginning

> In friendship false, implacable in hate,
> Resolved to ruin or to rule the State,

is the most telling example of passionately concentrated poetic portraiture in our literature.

Three other works by Dryden exhibit his splendid lyrical ability—the Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew, described by Johnson as the noblest in our language, the Song for St. Cecilia's Day, and Alexander's Feast. Dryden's translations from Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal and Boccaccio are subjects for advanced study. One of his chief claims to attention is that directness and masculine vigor of his language which almost any half-dozen lines of his verse would illustrate. James Russell Lowell says:

> Amid the rickety sentiment looming big through misty phrase which marks so much of modern literature, to read Dryden is as bracing as a north-west wind. He blows the mind clear. In ripeness of mind and bluff heartiness of expression he takes rank with the best. His phrase is always a short cut to his sense. He had beyond most the gift of the right word: and if he does not, like one or two of the Greek masters of song, stir our sympathies by that indefinable aroma, so magical in arousing the subtle associations of the soul, he has this in common with a few great writers that the winged seeds of his thought imbed themselves in the memory, and germinate there.

Of the poets who came between Dryden and Pope in order of their birth I select for mention but four: Matthew Prior (1664-1721) wrote a clever parody of Dryden's The Hind and the Panther, called The Country and the City Mouse. His muse, as Hazlitt says, was a wanton flirt. His poems and lyrics are marked by an easy air of abandonment, but have at least the merit of originality as well as wit. Thomas Parnell (1679-1718), author of The Hermit and The Fairy Tale, aided Pope in his translation of the Iliad and wrote an Elegy to an Old Beauty, of which one line is often quoted:

> We call it only pretty Fanny's way.

Edward Young (1683-1765) was a far from admirable character. His Night Thoughts have all the gloom but little of the grandeur of 'other-worldliness.' John Gay, whom we have already encountered as the author of The Beggar's Opera, was the author of many delightful songs.

The Genius of Alexander Pope

Bracketed equal with Dryden by his contemporaries, but retaining a higher place in the affectionate

esteem of posterity, Alexander Pope (1688-1744) is the next great figure to detain us. The son of a London linen merchant, he was excluded from public school and university by reason of his father's religion; and the result was that he was largely self-taught and self-cultivated. Pope tells us that

> As yet a child, now yet a fool to fame,
> I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.

Many critics maintain that they came too easily. These are they who hold that Pope's polish is as much a proof of an unpoetic soul as Whitman's ruggedness.

Indeed, there is more divergence of critical opinion concerning Pope than any other great poet. That may be due to his being a satirist and to the merciless manner in which he ridiculed his contemporaries in The Dunciad, The Epistles and his miscellaneous verse, which stirred up those animosities that cloud judgment and replace criticism with passion. Those whom he wounded and all who sympathized with them failed to appreciate his true greatness. That is always the danger for the satirist. When Voltaire built a church at Ferney and dedicated it to God, in all honesty and reverence, as a protest against the innumerable churches dedicated to Peter, and Andrew, and John and less familiar saints, he was widely contemned as a mocker. Who lives by ridicule shall perish by ridicule: but Pope contrived to do the one and avoid the other. That was because he had vastly more in him than his unmatched powers of satire.

PROPERLY to appreciate Pope we must know much more of his life and personality than can possibly be illustrated here, so I shall content myself with stating what I may not appear to prove: that he is one of the heroic figures in English poetry, and that he is one of our greatest poets, supremely competent in the technique of his art, with a brilliant and comprehending mind, and a heart that could respond to nature and to humanity, despite all the pother one has heard about his artificiality and his heartlessness.

It has been the fashion—I am doubtful if it is so now—to sneer at the smooth regularity and the rocking-horse rhymes of Pope's verse. He made the heroic couplet a great and enduring vehicle of expression, which not even the genius of Dryden had achieved for it, and rhythmic regularity is of the essence of the heroic couplet. It is easy to make it appear trivial by reading in a 'sing-song' manner: even the noblest passages of Paradise Lost can be turned into toneless prose if read aloud as one would read a newspaper paragraph. There must be in reading, as in witnessing a play, a contribution of make-belief from the reader, who should deliberately tune his ear to the movement of the verse and then submit to the poet's emphasis, pause and rhythm, if he would have the full pleasure of the verse he is reading.

Pope is a 'polished' poet. Gosse traces this polish to the example of Boileau, the great French satirist, and that may be so; but was not the whole age of Pope intent on polishing, and making perfect to the point of artificiality? Nor is that altogether a fault. The conscious effort towards perfection is always in itself a good thing and cannot mislead if the person making the effort has

something worth saying. This Pope had in abundance.

THE best and final test of a poet's contribution to the thought of the world is the extent to which his lines pass into the common speech. Let us dip for a moment into An Essay on Man.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest.

The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Learn of the little nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale.

Honor and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part, there all the honor lies.

A wit's a feather, and a chief a rod;
An honest man's the noblest work of God.

Thou wert my guide, philosopher and friend.

These lines and hundreds more that I might cite are familiar as household words to many thousands of readers who have never read one complete poem of Pope's. What a treasure is here for the pleasure and instruction of every generation in the works of the lyric sage of Twickenham!

In the poetry of James Thomson (1700-48) is heard an echo of that of Spenser. This echo is characteristic of much of the poetry of the eighteenth century. Thomson may be said to afford relief from the didacticism of Pope by singing of nature sincerely, if in a somewhat affected style. His chief poems are The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence, which prepare the way for the beautiful Odes of William Collins (1721-59) and the scholarly writings of Thomas Gray (1716-71), whose Elegy written in a Country Churchyard (Stoke Poges) did for 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet' what Pope accomplished for the fashionable folk of the town. Gray wrote little, but what he wrote was written supremely well. He was a man of leisure and refinement, the son—like Milton—of a scrivener. He drew inspiration from Milton and Dryden, and is one of the harbingers of Wordsworth.

Mention may here be made of Robert Blair (1699-1746), who wrote a somber poem called The Grave, which was still popular (with appropriate wood-cuts) in the melancholy Victorian days; William Shenstone (1714-63), whose Schoolmistress is a tender tribute to a Leasowes teacher, Sarah Lloyd; Mark Akenside (1721-70), whose Pleasures of the Imagination is a poem too dull and too didactic in character to appeal to the modern reader; and Oliver Goldsmith, whom we have already met among the dramatists.

Oliver Goldsmith

LET none apply too scornfully or carelessly the term 'booksellers' hack,' for Goldsmith—poet of The Deserted Village, writer of that inimitable novel, The Vicar of Wakefield, and author of She Stoops to Conquer—was a booksellers' hack. Goldsmith had, in generous measure, the saving grace of humor, with infinite tenderness and delicacy of thought.

No writer in the language (says Masson), has ever surpassed him, or even equaled

him, in that witching simplicity, that gentle ease of movement, sometimes careless and slipshod, but always in perfect good taste, and often delighting with the subtlest turns and felicities, which critics have admired for a hundred years in the diction of Goldsmith.

In some respects he touches the heart of man, and especially of the literary man, more surely even than Charles Lamb does. Ireland, that gave us a Swift, also gave us Oliver Goldsmith. The fact is one to be held perpetually in grateful remembrance.

William Cowper

'It is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century,' wrote William Cowper (1731-1800). It happened to him. Although in the century and a quarter that have gone since the death of that gentle soul his poetry has passed through periods of comparative neglect, it has never been quite under eclipse. There is in his most characteristic verse a true feeling for nature, mingled with an exalted conception of the divine. 'Religion was the nurse of Cowper,' said Macaulay, and it was the religious nature of his poetry that earned its first great vogue. At the close of the eighteenth and in the early years of the last century the whole middle class community of England was 'brought up on Cowper,' Yet it was a piece of joyous ballad poetry, John Gilpin, that first won the popular favor and will longest retain it. He was fifty-four and had suffered grievously in mental breakdown when, in 1785, he published The Task, which made him famous and established him in the front rank of contemporary poets.

Begun in the winter of 1783, it was written at the suggestion of a friend, and its success was complete, for here Cowper showed himself in his natural spirit. The Task has been said to be a poem about Cowper himself, and although it contains hardly a token of the tragedy of his life, yet his ailings, his walks, his friends, his abhorrence of slavery and his religious views are delightfully portrayed. It is also distinguished not only for its grace of diction, eloquent sincerity and human tenderness, but for its departure from the stilted conventions of the eighteenth century. The testimony to the divine in nature that abounded in Wordsworthian poetry had its first and loftiest expression in the lines of The Task.

Among Cowper's contemporaries were James Macpherson (1736-96), the reputed author of Ossian; Charles Churchill (1731-64), author of the satirical Prophecy of Famine; Michael Bruce (1746-67), who probably wrote that exquisite lyric, Ode to the Cuckoo, which has also been claimed for John Logan (1748-88); and Thomas Chatterton (1752-70), who wrote the Rowley Forgeries at the age of sixteen,

> The marvelous boy,
> The sleepless soul that perished in his pride!

Chatterton came to London full of hope and confidence in his precocious powers. He died of starvation and poison in a wretched garret and was buried in the paupers' pit of Shoe Lane Workhouse.

The Fame of Robert Burns

When Cowper talks about only one poet arising in a century he is somewhat wide of the mark. His own century produced Pope, Crabbe

and Burns in addition to himself. Robert Burns (1759-96) was one of Cowper's many admirers, for all his contemporaries were drawn to him in sympathy and esteem; certainly after The Task he lacked nothing of contemporary fame, though we can well believe him when he says: 'Fame is neither my meat nor my drink. I lived fifty years without it, and should I live fifty more and get to heaven at last, I shall not want it.' Fame came earlier to Burns and a sorry business he made of it.

> He left his land her sweetest song
> And earth her saddest story.

But the universal renown and affection which have grown for the works and character of Burns since his death are unprecedented in the history of literature and make the measure of Cowper's fame appear as a candle to the moon. There are good reasons for this. The lyric gift of Burns more nearly touches perfection than that of any English poet before or since. I write 'English' with a full sense of responsibility to my fellow-countrymen beyond the Tweed, because I claim Burns as something more than an Ayrshire bard, and I dislike the word British as applied to matters of taste. I have a further reason for emphasizing his English quality. Cowper, who was admired by Burns, returned the admiration, but not, I fear, with true discernment. He wrote:

> Poor B. loses much of his deserved praise in this country through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbor of mine, but the uncouth dialect spoiled all; and before he had read him through he was quite ramfeezled.

Burns is a writer of the purest, smooth-flowing English, and had nothing to learn in that respect from the author of The Task.

> Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
> That lov'st to greet the early morn,
> Again thou usher'st in the day
> My Mary from my soul was torn.
> O Mary! dear departed shade!
> Where is thy place of blissful rest
> See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
> Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

> Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
> Flow gently; I'll sing thee a song in thy praise:
> My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
> Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

'A dark lantern,' forsooth! Why, in all the serious poetry of Burns there is hardly one Scottish word. He reserves the Scottish tongue for his lighter moods, his satirical vein, and it will be noticed in such a poem as 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' that as the thought changes in character or deepens in seriousness the language changes also. Thus:

> With kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
> A strappin youth, he takes the mother's eye;
> Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill taen;
> The father cracks of horses, plows and kye;
> The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
> But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
> The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
> What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
> Weel-pleased to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

> O happy love! where love like this is found!
> O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
> I've paced much this weary, mortal round,
> And sage experience bids me this declare:
> If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare—
> One cordial in this melancholy vale—
> 'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
> In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
> Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale.

'A dark lantern!' What nonsense! Himself, Burns tells us in that famous dedication to the noblemen and gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt that the poetic genius of his country bade him sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of his wild, natal soil in his native tongue, and he tuned his *artless* notes as she inspired. There has been a tendency to accept him a little too much at his own valuation in that matter of art and artlessness. Personally, I regard him as one of the most finished of English poets, and his prose is obviously—perhaps too obviously—that of one who is an artist in words. I maintain that he is a conscious artist and no untutored genius of the plow.

Remember that Burns was no infant phenomenon of the muse. The bulk of the poetry on which his fame is based was written round about the age of 25—by no means an early age for a poet of genius—when his inspiration was at its freshest and his education had been carried far beyond the average of his class, both in reading and in writing. He was already an artist when he made his bid for fame. That is an aspect of the poet which I commend to students. Burns was a plowman, but in the Scotland of his day, and perhaps in the Scotland of our day, the plowman may be a man of culture as well as agriculture. Burns was no Scottish counterpart of the English Hodge, plus inspiration. He was a well educated, bookish young Scotsman of poor but decent parentage, a description that would be true of fifty per cent of his fellow-countrymen.

Robert Burns is the peculiar glory of Scotland. There never was poet at once so local and so universal in his appeal. He brought the quality of pity into poetry and stirred it in the hearts of men at a time when the blighting shadow of Calvinism cum Knoxism still lay upon Scotland and made its religion bleak and forbidding. For every lowly thing, for all downtrodden, unhappy folk, Burns was full of pity. And that pity has immortal expression in many of his poems, while there is also a wistfulness about much that he wrote which goes straight to our hearts and brings the poet there also.

There would be no end to this chapter were I to say all that I should like to say of Burns, so I shall end it arbitrarily here, with this reflection: that the century which produced Pope and Burns deserves well of all that follow.

VIII

THE POETS IN THE XIX CENTURY

1. Wordsworth and Byron and Their Contemporaries

The poetry of the nineteenth century struck its roots in the soil of the eighteenth and its branches stretch into the twentieth. But if I were to pursue this dangerous metaphor I know not where it would take me. I may venture as far as to suggest that the parent tree has marked its fullness of growth.

In its style, a notable characteristic of nineteenth century poetry is a certain reaction against artificiality and mere rhetoric. In its spirit is distinguishable the influence of the Germany of Goethe and Schiller; of the France of Rousseau and Victor Hugo; and of the 'problem' writers of Norway and Denmark. The movements towards political freedom in France, Italy and Greece, and the evolution of English democracy all affected it vitally. Thus, to its understanding must be brought some knowledge of the historic happenings amid which it arose and flourished.

It is possible to take the works of two or more of the greatest poets of the period and to derive pleasure from the isolated perusal of them without regard to the authors or their relationship to their times. But while there is much to be said for the study of the poetry of any writer for its own sake, too general a neglect of 'books about books' is to be avoided. The more we know of the main facts in the life and times of a great writer, the better shall we understand and appreciate what he has written. It is 'the man behind the book' we are interested in, as Carlyle pointed out.

So far as the poets and poetry of the nineteenth century are concerned, there is no lack of adequate guidance. The field is a wide one, and its flowers and fruits are varied. In all, something like two hundred names claim consideration. Of these, however, three or four are of outstanding importance; and fewer than thirty need engage those to whom poetry does not make a very strong appeal. Before taking up the study of any one of these writers, the student could hardly do better than glance at the names in such a series as the English Men of Letters and, selecting the monograph dealing with the author that has attracted him, make this the groundwork or starting-point of the study proper.

The Realism of George Crabbe

ALTHOUGH in his birth George Crabbe (1754-1832) pre-dates Burns by five years, his chief achievement falls within the nineteenth century and Burns had died four years before that opened. 'Nature's sternest painter and her best,' says Byron: a description that is not free from poetic enlargement, though we might safely accept the first half of the line. For Crabbe's chief work was to restore a sense of the realities; to smash up the pretty-pretty, meretricious, porcelain stuff that had come to pass as pastoral poetry. This he did lustily, and in fine, vigorous verse that pleased the ear while it sustained interest in the pity or the horror of his story. Humor is not Crabbe's strong point, and yet we grow to like the poet by reason of his evident sympathy with the unfortunate subjects of his verse; he is a satirist moved by a passionate attachment to the truth and a warm heart for human suffering, so that where others were seeing nothing but idyllic scenes in a rural England that never was—Goldsmith among them—and it was the fashion to pretend that the country life was still arcadian in its unalloyed delights, Crabbe in his poem The Village could remind us of the sordid realities of 'the parish house' in this fashion:

Theirs is yon House that holds the parish poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
There where the putrid vapors, flagging, play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day;
There children dwell who know no parents' care;
Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there;
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed;
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears;
The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they!
The moping idiot, and the madman gay.

Influenced by Goldsmith, Gray and Pope, Crabbe may be considered as the chief founder of the rural school and as the forerunner of Wordsworth. He applied the lash to the ignoble rich as well as depicted with graphic realism the lot of the ignorant poor. We read Crabbe for what he says more than because of his style, which, for all its vigor, is unequal and frequently faulty. His knowledge of humanity is extensive; and though deficient both in humor and in fancy, he showed a charming lyric gift when he sought relief from the heroic couplet of his descriptive poetry. The Parish Register published in 1807 is his most characteristic composition and worthy of study.

William Blake (1757-1827) is a link between the Elizabethans and Wordsworth. His love of children speaks to us in his Songs of Innocence, his feeling of horror at the bitter side of life in his Songs of Experience. He was a mystic, with something of the contrast of simplicity and subtlety in his work that is characteristic of Browning's poems; and he felt keenly and expressed keenly social wrongs and ecclesiastical tyranny. Like Crabbe, Blake had to fight poverty, and owed his knowledge to his own efforts. Like Crabbe, he is again becoming popular; but perhaps his most enduring fame rests upon his skill as an artist.

Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), that 'grim old dilettante, full of sardonic sense,' as Carlyle called him, wrote a long poem in heroic meter on The Pleasures of Memory, and caught, in his blank verse poem, Italy, some of the beauties of that storied land. He had the wisdom to decline the laureateship. Robert Bloomfield (1766-1823), first a rural 'hand' and then a shoemaker, wrote in a London garret The Farmer's Boy, which gives a sympathetic view of the life indicated by its title. He derived his style from Thomson's The Seasons.

Another poet of nature and of the poor, though on a much higher level, is James Hogg (1770-1835), the 'Ettrick Shepherd,' who stands next to Burns in the order of Scotland's peasant-poets. He described himself to Scott, to whom he sent contributions for the latter's Border Minstrelsy, as 'King of the Mountain and Fairy School of Poetry,' and this piece of self-description is accepted by the critics. When the Kye Come Hame and Kilmeny (the last-named from The Queen's Wake, a series of legendary tales and ballads supposed to have been sung by the Royal bards at Holyrood) are among Hogg's most popular, and deservedly popular, compositions. There is more that is enduring in the poetry of Hogg than in that of any of the others mentioned here since Crabbe, and the general reader must devote

considerable attention to his works.

William Wordsworth

ONE of the greatest poets of the nineteenth century, one of the real giants of English literature, now claims our attention in William Wordsworth (1770-1850). Indeed, his influence, which was of slow growth at the outset, is growing yet. He came of an old-established family, and in his early days was greatly affected by the ideals of French Republicanism and the teaching of William Godwin, the author of Political Justice, a work basing morals on necessity, who also influenced Coleridge.

When France, having first debased them, forsook her humanistic ideals for dreams of world conquest under Napoleon, the effect on Wordsworth would have been disastrous but for the devotion of his sister Dorothy and the fact that a small legacy enabled the brother and sister to settle down quietly, first at Racedown, in Dorset—where Wordsworth's one tragedy, The Borderers, was written—then at Alfoxden, by the Quantock hills—which district inspired his and Coleridge's contributions to the volume of Lyrical Ballads—and, finally, at Grasmere. This was the home of the Wordsworths from 1799 till the poet's death, the three places of residence there being Dove Cottage, Allan Bank and Rydal Mount.

The Prelude; or, the Growth of a Poet's Mind, an autobiographical poem in blank verse, reflects the influence of Wordsworth's continental travel—he visited Germany, Italy and Switzerland as well as France—and the philosophical views of Godwin. That poem and The Excursion are parts of a scheme which was never completed.

Wordsworth has to be considered in three aspects—as a critic, as a teacher and as a poet. His opinions may be studied in the preface and appendix to the Lyrical Ballads, the preface to The Excursion and in his letters. In the preface to the Lyrical Ballads he writes:

> It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and accordingly we call them sisters; but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree.

Pursuing the same idea, he writes in the appendix to the Lyrical Ballads that 'meter is but adventitious to composition,' and that 'the phraseology for which that passport is necessary, even where it may be graceful at all, will be little valued by the judicious.'

THE best proof of the error inherent in the view of poetry thus set forth is to be found in Wordsworth's own work. Elsewhere, in his intense scorn for the artificial and the meretricious, which were so characteristic of much of the poetry of the eighteenth century, Wordsworth went to the verge of the trivial. But though he raised a storm of criticism, which delayed due recognition of his surpassing genius and is not yet exhausted, it is well to remember with Coleridge, one of the greatest of literary critics, especially where Wordsworth is concerned, that but for the prefaces

and appendices much of what has been said against Wordsworth's poems would be reduced to absurdity. The few pages that gave such an opportunity to the pungent parodists of 'Rejected Addresses,' to Byron, to Leigh Hunt, to Jeffrey and to others to pour scorn on Wordsworth, would, but for the fear that they represented an intention to overthrow the accepted canons of art, have been 'passed over in silence as so much blank paper, or leaves of a bookseller's catalogue,' and 'only regarded as so many light or inferior coins in a rouleau of gold.'

As a teacher, Wordsworth expressed his purpose to be: 'To console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous.' It will be seen from this he took his vocation seriously. 'The poet,' he averred, 'is a teacher. I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing.'

Wordsworth's Teaching

WHAT did he teach? George Brimley, in one of the most brilliant of his essays, written in 1851 and still applicable, contends, with reason, that the value of Wordsworth's teaching

> lay mainly in the power that was given him of unfolding the glory and the beauty of the material world and in bringing consciously before the minds of men the high moral function that belonged in the human economy to the imagination, and in thereby redeeming the faculties of sense from the comparatively low and servile office of ministering merely to the animal pleasures. . . . He has shown the possibility of combining a state of vivid enjoyment, even of intense passion, with the activity of thought and the repose of contemplation. He has, moreover, done more than any poet of his age to break down and obliterate the conventional barriers that, in our disordered social state, divide rich and poor into two hostile nations; and he has done this, not by bitter and passionate declamations on the injustice and vices of the rich, and on the wrongs and virtues of the poor, but by fixing his imagination on the elemental feelings, which are the same in all classes, and drawing out the beauty that lies in all that is truly natural in human life.

Was Wordsworth a poet? Indubitably; as Plato and Dante were poets. None but a great poet could have written such lines as these from the poem 'Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey,' in 1798:

> For I have learned
> To look on Nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought.

Let the student who seeks to find Wordsworth at his best also ponder the exquisite ode entitled 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.' But Wordsworth's claim to rank among the immortals might be based on his sonnets alone. There is nothing in the Elizabethan writers of the sonnet to surpass in perfection of form the sonnet beginning—

> Earth has not anything to show more fair.

Tennyson paid a fine and sincere compliment to his predecessor when he declared that the Laureate's wreath came to him

> Greener from the brows
> Of him who uttered nothing base.

It is unnecessary to urge Wordsworth upon the general reader, for

he is so securely a popular classic that his poetry is in no danger of neglect.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

CHIEF of Wordsworth's contemporaries was Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). Coleridge was a talker, a preacher, a philosopher and a mystic. His best work belongs to his early years, when he was inspired by his love of nature and by the revolutionary idealism of France, and when, with Southey and Robert Lovell, he planned the foundation of a Utopia 'in the rich heart of the West.' Unhappily, all through his life, plans came more easily to him than performance. His life-story is one of the saddest in English literary history. His health was poor and his habits made it worse.

It is a notable fact that his ballad epic of Christabel, though a fragment, exercised in MS. form, some twenty years before it was published, a wonderful influence on Scott and other contemporary English poets. 'In this weirdly beautiful creation,' says one critic, 'the spiritual and material are so exquisitely blended that it is difficult to know where they run into each other.'

For an explanation of the dreamland beauty of Christabel and the Rime of the Ancient Mariner recourse must be had to the German philosophers, particularly to Goethe, Herder, Schelling and others of their school, to whom Coleridge was much indebted. Swinburne says of The Ancient Mariner that it is—

> perhaps the most wonderful of all poems. In reading it we seem rapt into that paradise revealed by Swedenborg, where music and color and perfume were one, where you could hear the hues and see the harmonies of heaven. For absolute melody and splendor it were hardly rash to call it the first poem in the language.

Sir Walter Scott as Poet

IF, EXCEPTING The Ancient Mariner, Coleridge is a difficult poet for the young reader and for all who are not readily drawn to poetry, Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), on the other hand, is essentially a poet for the young. Repelled by the Revolution from visions of the future, he sought and restored to letters the romance of the past. The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion and The Lady of the Lake, his best poems, are for the million what Christabel is for the comparatively few. For pure joy in nature and love of humanity Scott was not excelled by either Wordsworth or Coleridge, though there is a certain mechanical touch in his verse and a mannerism which prevent its being classed with the greatest English poetry. How little do great authors know what fate has fixed for them! Scott was so assured of the immortality of his poetry, so conscious of the dignity of the poet, that he thought it would be derogatory to his fame to be known as a novelist; hence the anonymity of Waverly!

Another Scots poet, and one of the greatest of song writers, was Robert Tannahill (1774-1810), a Paisley weaver, whose life was sad and ended tragically. His Braes o' Gleniffer, and Jessie the Flower o' Dunblane are favorite lyrics with Scotsmen the world over, and are assured of immortality.

Robert Southey (1774-1843), as a poet, is little honored to-day, though Professor Saintsbury boldly

champions his cause. His change from a democrat to a Tory standpoint—exemplified in the difference between Wat Tyler and The Vision of Judgement—may have had some influence on popular taste; but his choice of subjects is perhaps the chief reason for the neglect into which he has fallen. Of his longer works, Roderick, the Last of the Goths, is the best. The others are Thalaba, the Destroyer, a rhymed epic of Arabia; Madoc, a semi-historical poem, descriptive of the adventures of a Welsh prince; and The Curse of Kehama, a poem in irregular rhymes, the theme of which is drawn from Hindu mythology. Southey is better known by such spirited ballads as The Battle of Blenheim, The Well of St. Keyne, and The Inchcape Rock.

The name of Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) recalls one of the most touching stories in the romance of reality. It is told with exquisite sympathy by Sir William Hunter, in the introductory chapter of his Thackerays in India.

Midway in the impetuous rush of his stormy youth Landor found kindness in the family of Lord Aylmer, with whose gifted daughter Rose he fell in love. The affection was mutual. It was Rose Aylmer who lent him the book which inspired the work—Gebir—in which his genius first flashed out into enduring flame. Hope told a flattering tale, and then Rose Aylmer was sent out to relatives in Calcutta, there to find an early grave. For days and nights her image never left Landor's brain. 'During hours of sleeplessness he wrote the elegy which enshrines in a casket of pearl the name of Rose Aylmer, as long as maiden hearts shall ache and the English language endure':

Ah, what avails the sceptred race?
  Ah, what the form divine?
What every virtue, every grace?
  Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
  May weep but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
  I consecrate to thee.

Landor gave a marked impetus to the Romantic movement, and while he is more for the student than for the general reader, the latter must make some acquaintance with his poetry and his prose.

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) is, like Southey, best remembered by his lyrical poems: Hohenlinden, Ye Mariners of England, The Soldier's Dream, Lord Ullin's Daughter and The Song of the Evening Star are among them. His Pleasures of Hope is an echo of Thomson and Gray.

The Sweet Singer of Erin

THOMAS MOORE (1779-1852) flitted through a brilliant sunshine of popularity with all the spontaneous joy of life of an iridescent humming bird endowed with the extra gift of song. An Irishman by birth, he achieved the more enduring part of his reputation by his Irish Melodies, lyrics of haunting beauty written to be sung to native airs instinct with an equally tender spirit of music. They captivated his own generation and many of them have become a permanent part of the national heritage. Moore's social success was also due in part to his gift of political satire, the least enduring form of verse, exemplified by him in The Twopenny Post Bag and The Fudge Family.

While still at the zenith of his fame, he forsook lyrical for narrative poetry and in 1817 published

Lalla Rookh, a poem which despite certain obvious faults, of which the chief is an excess of sensuousness, has many passages of rare beauty and some of real splendor.

Moore's poetry is not of the highest class, but it has fine qualities and he rendered a real service to English verse by introducing a great variety into the use of the lyric meters. Poetry was still fettered by a too rigid insistence upon the iambic and trochaic meters and, possibly for the satisfaction of his own musical instinct, he made a free use of dactylic and anapaestic measures, managing them with astonishing dexterity and contributing greatly to the emancipation of all lyric poets who have followed him. It is Moore's great distinction, his fellow countryman Stephen Gwynn has remarked, that he brought into English verse something of the variety and multiplicity of musical rhythms.

If space allowed I might have had some observations on the poetry of Charles Lamb, Ebenezer Elliott, William Tennant, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Love Peacock and Barry Cornwall, who all were flourishing in the days of Tom Moore, but greater names beckon us and we must on.

Lord Byron

I REMEMBER—it must be a quarter of a century ago—John Morley commending to the favor of working class readers the poetry of Lord Byron (1788-1824), the centenary of whose death so recently filled the newspapers of the English-speaking world with incalculable columns of critical appreciation. Since the reaction following the excessive hero-worship to which he was at first subjected, Byron has enjoyed a far greater popularity on the Continent than in England. But precisely in what he is commendable to the working people of Great Britain I am unable to state. I would commend him to all.

At heart most men are romantics: even pork butchers. Every young woman, be she of the leisured workers or of the busy rich, dramatizes her own emotions and her knowledge of events to suit her day dreams. To all such Byron in his sheer picturesqueness must have an irresistible appeal. He is a figure of romance. His poetry is part of his personality. We cannot conceive Byron as a successful bank manager or chief of a great engineering works. He lived and moved in an atmosphere for ever electrical with presage of storm, joyous intervals of sunniest beauty alternating with others of somber melancholy. In this he was intensely human: he was exceptional only in being able to give to all his moods a romantic glamour which made even his melancholy a thing of tenderness and human pity.

His hatred of shams, his passionate love of freedom, his sorrow for all afflicted: these certainly are qualities to endear him to the common people, who have not read enough of him, but hardly less to the other classes of the community who have been chiefly attracted by the sensuous beauty of so much of his descriptive poetry. Of all our great poets, he is the most subjective: he found all his emotional material within himself. In everything that he wrote it is himself that clamors for expression: the per-

sonages of his poems are but varying aspects of the poet. His poetry is really an extraordinarily brilliant and fascinating autobiography.

Thus it is especially true of Byron that without some knowledge of the successive stages of his short but crowded life, his belongings, his surroundings, his friendships and his fortunes, a great deal of his poetry lacks significance. His output was large. It comprises two epics, or quasi-epics, Childe Harold and Don Juan—which constitute his best work—twelve narrative poems, eight dramas, seven or eight satires and a multitude of occasional poems, lyrics, epigrams and jeux d'esprit. For a pithy judgment of the poet I turn to his very competent editor, himself the grandson of a great poet, Ernest Hartley Coleridge, who says:

> He brings the wisdom of the many to bear upon his individual experience, 'touching it with emotion' and re-making it by the potency of his wit. His wisdom is not that of the market, nor of the cloister, nor of the academy, but of a man of the world who has realized and faced the problems of existence. If he 'taught' us little of the spiritual amenities of the soul, he has taught us the limitations of our hopes and fears, and to bear with reverence and submission the burden and the mystery of our fate. He is neither pessimist nor optimist, but he reasons concerning things as they are, and the judgment which is come already.

He shows, in short, how hollow are many of the baubles for which a section of democracy craves. He is a keen satirist and a humorist of the following of Rabelais and Sterne. Ernest Coleridge has also described him as 'the parent of modern fun,' a description that does not appeal to me, possibly because I cannot quite guess what was in the critic's mind.

But Byron had the true poetic 'glamour,' a personality not to be shackled by any laws of rhythm or rhyme. No reader with any taste for poetry, responsive to the passionate expression of a soul unrestful, will need to be urged to the reading of Byron; once taken up, his poetry has a compelling force unsurpassed, if not unrivaled, by that of any other of his day.

Shelley's Personality

IN REGARD to Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), the reader must be warned against being misled by warped and narrow views concerning Shelley's life. Shelley was, like Byron, a herald of revolt; but he was also, what Byron could hardly be said to be, an idealist. Byron was at times sincere; Shelley always so. If Shelley erred, as we may think, against the social conventions, it was not out of contempt nor in any spirit of reckless libertinism, but because he had constructed for himself a philosophy and adhered to it.

His principal works are Queen Mab, Alastor, The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, The Cenci, Julian and Maddalo, The Witch of Atlas, Epipsychidion, Adonais, and Hellas. In Queen Mab were expressed the mingled idealism and atheism of the Revolution. Prometheus Unbound is well described as 'the finest example we have of the working out in poetry of the idea of a regenerated universe.' Adonais was a lament for the death of John Keats. The Cenci is the most powerful drama in English since Otway's Venice Preserved.

Shelley's was a divided personality; he lived in the world, but all his thoughts soared into the empyrean. As a poet of the imagination,

he was immensely superior to Byron. Of his lyrics, the Ode to the West Wind is as imperishable as anything in English poetry.

John Keats: The Master Spirit

TO TURN from the poetry of Byron and Shelley to that of John Keats (1795-1821) is like passing from a region of storm, in which body and soul have been engaged, to a quiet garden full of fountains. Keats leaves the problems of passion—whether physical or purely intellectual—alone, and tunes his lyre to hymns of beauty and the praise of nature. He is one of the first of modern literary poets, drawing his inspiration largely from Ancient Greece and Elizabethan England, though the influence of his friendship for Leigh Hunt is distinguishable in his early poems.

Keats (writes Sir Edmund Gosse) has been the master-spirit in the evolution of Victorian poetry. Both Tennyson and Browning, having in childhood been enchained by Byron, and then in adolescence by Shelley, reached manhood only to transfer their allegiance to Keats, whose influence on English poetry since 1830 has been not less universal than that of Byron on the literature of the Continent. . . . In spite of what he owes to the Italians . . . no poet, save Shakespeare himself, is more English than Keats; none presents to us, in the harmony of his verse, his personal character, his letters, and his general tradition, a figure more completely attractive nor better calculated to fire the dreams of a generous successor.

When the critics attacked Endymion, the attack was meant to reach, through that poem, the detested politics of Leigh Hunt. Not only Browning and Tennyson, but Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne owe much to Keats. Hyperion is a beautiful fragment; the odes, On a Grecian Urn and To a Nightingale; the sonnet, On First Looking into Chapman's Homer; and the poems, The Eve of St. Agnes and La Belle Dame Sans Merci, are sufficient to place their author securely in the front rank of English poets. They are the work, be it remembered, of one whose father was engaged in a livery stable; and who began life as a surgeon's apprentice and was dead at twenty-six.

After the great days of Byron, whose bardic ascendancy eclipsed Scott—'Byron hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow,' Sir Walter said generously and truthfully—poetry had become the fashion. The writing of poetry was a pleasant occupation and profitable withal. Incredible thousands were paid by publishers to Byron, even to Crabbe and Moore, for their verses, and the long wash of good, but undistinguished, poetry that now set in is largely traceable to the Byron 'boom.' That is why, it may be, that from Byron's time the names of the lesser poets begin to crowd upon us at so great a pace before we come to another giant in Tennyson. Only by limiting my whole survey to the poets could I hope to offer anything of value concerning each.

I SHALL conclude this chapter by merely noting a few of these poets with some of whose works my readers ought to familiarize themselves. These are Sir Aubrey de Vere (1788-1846), who went to school with Byron, was a friend of Wordsworth, and wrote several fine sonnets and two dramas of much poetic strength, Julian the Apostate and Mary Tudor; Thomas Hood (1799-1845), whose 'I remember, I

remember,' The Dream of Eugene Aram, The Song of the Shirt, and The Bridge of Sighs are as truly poetry of the heart as his inimitable humor was original; Lord Macaulay (1800-59), whose fame rests, not on his spirited Lays of Ancient Rome, which used to be the popular ideal of the heroic, but upon his historical and critical writings; and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), whose Cry of the Children, Casa Guidi Windows, Poems Before Congress, Aurora Leigh, and Sonnets from the Portuguese, bespeak the exquisite tenderness of a womanly woman more than they display the technical excellence of a poet.

IX

THE POETS IN THE XIX CENTURY

2. *From Tennyson and Browning to Thomas Hardy*

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON, a poet and a great critic of poetry, summed up the significance of Wordsworth's renowned successor in the laureateship in a single telling phrase. 'Tennyson,' he wrote, 'knew of but one justification for the thing he said—viz. that it was the thing he thought.'

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-92) is the 'bright particular star' in the crowded galaxy of Victorian poets. His muse was responsive to the dreams of science and the doubts of philosophy, as to the whole world of nature. One of the most scholarly and exact of poets since Milton and Gray, he was, with the possible exceptions of Burns and Byron, the most popular since Shakespeare. Not even Wordsworth took his vocation more seriously.

From a period of idealism he passed to one of something very like pessimism. Always hating the petty conventions of the present, he became in his later years too much of a social critic for his poetry to benefit. From first to last, however, he was a master of word-music, acutely sensitive to every vibration in nature, and capable of rendering his impressions with almost miraculous fidelity. He saw no less clearly than he heard. Proctor said there were no mistakes about the stars in his poems; and similar tributes have been paid to his knowledge of birds and flowers.

Tennyson's Teaching

THE value of Tennyson to the student is twofold. On the one hand, he teaches by example the qualities and possibilities of the English language; on the other hand, his poems may not inaptly be described as 'the voice of the century' in all its modulations between the extremes of buoyant hope and desolate despair.

In Memoriam, his elegiac poem, written in memory of his friendship for Arthur Hallam, son of the historian, has been much represented as an influence against orthodox religion. Tennyson's faith was firm and unshaken to the end; but 'he dreaded the dogmatism of sects and rash definitions of God.' Locksley Hall and its sequel, Locksley Hall Sixty Years After, sum up the dif-

ference between liberal aspiration and democratic achievement. In Maud, his favorite work, he entered an eloquent protest against the material view of human life.

Tennyson's consistent contention was that poetry should be the flower and fruit of a man's life, and in every stage of it a worthy offering to the world. One day in the summer of 1888, in the garden of his home at Aldworth, Sussex, the Poet Laureate was discussing with Edmund Gosse the case of those who love to trace similarities and seem to think that a mediocre poet who originates an idea is above the great poet who adopts and gives it everlasting form. Said Tennyson:

> The dunces fancy it is the thought that makes poetry live. It isn't. It's the expression, the form; but we mustn't tell them so—they wouldn't know what we meant.

This is a very different thing, of course, from saying that the 'form' of poetry is its all in all; as the poet's further remark on the same occasion proves:

> The highest poetry may be popular, and praised in the magazines, and yet the secret of it is 'unrevealed to the whole godless world for ever.'

We may doubt if it is always revealed to the poet himself. But there is nothing in this view of poetry that is incompatible with the principles set forth in my opening chapter.

If it be granted that Tennyson's poetry did not profit by his sensitiveness to the social problems of the time, or by the way in which he criticized the trend of policies and the fickleness of public opinion, it can hardly be gainsaid that he was a great teacher for all who care to give ear to his message. The best of Tennyson is not to be gathered by the pastime of hunting out plagiarisms in his poems. As Shakespeare was inspired by the stirring events of Elizabeth's reign, so was Tennyson inspired by the Battle of Waterloo and 'the fairy tales of science' to the vision of a time when—

> The war drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

But he saw the peril, first of an excessive insular patriotism, and then of mere 'talk.'

Tennyson's Vision and his Technique

In his interpretation of the five chief subjects it has been the province of poets to deal with—nature, woman, life, politics and religion—Tennyson will be found always looking forward to the ultimate good. If the spirit of the present generation wars with Tennyson the teacher, it is because of his treatment, in The Princess particularly, of woman's rights. His views on the woman question were, indeed, reactionary. 'Woman,' he wrote,

> is not undevelopt man,
> But diverse: could we make her as the man,
> Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
> Not like to like, but like in difference.

From a technical standpoint Maud is regarded by competent criticism as one of the best and most highly finished of Tennyson's great poems; it is the one, moreover, of which the poet himself was specially fond. It contains the exquisite lyric 'Come into the Garden, Maud.' Perhaps the best of Tennyson's work was his earliest. That which penetrates the

heart of the many is comprised in the lyrics, such as the song just referred to, together with 'Break, Break, Break,' Sweet and Low, and his swan song, Crossing the Bar. But the Idylls of the King are also widely loved. The Lady of Shalott, Mariana in the South, The Miller's Daughter, Oenone, The Palace of Art, The May Queen, The Lotos-Eaters, A Dream of Fair Women, The Morte d'Arthur and Locksley Hall have been rightly placed among the poems that have 'profoundly affected English literature.'

The best plan to pursue in the study of Tennyson is to take up the Life of the poet written by his son, and then to read the poems in the sequence in which they were written. Any student who will do this will know more of Tennyson (and, incidentally, of the most important of his contemporaries) than he will be able to glean from any other pair of volumes that can be named. For examples of Tennyson's indebtedness to the writers who preceded him, and of the extent to which he revised and re-wrote many of the poems, reference should be made to Illustrations of Tennyson and The Early Poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, by Churton Collins. Stopford Brooke's very able study of Tennyson is also worthy of attention.

The Optimism of Browning

With Robert Browning (1812-89) 'form' was but a secondary consideration. Its requirements, in fact, constituted for him almost an obstacle to the flow of thought. He is as difficult and obscure as, for the most part, Tennyson is clear and easy to the common understanding. It is said that in the course of time Browning will supersede his great contemporary in popular estimation but that time is not yet, nor likely soon to come. With Browning, far more than with Tennyson, is it necessary to consider the life and the poetry as interdependent and mutually explanatory. It has been well said that 'much of the apparent obscurity of Browning is due to his habit of climbing up a precipice of thought, and then kicking away the ladder by which he climbed.'

There is no gloom in Browning. He is full of vitality. His drama and his poems are the appurtenances of an intellectual gymnasium. With Browning—

> Life is—to wake, not sleep.

'Rise and not rest,' he cries; but 'press . . .'

> From earth's level, where blindly creep
> Things perfected, more or less,
> To the heaven's height, far and steep,
> Where, amid what strifes and storms
> May wait the adventurous guest.
> Power is love.

Tennyson wrote that:

> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.

With Browning it is better to have lived and struggled and failed than never to have lived at all.

Few poets have given rise to such a body of criticism and interpretations as Browning. Tennyson has needed no Tennyson Society to expound what he meant. The Browning Society may have done its hero a disservice. But it is not always what is best worth knowing that is clearest of comprehension, and although I would rather spend an evening with Tennyson for the certain solace of his word-music, I feel that the same time spent in mental

parring with Browning might be more stimulating in effect if less greeable in experience. Still, I am more often reaching out to the rowded Tennyson shelf in my li-rary than to that on which my maller Browning collection stands.

Browning as a Stimulus

THAT is merely the statement of a personal and middle-aged aste; for as a young man I derived such enjoyment and stimulus from the study of Browning as to make me commend him with genuine enthusiasm to all young men. I fear, however, that to offer here my own opinions on Browning might involve me in a greater expenditure of space than I can afford, as I have done no concentrated thinking on the poet and his work, and I turn therefore to one who has made such a study and set forth his conclusions with brevity. Professor Dowden, who, despite later and more pyrotechnical exponents, remains in my estimation Browning's most competent critic, says:

> Browning as a poet had his origins in the romantic school of English poetry; but he came at a time when the romance of external action and adventure had exhausted itself, and when it became necessary to carry romance into the inner world, where the adventures are those of the soul. On the ethical and religious side he sprang from English Puritanism. Each of these influences was modified by his own genius and by the circumstances of its development. His keen observation of facts and passionate inquisition of human character drew him in the direction of what is termed realism . . . His Puritanism received important modifications from his wide-ranging artistic instincts and sympathies, and again from the liberality of a wide-ranging intellect. . . . He regarded our life on earth as a state of probation and of preparation. . . .
>
> In his methods Browning would acknowledge no master; he would please himself and compel his readers to accept his method, even if strange or singular. . . . His optimism was part of the vigorous sanity of his moral nature; like a reasonable man, he made the happiness which he did not find. . . . The emotions which he chiefly cared to interpret were those connected with religion, with art, and with the relations of the sexes.

It is especially important to remember that Browning's thought where it is most significant is often more or less enigmatical if taken by itself; 'its energetic gestures, unless we see what they are directed against, seem aimless beating in the air.' That portion of his work, therefore, which is primarily polemical bids fair to fail of interesting posterity. Men and Women includes some of his finest work; but his masterpiece is that living human epic The Ring and the Book. How They Brought the Good News from Ghent, Saul, The Lost Leader, and The Pied Piper of Hamelin are among his most popular works.

The Music of Swinburne

WHEN we turn to Browning's younger contemporary, Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), we encounter a poet of a different mold. 'He is a reed,' Tennyson said of him, 'through which all things blow into music.' Browning was a thinker striving to utter his thoughts in poetic form, and never a stringer-together of mellifluous words for the sake of their metrical charm. Form was paramount with Swinburne, and the content of the verse seemed secondary. But what a master of poetic form! His verse is as near to actual music as that of any poet who ever lived.

His chief contribution to our literature was, in an age of smug Victorian hypocrisy, to strike again the

old pagan note of earth worship, to sound again that authentic lyrical cry, the need of which the soul in the presence of the august mysteries of nature so deeply feels, but only the poets may utter.

No English poet more definitely felt himself a poet than Swinburne did; not even Byron. From his earliest years he consecrated himself to the tuneful muses, and even when his verse is disfigured by excess of passionate phrase, as it often is in Poems and Ballads, still it is verse that produces in the reader a sense of exaltation which no prose can create. Such stanzas as this became the ready prey of the parodist:

O lips full of lust and of laughter,
Curled snakes that are fed from my breast,
Bite hard, lest remembrance come after
And press with new lips where you pressed.
For my heart too springs up at the pressure,
Mine eyelids too moisten and burn;
Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure
Ere pain come in turn.

The music is inescapable, and only in his later years when the earlier ichor had been largely spent do we find his verse moving a little stiffly. There may be a good deal of florid nonsense in these poems of passion, but the true stuff of poetic utterance is in them, and they must be read by all who wish to be familiar with the best poetry of our literature.

Our finest lyrist after Tennyson, and an artist even more comprehensive in the mastery of varied meters, it would be wrong to leave the impression that Swinburne's concern was so fixed upon the form of his poetry that he was careless of its content. He abounds in instances where high thought and true emotion are expressed in lines of genuine and enduring beauty. It is worth noting also how he competes with th greatest Victorian poet in his treat ment of the Arthurian story, tha touchstone of romance.

That Swinburne was really not ob sessed by the sensuous side of life that his soul was in tune with it inmost and profound harmonies, tha he was no mere fluent chanter of creed of despair, let these lines from Super Flumina Babylonis bear wit ness:

Unto each man his handiwork, unto each hi crown,
The just Fate gives;
Whoso takes the world's life on him and hi own lays down,
He, dying so, lives.

Whoso bears the whole heaviness of th wronged world's weight
And puts it by,
It is well with him suffering, though he fac man's fate;
How should he die?

Seeing death has no part in him any more no power
Upon his head;
He has bought his eternity with a little hour
And is not dead.

For an hour, if ye look for him, he is no more found,
For one hour's space;
Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him crowned,
A deathless face.

But there is no need to apologize for Swinburne; he is secure among the great poets of England, and every student of our literature who turns to his poetry as a duty will continue with it as a joy.

Matthew Arnold & Some Lesser Poets

Next in importance to Swinburne must be reckoned Matthew Arnold (1822-88), whose poems, austere in form, classic in spirit, breathe the indefinable sadness of culture threatened by anarchy. Swinburne

ttered no criticism that rings more ue than his dictum that Matthew rnold's 'best essays ought to live nger than most; his poems cannot ut live as long as any of their time.' Iatthew Arnold would have won sting distinction among the few ad he written only The Strayed eveller, Empedocles on Etna, The cholar Gipsy, and Sohrab and ustum.

The poems of Frederick Tennyson 1807-98) and Charles Tennyson urner (1808-79) may be studied ith those of their illustrious rother. Frederick was joint author f the famous Poems of Two rothers, and his poem The Isles of reece is well worth reading. harles is best represented by his nnets. Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1828-82) cannot, as A. C. Benson bserves, be said to have modified in ny direct way the great stream of nglish poetry; but he 'has stimuted the sense of beauty, the desire extract the very essence of deght from emotion, form and olor; he has inculcated devotion art.' Rossetti's sister Christina 1830-94) was in all she wrote and her attitude to life an essential oet. She did not scale the higher eights, but her lyric gift was rare nd distinguished and her poetry ill engage the student not less rofitably than that of her brother ante.

AND now behold me at a stage in my survey when not even the retence of naming the lesser poets f the period can be made. A. H. allam, Jean Ingelow, Monckton Milnes, Locker-Lampson, Aytoun—o, their name has now become egion and they must pass in scores unheralded. None whose work meant any really distinguished addition to the body of nineteenth-century poetry shall I ignore and, teeming though the bardic ranks may be, with that proviso there are but few of uncommon stature to detain us longer.

What must be made clear as explaining this phenomenon is that there was now a steady raising of the mean of poetry: a movement that has brought the tide mark in our own day well inshore. And as the average rises and the number of competent artists swells it would seem that poetic genius becomes diffused; the sporadic outbursts which gave us the giants are fewer, or by contrast less astonishing.

It did seem for a few years that in Philip James Bailey (1816-1902) English literature had found another of the company of Milton, and I still think that his Festus will see a revival. It will have to be the poem as he first wrote it in his early twenties, and in a fine frenzy of inspiration, not the obese and tedious volume which he most unwisely transformed it into during the remainder of a long and introspective life. I urge Festus—get an early edition—upon the student, though Bailey must go into the category of Might-have-been.

The Paganism of George Meredith

NEXT in sequence of birth—for I have brought Swinburne out of order to his place alongside Tennyson and Browning—comes George Meredith (1828-1909), concerning whom critical opinion is still at sixes and sevens. Myself, I have no misgivings that he is destined to live as a poet when his long novels will be

little read. In my judgment, poetry is Meredith's natural voice, and I find a forthright vigor of expression in most of his poems which is not characteristic of his prose. He was a poet-philosopher at heart and a novelist because novels were the common traffic of the literary world of his day. Like Swinburne he was one of the splendid pagans that have found in the 'reading of Earth' a solace for the doom of life.

> And O, green bounteous earth!
> Bacchante Mother! stern to those
> Who live not in the heart of mirth;
> Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
> Into the breast that gives the rose
> Shall I with shuddering fall?

There is the keynote of Meredith's philosophy as expressed in some of his finest poetry, and as the whole of his verse amounts to little more than one half the length of one of his longer novels the reader who would be familiar with it—and I urge it upon all—has no arduous task to perform and a new field of intellectual adventure awaiting him.

EACH reader will in his own way discover for himself favorite poems of Clough, of Kingsley, Patmore, Allingham, Stevenson and of William Morris—all with their contribution of pleasure and experience to give, though not vitally important to English literature. Gerald Massey (1828-1907) might be overlooked, and that were a pity, as his poetry ranks among the best that is 'racy of the soil' and expressive of that popular spirit which gave rise to Chartism; and with James Thomson's ('B.V.') The City of Dreadful Night, Alexander Smith's City Poems, as well as his Life Drama, should be read some of Robert Buchanan's early poems and most of William Ernest Henley's. There is true charm and the daintiest of art in everything of Austin Dobson's, and if our present poet laureate, who may acquire fame from the dignified dumbness of his official muse, is an improvement on Alfred Austin, it is chiefly in the technique of verse, where his cleverness is obvious. That anything of Robert Bridges will engage a later age, except as examples of how rhymes are made and meters may be managed, I cannot believe; there is an utter absence of true poetic fire.

Sir William Watson

THERE is, however, no lack of fire or fervor in the poetry of William Watson (b. 1858). He started and has continued as a Wordsworthian and has some of the defects as well as many of the merits of his master. But he has shown an austerity of self criticism that was not characteristic of Wordsworth, and as a result the printed bulk of his verse is notably slight for one who has devoted himself exclusively to poetry. A penetrating observer of nature, his descriptive verse is always fresh and compelling in its truthfulness, his mastery of the sonnet form is complete, and he has written odes of grave beauty and serene simplicity—witness Sable and Purple—which should have marked him out as one who might have restored the poet laureate's office to the dignity it has lacked since Tennyson's day; but an unfortunate tendency to leap hot-blooded into the political arena and throw off some ephemeral lines full of the passion of the moment may explain why a safe but uninspired practitioner was selected for the

bays. Sir William Watson—he was knighted in 1917—is certainly one of our chief poets of these later times: he was, in a sense, the poetic herald of that very remarkable literary revival which we now identify with the 'nineties of last century; and he has not failed of the high promise of Wordsworth's Grave with which his career began in 1890.

Possibly none of the poets of this period will outlive Francis Thompson (1859-1907). He is indeed a peculiar glory of the declining Victorian era: the most individual voice among our later singers touched with religious mysticism. The Hound of Heaven is an assured classic and the sad story of its author's life in association with the austere beauty of his poetry will long attract readers to him. Nowhere in our poetry is music more happily wedded to profoundest questionings of the soul.

Another of those poets of the 'nineties was a fine fresh singer of our rough island story, but the voice was still that of the scholar: Sir Henry Newbolt (b. 1862) in Admirals All, The Sailing of the Longships, and many another volume of verse in which there is the same classic union of the heroic and the scholarly, has won the hearts of all who like their patriotism lyrical and episodic.

Somewhere about here I might be expected to allude to that remarkable phenomenon of our time, the Irish literary renascence, for its protagonist, William Butler Yeats, was born in 1865, and those who were young with him in the 'nineties and have lived until this day have seen some strange and stirring things in Ireland. As it would take a volume as large as the present to do no more than outline the Irish Literary Movement and its poets and prose writers, and as I am eminently unqualified for the task by a conspicuous lack of Celtic sympathy and a fine ignorance of the movement in its ramifications of drama, poetry, story and stark political propaganda, I am thankful for any excuse to evade what might else have proved another of the difficulties of my task. Nor am I unconscious of a certain meanness in this, when I recall the pleasure I have had from the many plays of J. M. Synge, Lady Gregory, W. B. Yeats and others who have contributed to the Irish drama, or the numerous poems of Yeats and 'A. E.' (George Russell) I have read with understanding, saying nothing of those I have read with mystification. But, after all, our Hibernian friends might resent the inclusion of the Irish literary movement in a sketch of English literature, although they make free to use the English language—and with what astonishing charm too!—in most of their writings.

There is little doubt, I suppose, that Yeats is a very considerable poet: he has the rarest of all poetic gifts, the knack of telling you something that is really complex and profound in words that are as simple as a child might use, yet, when written by him, seem to glow with a chromatic aura of beauty. 'Fiona Macleod' (William Sharp, 1855-1905) with his rather tenuous Neo-Celticism was in the Irish movement from the Scottish side, so to say, and the extraordinary success which attended the posthumous production of his poetic drama The

Immortal Hour may be attributed either to the number of those prepared to suffer boredom for the sake of being thought persons of taste or to the genuine enthusiasm which Celtic mysticism awakens in the hearts of bourgeois British playgoers.

But, returning to the 'nineties, the real phenomenon of that time was a poet of an utterly different stamp, who spoke in the rough and racy jargon of the barrack-room. No one that read Barrack Room Ballads when they first appeared in the Scots (afterwards National) Observer will forget the sensation of listening to a new and individual voice in literature. How greedily Departmental Ditties, printed several years before, were then absorbed by all who had not been in at the very beginning of the career of that most remarkable figure in our modern literary history—Rudyard Kipling!

Rudyard Kipling

It is always the fate of one who has a new way of saying anything to be criticized for breaking with the old and condemned for most of the qualities that make him eventually admired. Rudyard Kipling (b. 1865) was no exception to this rule, except that his ascendancy was quickly established and only those to whom his political outlook was Jingoist remained to scoff. He is of the company of the great both in poetry and in prose, and the fact that certain of his measures have a lilt which any blockhead can easily imitate—

I have wrenched it free from the halliard to
hang for a wisp on the Horn;
I have chased it north to the Lizard—rib-
boned and rolled and torn;

or

An' now it's bloody murder, but all the
while they 'ear
'Is voice, the same as barrick drill, a-shep-
herding the rear,—

ought not to detract from the power and rugged beauty with which he can invest them. No poet of our time has written anything finer than Recessional; genuine patriotism has found no grander voice; and I am persuaded that even the 'little Englanders' could not give patient ear to Kipling unmoved by his passionate admiration of the greatest civilizing force the world has known—the British Empire.

There is about all Kipling's most typical poetry something that recalls the Hebrew prophets in their solemn invocation of the Deity; his attitude not only in Recessional but in numerous other poems, even in that lovely hymn, The Children's Song, recalls the priest-prophet of old, standing in the presence of the Holy One of Israel. This I had accepted as a literary attitude, the effect of which could not be gainsaid, but when I read these verses I felt, as I am sure all must feel, the unmistakable appeal of a sincere heart:

If there be good in that I wrought,
Thy Hand compelled it, Master, Thine—
Where I have failed to meet Thy Thought
I know, through Thee, the blame was mine.

One instant's toil to Thee denied,
Stands all Eternity's offense.
Of that I did with Thee to guide
To thee, through Thee, be excellence.

The depths and dream of my desire,
The bitter paths wherein I stray—
Thou knowest, Who hast made the Fire,
Thou knowest, Who hast made the Clay.

Yet another figure of the 'nineties was with us until the other day in the gracious personality of that true poet and rare critic Alice Meynell (1850-1922), the foremost woman poet of our time; and it was in 1890, also, that that sweet singer, Katharine Tynan, happily still with us, first made her serious appeal as a poet with Ballads and Lyrics; Dora Sigerson, too, is a wistful memory of the ending of the nineteenth and the opening years of the present century. She had real vision and imagination, and particularly in the ballad measure she could give an appealing sense of artlessness to what was consummate art.

Thomas Hardy and The Dynasts

The other names identified with poetry in the nineteenth century that might still engage us are many, but only one that stands for greatness will detain us: that of the last Victorian master of fiction—Thomas Hardy, O.M. (b. 1840). The amazing thing about him is that, though born in the first half of last century, he narrowly escapes being classified with the poets of the present, his first book of verse, Wessex Poems, appearing in 1898, although it is true that it contained the slender harvest of some thirty years of occasional verse-writing. There is a personal note in the last poem of the collection:

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, 'Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!'

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide.

Time is an ironic old rascal, and I am glad to think that, nearly thirty years later than the writing of these verses, their author was still alive and interested in the tragi-comic pageant of life. Yes, and his most notable achievement was to be made in the twentieth century when the poet-novelist had almost reached 'the allotted span'! For he stands as a poet on the epic-drama of The Dynasts, which appeared in three successive parts in the years 1903, 1906 and 1908.

There is no more curious work in modern literature. Great novelist as Hardy is, the serious student of literature who takes up The Dynasts will scarcely regret that when the novelist turned poet—the transition is usually reversed—our poetic drama was so enriched that the loss to fiction was fully counterbalanced. For The Dynasts is something more rare than even a great fictional masterpiece. It is a work so vast in its scale, so complex in character, so original, that many pages would be required to give the uninitiated an inkling of it—and a paragraph or two must be the measure of my space!

It is neither epic nor drama, nor does the hyphenating of these two words quite describe it. It is labeled by its author: 'An Epic-Drama of the War with Napoleon, in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes, the time covered by the action being about ten years.' Clearly this is a drama for enacting only on the stage of the mind, although an abridged version was produced in London in 1914. It is at times nar-

rative, at others dramatic; 'voices' from the unseen world are heard, 'phantom intelligences' discuss the dark, perplexing problems of human destiny; the author is now withdrawn, like one apart watching the play of men, at others he is as intimately interested in the narrative as a novelist in the children of his fancy; and withal the reading of the vast drama scene by scene, in which movement is effected largely by means of 'stage directions' that are really masterly pieces of prose narrative and description, produces in one a sense of the spaciousness of the realms where man's character is evolved.

Despite frequent untuneful lines, despite occasional phrases which suggest that the author has lost the lusty sense of humor we encounter in all his novels, the reader is continuously impressed with the splendid and audacious largeness of the poet's plan, for not even the blank verse which Napoleon has to speak sounds strange or unnatural in this strangely familiar, newly created world of old, historic things.

The first part of The Dynasts was received with misgivings, but as the drama developed and the poet's command of his medium strengthened, critical opinion was conquered, until on its completion Hardy was recognized not only as the foremost novelist of his time but also as a poet who had produced a work that would defy time and circumstance and engage the thoughtful in ages to come when even the best of novels may be forgotten.

Assuredly the century that began with Wordsworth and Byron, with Shelley and Keats, that produced Tennyson and Browning, Matthew Arnold and Swinburne, and went out with the rise of such poets as Watson, Kipling and Hardy was one of the most opulent in our literary history.

It is impossible to look at the poets of to-day in any detail: so numerous are the followers of the Muse become—the Great War stirred up a veritable swarm—and so astonishingly good is the verse that is written by many whose names are quite unknown to the larger reading public, that it would be invidious to attempt even a glimpse of them, as many deserving of notice would have to be ignored. One would have liked to speak of the promise of a Rupert Brooke or even—a lesser name—an Elroy Flecker; but I must content myself with the avowal that I find plenty to admire in poets so variously gifted as John Masefield, Alfred Noyes, John Drinkwater, Walter de la Mare and W. H. Davies.

If there are no poetic giants in these days, there are many of manly stature and the Muse is not indifferently served. Besides, heaven knows, there is already as much good poetry in existence as any man can hope to cope with in the too brief years that nature allots to him here.

X

ENGLISH PROSE IN THE MAKING

1. Some Characteristics of the Early Exponents

THE reader confronted for the first time with even an elementary work on English prose may well ask himself why he should study it. What is the use, for example, of an anthology of English prose? Is it compiled in order that the reader may be enabled to form some idea of the origin of the language and its development at various periods of its history? Yes; and no. Philological considerations enter very slightly into such a work. There is as much fascination attached to the study of the growth of a language as there is to the pageant of history itself. But this is not all.

As Churton Collins says, 'It is the privilege of Art and Letters to bring us into contact with the aristocrats of our race. It is the misfortune of philology that, in its lower walks at least, it necessitates familiarity with a class of writers who probably rank lowest in the scale of human intelligence.'

WE STUDY classic prose, in short, not only for the light it sheds upon the time in which it was written; not merely because of its intrinsic value as a means of knowledge; but also because of its 'style.' And for yet another reason—which some would place above all the rest—because behind the style is a living man. Herein, for the true student of literature, as distinct from the 'competition-wallah,' is the subtle charm of our standard literature, and especially of our standard prose. We learn, soon or later, that the eloquence, the rhythm, the color, the tone, the deft management of the period, have all been modeled by the great masters of English prose upon the works of men who wrote in Greece and Rome long ago. But that is no cause for withholding our tribute of admiration. What is allowed to the plastic artist, the painter, the sculptor, the architect, cannot be denied the artist in words.

When we approach a work of living prose we may be certain that behind it is a great man, and something more, something of the character of the best of that man's contemporaries, of the spirit of the age in which he lived. Genius is the same in all ages, and writers in the rudest times, as well as those in the more polished and enlightened eras, reached those limits beyond which the faculties of the human mind seem unable to penetrate. Thus, the elements of thought are only conditioned, not governed, by the outward circumstances of their expression.

VERSE has been, certainly in English, far ahead of prose in the matter of settled law. Hence, as Sir Henry Craik has aptly indicated, we may imitate the rhythm of Spenser without seeming old-fashioned. No cadence in modern verse is more pure, more perfect, than that of Shakespeare's sonnets and lyrics; no later blank verse approaches the supreme art of Milton. But the

prose of the masters and makers of it is personal in a double sense; it cannot be imitated. Newman has stated the case admirably:

> While the many use language as they find it, the man of genius uses it indeed, but subjects it withal to his own purposes, and molds it according to his own peculiarities. The throng and succession of ideas, thoughts, feelings, imaginations, aspirations, which pass within him; the abstractions, the juxtapositions, the comparisons, the discriminations, the conceptions, which are so original in him; his views of external things, his judgments upon life, manners and history; the exercises of his wit, of his humor, of his depth, of his sagacity—all these innumerable and incessant creations, the very pulsation and throbbing of his intellect, does he image forth. To all does he give utterance in a corresponding language which is as multiform as this inward mental action itself and analogous to it, the faithful expression of his intense personality, attending on his own inward world of thought as its very shadow; so that we might as well say that one man's shadow is another's as that the style of a really gifted mind can belong to any but himself. It follows him about as a shadow. His thought and feeling are personal, and so his language is personal.

In what follows I purpose only (1) to indicate where the reader must look for the leading examples of English prose, and (2) to point out, as briefly as may be, the chief stages of our prose development.

The chief characteristic of Anglo-Saxon prose reflects a distinguishing trait of the English character: practicality. The language was direct and simple. Another point to be borne in mind is that right up to and including the sixteenth century, our prose-writers, beginning with the Venerable Bede (673-735) were in the main translators. Their works were for the most part educational, religious and historical, as is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Alfred the Great (849-901) was a translator himself and the cause of translation in others.

Alfred sought to give his people peace, and he labored manfully to effect their intellectual improvement. He desired that at least every free-born youth who possessed the means should 'abide at his book till he could well understand English writing.' He sought to spread wide the learning which was then the monopoly of the clergy. Ballads and poems England already possessed. Prose she had none. He aimed at the rendering of all useful books 'into the language which we all understand.'

This language has been described as one of the finest and purest forms of Teutonic speech. Into it Alfred translated, or rather paraphrased, in an epitomized form, the Universal History of Orosius, a Spanish author of the fifth century; the Historia Ecclesiastica of the Northumbrian monk Bede; the Pastoral Rule of Pope Gregory; and the De Consolatione Philosophiae (on the consolation afforded by philosophy) of Boethius, a Roman philosopher of the sixth century.

Anglo-Saxon was distinct from modern English in the character of its lettering as well as in other ways, but some idea of the English that Alfred wrote may be gleaned from the following example, which is given with modernized lettering, from the De Consolatione:

> Hit gelamp gio, thætte an hearpere wæs on thære theode the Thracia hatte. Thæs nama wæs Orpheus. He hæfde an swithe ænlic wif; sio wæs haten Eurydice.

This passage has been rendered thus:

> It happened formerly that there was a harper in the country called Thrace. His name was Orpheus. He had an excellent wife called Eurydice.

The work from which these lines are quoted was also translated by Chaucer. Its theme is the mutability of all earthly things save virtue; it belongs to that small order of immortal works that have been written in prison.

To the development of the Anglo-Saxon a period was placed by the Danish and Norman conquests.

SOME authorities object entirely to the term Anglo-Saxon as descriptive of the language and literature of England before the Norman conquest and for a century after that epochal event, preferring to classify the period as Oldest English or Old English; but we may follow the conventional classification, which makes Early English succeed Anglo-Saxon and cover the years 1150-1350, as during the first of these two centuries the inflections were broken up, and in the second the language was extended by the introduction of numerous French words. Middle English, of which Chaucer was the great literary artificer, flourished from 1350 to 1550, since when our language and literature are classed as Modern English.

As was the case with the Anglo-Saxon and Early English writers, their successors of the fourteenth century concerned themselves chiefly with the work of translation. Several of Chaucer's works are of this nature: two of the famous Canterbury Tales, The Tale of Melibeus, borrowed from Albertano of Brescia, and The Persones (Parson's) Tale, a sermon derived from Frère Lorens; the unfinished Treatise on the Astrolabe, and his Boethius.

A few passages from the last named will serve to indicate how the language had grown since Alfred's time.

> At the laste the lord and juge of sowles was moeved to misericordes [mercy] and cryde, 'we ben overcomen,' quod he; 'give we to Orpheus his wyf to bere him companye; he hath wel y-bought by his song and his ditee but we wol putte a lawe in this, and covenaunt in the yifte: that is to seyn, that, till he be out of helle, yif, he loke behinde him, that his wyf shal comen ayein unto us.'

Though the Norman conquest introduced Norman-French as the language of the court and the cultured classes, while Latin remained the language of the clergy and that in which many learned works were written, the native dialects merged into one another, and ultimately into the Middle English tongue. That the French influence was by no means a negligible quantity is evident if we examine the work of Chaucer alone; but the native English as successfully resisted the Norman-French invasion as our native drama in the sixteenth century rose superior to the dictates of the 'University scribes,' who sought to shackle it with the dead weight of classical tradition.

Following upon the death of Chaucer, however, the French wars and the Wars of the Roses once more set back the clock of English literary activity, and there is but little of interest to chronicle, save the introduction of the printing press by William Caxton (c. 1422-91), till we reach the age of the Tudors, whence may be dated the beginning of Modern English.

One example of the manner in which the English appropriated French literature is to be found in the anonymous translation of The Voyage and Travels of Sir John

Maundeville by Jehan de Bourgogne, a work which is still read on account of its naïve descriptions of the marvelous. But especially interesting is it to ponder the influence of the romantic legends of the Norman poets known as the trouvères. These deal with Alexander the Great, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Charlemagne, and the Crusaders.

Malory's Morte d'Arthur

THE origin of the Arthurian legends is Celtic—partly Welsh and partly Breton. La Morte d' Arthur of Sir Thomas Malory (fl. 1470) so delighted the heart of Sir Walter Scott that he described it as being indisputably the best prose romance of which the English language can boast. Many modern writers, Tennyson among them, are the eternal debtors of Malory, whose work, as printed with all the affection of a sympathetic craftsman by William Caxton, played no small part in the making of Elizabethan prose. A favorite passage is Malory's account of the passing of Arthur. How English it is, apart from the spelling, may be seen from the following modernized extract:

> And when they were at the water-side, even fast by the bank hoved a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a Queen, and they all had black hoods, and they all wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur. 'Now put me into the barge,' said the king; and so they did softly. And there received him three Queens, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head, and then that Queen said, 'Ah, dear brother! why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught overmuch cold.' . . . Then Sir Bedivere cried, 'Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies?' 'Comfort thyself,' said the King, 'and do as well as thou mayst; for in me is no trust to trust in. For I will go into the Vale of Avillon, to hea me of my grievous wound. And if thou hea never more of me, pray for my soul.'

Malory's monumental work, following that of Chaucer and Gower, gave to English literature something of the glamour of chivalry and romance; and this enriching influence was followed in its turn by the translation of Froissart's Chronicles by Lord Berners (1467-1533).

Froissart the Chronicler

JEAN FROISSART, like one of his own heroes, set out on his travels in quest of adventure. He visited England twice, in the reign of Edward III and of Richard II; he was the guest of David Bruce in Scotland; he journeyed in Aquitaine with the Black Prince, and was in Italy, possibly with Chaucer and Petrarch. Ten years before his death he settled in Flanders. His Chronicles, drawn from his travels and experiences, are among the most delightful things in European literature.

The student of fifteenth century England should not omit to pay some attention to the Paston Letters (1422-1509). These documents, which are about 1,000 in number and were not printed till the second half of the eighteenth century, were written during the reigns of Henry V, Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII, by members of an East Anglian family. They throw a flood of light on the social customs of fifteenth century England, and they also indicate that the civil strife which then divided families did not crush out the desire for learning.

Sir Thomas More (1480-1535) was a man whose thoughts were far in advance of his time. His theories

were essentially those of a humane man and a philosopher; his practice, as chancellor of Henry VIII, was curiously at variance with his avowed sympathies. He was beheaded for refusing to acknowledge any other head of the Church than the Pope.

His best-known work, the Utopia, a political satire, was written in Latin, and translated into English by Ralph Robynson thirty-five years later. It deals with the social defects of English life and pictures an imaginary island where communism is the rule, education common to the sexes and religious toleration general. The generally accepted derivation of the title is from two Greek words meaning 'Nowhere.'

More also wrote a number of works in English, of which the most notable is his Historie of Edward the Fifth and Richard the Third. This is the first history with any pretension to a literary character.

As our Anglo-Saxon forbears fought against the influence of Norman-French, so Roger Ascham (1515-68), the tutor of Queen Elizabeth, reflected the native English spirit in his strong masculine prose and his antagonism to the 'Italianate Englishman,' who modeled his conduct and his studies on what he or others brought back from Italy in those early days of Continental intercourse and travel.

Ascham was devoted to the old English pastime of archery, and wrote a defence of it in English—Toxophilus—which he dedicated to Henry VIII, adding an address to the gentlemen and yeomen of England in which occurs a passage that forms at once an apology for and a defense of his native tongue:

> As for the Latin or Greek tongue, everything is so excellently done in them that none can do better; in the English tongue, on the contrary, everything is in a manner so meanly, both for the matter and handling, that no man can do worse. He that will write well in any tongue must follow this counsel of Aristotle, to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do.

There are several important works on education which belong to the sixteenth century, but Ascham's Scholemaster is the first in point of time, and contains not a little advice the value of which is of a permanent character. One of the truths that he urges is being propagated in our own day with all the energy of our twentieth century reformers: namely, the need of awakening in the mind of the pupil an interest in his work.

Henry VIII, who encouraged Ascham, must have it placed to his credit also that he gave similar aid to Sir Thomas Elyot (c. 1490-1546), who wrote on behalf of good government, and translated Plutarch On the Education of Children.

XI

ENGLISH PROSE IN THE MAKING

2. *Influence of the Bible—The Philosophers and Early Essayists*

As POETRY, in a chronological sense, takes precedence of prose in the history of English literature, so religious works precede secular in influencing the growth of English prose. The services of the early translators of the Bible cannot be over-estimated. First among these translators was John Wycliffe (c. 1325-84).

It is important to remember, however, that neither the Wycliffe Bible nor any of its successors was the work of one man, although Wycliffe's Bible, Tyndale's Bible and Coverdale's Bible are common terms. According to Father Gasquet, Wycliffe's Bible was the work of the English bishops. This contention remains but a theory.

Before Wycliffe's time only portions of the Scriptures had been translated into English. Wycliffe—to follow the accepted story—set himself, a few years before his death, to the task of producing the first complete English Bible. By 1382 he had completed the New Testament. His friend Nicholas, of Hereford, translated most of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha. John Purvey, a pupil of the Reformer, revised the work four years after Wycliffe's death. The translation (or paraphrase) which was made from the Vulgate (or Latin version) was originally issued in manuscript form; of this 150 copies are still extant. Written as it was for the common people, it is remarkable to find with how much ease Wycliffe's Bible can still be read. Wycliffe was a Yorkshireman, and we are told that when, some years ago, several long passages were read to a congregation in his native county, not only were they understood by the hearers, but almost every word was found to be still in use.

Wycliffe's Successors

THE work of Wycliffe was carried on and improved by William Tyndale (c. 1492-1536), a pupil of Erasmus, the great co-worker with Martin Luther in the Reformation. When Erasmus published his Latin version of the New Testament in 1516, he declared his wish that even the weakest woman should read the Gospels.

> I long (he said), that the husbandman should sing portions of them as he follows the plow, that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveler should beguile with their stories the tedium of his journey.

Tyndale declared: 'If God spare me I will one day make the boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures than the Pope of Rome.' Tyndale, who was a good Greek scholar, studied Hebrew for the purpose in hand, and while consulting the Vulgate went back to the originals as the basis of his version. He was helped in his task by a fugitive friar named Roy and others. It was Tyndale's Bible which, revised by Miles Coverdale (c. 1488-1569)—the first complete printed English

Bible—and edited and re-edited as Cromwell's Bible (1539), and Cranmer's Bible, or The Great Bible (1540), was set up in every parish church in England, in some cases being chained to the lecterns, or reading desks.

The Bible, to quote Stopford Brooke, 'got north into Scotland and made the Lowland English more like the London English. It passed over to the Protestant settlements in Ireland.' After its revision in 1611—there had been printed meanwhile the Genevan Bible, a work handier in size than its predecessors, in Roman type and with the text divided into verses—it went as the Authorized Version with the Puritan fathers to New England and fixed the standard of English in America.

Many millions of people now speak the English of Tyndale's Bible, and there is no book which has had, through the authorized version, so great an influence on the style of English literature and the standard of English prose.

In Edward VI's reign Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) edited the English Prayer Book (1549-52). 'Its English,' Stopford Brooke notes, 'is a good deal mixed with Latin words, and its style is sometimes weak or heavy, but on the whole it is a fine example of stately prose. It also steadied our speech.'

To examine the influence of the Bible on English writers from Shakespeare's time to Swinburne's would be to specify nearly all the best work of our greatest writers. Scarce any writer of note but has either acknowledged its inspiration or shown trace of it in his work. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the need—apart from all religious considerations—of Bible-reading on the lines laid down by Richard Moulton in that admirable work, The Literary Study of the Bible.

Revival in Philosophic Thought

THE development of English rhetoric and English philosophic thought between the close of the fifteenth and the earlier part of the eighteenth century may be studied in the writings of Hugh Latimer (c. 1485-1555), Bishop of Worcester, whose sermons well sustain the homely and direct character of his native tongue; John Knox (c. 1514-72), the Scottish reformer and historian; John Foxe (1516-87), whose Acts and Monuments, commonly known as Foxe's Book of Martyrs, 'gave to the people of all over England a book which, by its simple style, the ease of its story-telling, and its popular charm, made the very peasants who heard it read feel what is meant by literature'; Richard Hooker (1553-1600), author of The Laws of Ecclesiasticall Politie, a great theologian whose memory is enshrined in 'Walton's Lives,' and whose character is fitly indicated on his monument at Bishopsbourne, Kent, as 'judicious'; Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), Bishop of Down and Connor, the author of Holy Living and Holy Dying, and a voluminous writer who, in the words of his friend Bishop Rust, of Dromore, 'had the good humor of a gentleman, the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, the wisdom of a chancellor, the reason of an angel, and the piety of a saint'; Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), a philosopher who applied the principles of geometry to the judg-

ment of human conduct, and who, in his Leviathan, De Cive, Human Nature and other works, showed himself to be 'the first of all our prose writers whose style may be said to be uniform and correct and adapted carefully to the subjects on which he wrote'; Thomas Fuller (1608-61), the style of whose best-known work, Worthies of England, shows admirable narrative faculty, 'with a nervous brevity and point almost new to English, and a homely directness ever shrewd and never vulgar'; Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), a Norwich physician and author of Religio Medici, than whom, according to Sir Edmund Gosse, 'among English prose writers of the highest merit there are few who have more consciously, more successfully, aimed at the translation of temperament by style,' and who 'unquestionably tasted the divine pleasure of writing for its own sake'; John Bunyan (1628-88), author of The Pilgrim's Progress, a work as famous as Robinson Crusoe, as fascinating in a narrative sense, and of perennial influence on the religious thought of the young of all nations; Richard Baxter (1615-91), whose life may be studied as an example of self-help by the side of Bunyan's, and the style of whose many writings 'is one of the finest specimens of direct masculine English, and a model for all who wish to talk to people instead of at them'; John Locke (1632-1704), author of Two Treatises of Government, An Essay Concerning Toleration, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, a work especially to be commended to students on The Conduct of the Understanding, and a philosopher who is regarded as 'the unquestioned founder of the analytic philosophy of mind'; and Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), author of a History of the Reformation and a History of My Own Times.

REGARDED in this brief summary, the works of these theological and philosophical writers may appear uninviting; but no reader can neglect them all without missing a fruitful part of the rich field of our national literature. Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying, Hobbes's Leviathan, Fuller's Worthies, Browne's Religio Medici, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and The Holy War, Locke's Human Understanding—these especially are works of which every one who aspires to a sound appreciation of our literature should have some firsthand knowledge; and just as in early youth we read Bunyan for the sheer pleasure of his narrative, so in manhood we may read the other religious and philosophical writers for their charm of style, their wisdom and their humanity.

Both Spenser and Shakespeare wrote prose. Spenser's A View of the Present State of Ireland is written in a most pleasing style. Shakespeare's prose has been the theme of many commentators; see, for example, the admirable little manual of George L. Craik. The student is recommended to study the 'men in buckram' section of Henry IV. The Arcadia and the Defense of Poesie of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) are also to be studied in this connection.

The first popular English history in the language is The History of England to the Time of Edward III of the poet Samuel Daniel

(1562-1619). After Daniel's work may be considered the History of the World, written in the Tower by Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), and to be read for its human and personal interest more than on account of its intrinsic value as history. Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon (1608-74), friend of poets like Jonson and Waller, wrote a History of the Rebellion. This was modeled on the style of the Roman historian, Tacitus, and is notable for its biographical value.

The Life of Colonel Hutchinson, the Puritan, by his widow, Lucy Hutchinson (b. 1620), is one of the most delightful of biographies with a historical character for subject, and, taken up as a study, will be read through for the charm and simplicity of the narrative.

To the domain of history and antiquarian study belong the writings of William Camden (1551-1623), John Selden (1584-1654), John Stow (c. 1525-1605), Raphael Holinshed (c. 1520-80), and William Harrison (1534-93). Mention must also be made here of the invaluable Diaries of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) and John Evelyn (1620-1706), the Letters and other writings of James Howell (1593-1666), and the exquisite epistles of Dorothy Osborne (1627-95), later the wife of Sir William Temple, diplomatist and essayist.

Essayists and Pamphleteers

THE meaning of the word essay is 'a testing.' As we understand it to-day, an essay is a valuation of a subject, usually of a literary or social nature, from the standpoint of the writer. The Essays of Montaigne, the translation of which by John Florio (c. 1553-1625) preserves for us a vigorous and perennially delightful example of Elizabethan prose, hardly come within the limits of the essay as we understand the word. Shakespeare was evidently familiar with Florio.

The Elizabethan and Jacobean pamphlets were, in a sense, essays; but we see in them perhaps more distinctly the beginning of the modern newspaper, because they were published for controversial purposes. They form in themselves a branch of literary historical study.

A number of the writers of these pamphlets also wrote tales, so that while the Euphues of Lyly is generally regarded as the earliest English novel, it is not quite isolated as an example of English prose narrative. Even if Sidney's Arcadia be left out of the question, there are the tales as well as the pamphlets of Robert Greene; Thomas Lodge (c. 1558-1625), whose Rosalynde inspired Shakespeare's As You Like It; and Thomas Nash (1567-1601), whose Jack Wilton provided the prototype of Falstaff.

Londoners who desire to learn how their predecessors lived three centuries ago will find a world of entertainment in The Gull's Hornbook of Thomas Dekker (c. 1570-1637). The most interesting and permanent of all the pamphlets is the Areopagitica, a trenchant plea for the liberty of the printing press, by John Milton (1608-74).

The first of the real English essayists is Francis Bacon (1561-1626). The student can have no better guide than is provided in the fiftieth of Bacon's Essays—the one entitled Of Studies. Part of this may be quoted as exemplifying

Bacon's method and perspicuity of style:

Studies serve for Delight, for Ornament, and for Ability. Their Chiefe Use for Delight, is in Privatenesse and Retiring; For Ornament, is in Discourse; And for Ability, is in the Judgement and Disposition of Businesse. For Expert Men can Execute, and perhaps Judge of particulars, one by one. But the generall Counsels, and the Plots, and Marshalling of Affaires, come best from those that are *Learned*. To spend too much Time in *Studies*, is Sloth; To use them too much for Ornament, is Affectation; to make Iudgement wholly by their Rules, is the Humour of a Scholler. They perfect Nature, and are perfected by Experience: For Naturall Abilities are like Naturall Plants, that need Proyning by *Study:* And *Studies* themselves, doe give forth Directions too much at Large, except they be bounded in by experience. . . . Reade not to Contradict and Confute; Nor to Beleeve and Take for granted; Nor to find Talke and Discourse; But to Weigh and Consider. Some Bookes are to be Tasted, others to be Swallowed, and Some Few to be Chewed and Digested. That is, some *Bookes* are to be read onely in Parts; Others to be read but not Curiously; And some Few to be read wholly, and with Diligence and Attention. . . . Reading maketh a Full Man; Conference a Ready Man; and Writing an Exact Man. . . . *Histories* make Men Wise; *Poets* Witty; *The Mathematiks* Subtill; *Naturall Philosophy* deepe; *Morall* Grave; *Logick* and *Rhetorick* Able to Contend.

Of Bacon's Essays Hallam rightly declared that it 'would be derogatory to any educated man to be unacquainted with them.'

Jonson's Commonplace Book

Next to them I would place the Discoveries of Ben Jonson, which Swinburne prefers before Bacon's Essays and Professor Saintsbury describes as coming 'in character as in time midway between Hooker and Dryden.' Jonson's Discoveries have been too long neglected. A recent writer acutely says:

A comparison of the vocabulary of Sir Philip Sidney's Defense of Poesie with that of the Discoveries, written nearly sixty years later, will disclose a far larger number of words demanding explanation in the latter. On the other hand, a like comparison between the two works with reference to the structure of sentence and paragraph will exhibit a form and symmetry, a sense of order and proportion, and a consciousness of the demands of literary presentment in the Discoveries for which we may look in vain in the somewhat loosely-strung periods and formless paragraphs of the Defense. This contrast, as Professor Schelling, the first adequately to edit the Discoveries, points out, becomes the more startling when we remember that Sidney's work is characterized by a logical sequence and continuity of thought, and that Jonson's is more or less of a commonplace book containing, as he himself says, 'discoveries' made upon men and matters, as they flowed out of his daily readings, or had their reflux to his peculiar notions of the times.

After Jonson, considered as an essayist, come Abraham Cowley (1618-67), whose language is at once simple and graceful, and Sir William Temple (1628-99), distinctly a predecessor of Addison.

It is difficult to classify the Anatomy of Melancholy of Robert Burton (1577-1640), but Dr. Johnson greatly admired it, and it is full of quaint and curious learning. The Microcosmographie of John Earle, Bishop of Salisbury (c. 1601-65), is at once of social and philosophical value, but stands, like the Anatomy, by itself.

Three other books that demand notice are the Lives, and The Compleat Angler of Izaak Walton (1593-1683), the first a gem of literary biography, the second one of the first of 'country books; and the Autobiography of Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648), which Swinburne placed among 'the hundred best books.'

The place of honor as the first of English critics belongs to John Dryden. In the words of Lowell, Dryden, more than any other single

writer, contributed, as well by precept as example, to free English prose from 'the cloister of pedantry' and to give it 'suppleness of movement and the easier air of the modern world.' The introductions to Dryden's works are specially worthy of study. The famous Essay on Dramatic Poesy has already been commended. Nearly the whole of Dryden's criticisms have been edited by W. P. Ker, Essays of Dryden.

XII

FOUR MASTERS OF XVIII CENTURY PROSE

Short Studies of Defoe, Swift, Steele and Addison

WHAT the prose of the eighteenth century may lack in color and warmth as compared with the prose of the seventeenth century it gains in general smoothness, perspicuity and correctness. It set the standard of the prose of the present day. It has been styled the 'aristocratic'; and this description is in the main a true one. But at the period with which we are now to deal the 'aristocracy of intellect' was to a great extent employed to the furtherance of ends more practical, or at least more partisan, than literary. These ends were in part political, in part ecclesiastical, in part ethical. Thus the literature of the time must be studied in connection with its political, religious and social history. Journalism, which, as has been shown, had its rise in the controversial pamphlets of Elizabethan and Jacobean times, received in the eighteenth century a new and forceful impetus, and the novel assumed a more definite shape.

To Daniel Defoe (c. 1659-1731) must be assigned the distinction of being the first of English journalists, and forerunner of Richardson and Fielding. To-day, save as the author of two or three books, one of them of world-wide repute, Defoe is half forgotten. In his lifetime, however, he played many parts, and over 250 distinct works bear his name.

Of the many pamphlets that flowed from Defoe's busy pen the most remarkable, perhaps, is that bearing the title The Shortest Way with the Dissenters, a Whig production, the plausible realism rather than the satire of which, if it was really intended as a satire, secured its author a cell in Newgate and a place in the pillory.

As the author of Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack and other works of a kindred character, Defoe stood sponsor to the novel of crime. In 1704 he started a Review which was the forerunner of The Tatler, The Spectator, and The Rambler. His Robinson Crusoe is as immortal as The Pilgrim's Progress or Don Quixote. Like these two works, and one other to be mentioned almost immediately, Robinson Crusoe may be read by the young on account of the narrative alone, and by older readers as an allegory.

Robinson Crusoe and the fictitious Journal of the Plague Year are

enough to secure for Defoe pre-eminence as a master of the art of literary illusion. 'To him,' says Sir Leslie Stephen, 'was given a tongue to which no one could listen without believing every word he uttered.' He had defects. He was curiously heedless of chronology; he was weak, on the whole, as a delineator of character. But he was an essential realist; and if his readers would study the didactic side of his writings more, and the Serious Reflections of his inimitable hero in particular, the character of Defoe himself would escape in the future some at least of the aspersions that are still cast upon it.

With Defoe, says Sir Walter Raleigh, the art of fiction came to be the art of grave imperturbable lying, in which art the best instructor is the truth. And it was to no reputed masters of romance, but to recorders of fact, biographers, writers of voyages and travels, historians and analists, that Defoe served his apprenticeship.

No one need be counseled to read Robinson Crusoe. The reading of this immortal fiction is in the birthright of every Englishman, though not so many are familiar with its sequel, which, not lacking in interest, is yet greatly inferior to the first and ever popular story. Moll Flanders ought certainly to be read and The Journal of the Plague Year, but I would also urge the claims of Colonel Jack which, despite many inequalities, contains some of Defoe's most brilliant writing.

As a pamphleteer Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) affords an interesting companion study to Daniel Defoe. Swift was, however, by far the greater man. His power as a pamphleteer may be gauged by a consideration of the famous Letters, signed M. B., Drapier, and familiarly known as the Drapier Letters. In these compositions he attacked the iniquitous 'job' by which, in 1722, a certain William Wood, a hardwareman and a bankrupt, was granted a patent for supplying Ireland with copper coin. The Drapier Letters defeated this project, and though it is often said that the ensuing popularity of their author among the Irish people was unpalatable to him, his bequests to Irish charities seem to negative the idea that he had no sympathy for the people amid whom his lot was for a long time cast.

The Tale of a Tub is the most comprehensive example of all that is characteristic of his prose style. As sailors were supposed to throw out a tub to a whale to prevent it from colliding with their ship, so Swift thought by his Tale to afford such temporary diversion to the wits and free-thinkers of his day as to prevent them from injuring the State by the propagation of wild theories respecting religion and politics. But his satiric genius, his fiery imagination, and his keen eye for 'the seamy side' imparted to The Tale of a Tub qualities that disguised his avowed object and at the very outset placed an insurmountable obstacle in the way of his ecclesiastical preferment.

The Battle of the Books, which, with The Tale of a Tub, helped to make Swift famous, takes a witty part in a controversy that was raging over the respective claims of modern and ancient literature.

Something like one-fourth of Swift's most remarkable work, Gulliver's Travels, and a great part of his other writings are debarred from general circulation on account of their coarseness. But of Gulliver's

Travels enough is so delightful as romance as to rival both Robinson Crusoe and The Pilgrim's Progress in the estimation of young and old. Important as a satire, Gulliver's Travels has a distinct value as autobiography.

While Defoe excelled in the art of making fiction read like fact, Swift, with the finest skill, cultivated a vigorous simplicity and homeliness of style the accumulated effect of which is so formidable as to afford a permanent object-lesson in the art that conceals art where the writing of nervous English prose is concerned. And with all its carefully calculated simplicity the English of Jonathan Swift is never pedestrian or devoid of sparkle or variety.

Students of Swift's life will find in his work much that reflects the shadows of his unhappy experiences. They will be especially indebted to the Journal to Stella (Esther Johnson, whose tutor he was) for many valuable pages of autobiography and for many sidelights on the manners of the time.

Influence of Addison and Steele

Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729), the friend and schoolfellow of Joseph Addison (1672-1719), was, like Swift, born in Ireland; but in this fact lies the sole resemblance between the saturnine Dean of St. Patrick's and the genial 'scallywag' who originated The Tatler, wrote part of The Spectator, founded The Guardian and other ephemeral periodicals, and worshiped Addison as a hero.

In 1709, Steele started The Tatler anonymously. It was a small sheet, sold for a penny, appearing three times a week, and designed to expose 'the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behavior.' Part of The Tatler was devoted to news.

When his pen-name of Isaac Bickerstaff, which he borrowed from a diverting pamphlet by Swift, became useless as a disguise, Steele founded The Spectator. The Tatler extended to 271 numbers, of which Steele wrote 188; his friend Addison contributed 42, and they were jointly responsible for 36. The Spectator, which was published daily, ran to 635 numbers, of which Addison wrote 274 and Steele 240.

The wholesome effect of these publications on the manners and morals of the eighteenth century can hardly be exaggerated. Both the style of writing and the tone of conversation were improved as a result of their influence. It is generally conceded that while Addison's style is the more finished, Steele's is more marked by liveliness of invention. Addison usually wrote at leisure, Steele often in a 'white heat.' The papers took the form sometimes of moral and critical discourses, sometimes of short stories of domestic life, in the writing of which Steele excelled.

The plan of The Spectator was laid at a club, and in the second number, which was written by Steele, we are given the first sketches of the members. It is a remarkable testimony to the skill of Steele's work that the characters stand out so clearly before us. The immortal baronet, Sir Roger de Coverley, is understood to be Addison's invention.

Not the least of Addison's services to literature was the attention he

gave in The Spectator to Milton. These papers should be studied by all who desire to appreciate the style and value of literary criticism in Addison's time. On the whole, we read Addison to-day not so much for the value of what he has to say as for the way in which he says it.

Concerning the Style of Addison

ONE of the most noteworthy of Addison's contributions to The Spectator is an allegory, The Vision of Mirza, which the writer professes to have translated from an Oriental manuscript. It tells of one who went up to the high hills of Bagdad to pray. There he met the Genius of a certain rock who opened his eyes to the vision of a great valley with a prodigious tide flowing through it. The valley is the Vale of Misery, the tide part of the great Tide of Eternity. In the midst is a Bridge—Human Life—over which multitudes are passing, and which, like the valley, is shrouded at both ends by darkness. The fairway is studded with trap doors through which passengers fall into the flowing tide beneath. The narrative proceeds:

> The Genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect. Look no more, said he, on man in the First Stage of his Existence, in his setting out for Eternity; but cast thine eye into that thick Mist into which the Tide bears the several generations of mortals that fall into it.
>
> I directed my sight as I was ordered, and (whether or no the good Genius strengthened it with any supernatural force, or dissipated part of the Mist that was before too thick for the eye to penetrate) I saw the Valley opening at the farther end, and spreading forth into an immense Ocean that had a huge Rock of Adamant running through the midst of it, and dividing it into two equal parts. The Clouds still rested on one half of it, insomuch that I could discover nothing in it; but the other appeared to me a vast Ocean planted with innumerable Islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers, and interwoven with a thousand little Shining Seas that ran among them. I could see Persons dressed in glorious habits, with garlands upon their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the side of fountains, or resting in beds of flowers; and could hear a confused harmony of singing birds, human voices, and musical instruments.
>
> Gladness grew in me upon the discovery of so delightful a scene. I wished for the wings of an eagle that I might fly away to those happy seats; but the Genius told me there was no passage to them, except through the Gates of Death, that I saw opening every moment upon the Bridge.

This is no bad specimen of Addison's style, illustrating its defects as well as its merits. He sacrificed everything to elegance; that is, to rhythm or melody of phrase. The supple movement and cadence of the above, its color, will be at once apparent to the critical reader, but equally will the student detect the inelegance of the second sentence, where 'into that,' 'into which' and 'into it' form six of a sequence of eighteen words.

Addison not only shows a somewhat limited vocabulary at times, but is very apt to repeat unnecessarily his ideas and his images. The allegory from which I have quoted will furnish examples of this, and also of what is not always a fault, though usually stigmatized as such by the partisans of the pompous, rhetorical style of prose—his looseness of construction. In the essay, this has its advantages, and helps to lightness of touch, which is scarcely possible where the writer aims at 'rounded periods' or stately, slow-moving sentences.

But I am inclined to think that Addison has long been something of a fetish with writers on literary style—'Read an essay of Addison's every day' has been the reiteration of all our mentors for generations—and

that in the not very distant future, his chief interest will be historic, his influence less immediate on individual students, though there is no gainsaying its effect on eighteenth century prose.

XIII

PROSE MASTERS OF THE JOHNSONIAN AGE

Johnson, Goldsmith, Gibbons, Burke and Others

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-84), poet, essayist, dramatist, biographer, critic, novelist, lexicographer, and the 'great Cham' of English literature, cannot be considered here in relation to his unrivaled position as a great and wise talker. There is one sure way of realizing Johnson's greatness: by mastering Boswell's biography. As it runs to upwards of six hundred thousand words one gets to know Johnson with some intimacy before the end is reached! If one's leisure will not permit of so considerable a task of reading, an abridgment will serve, and even the condensation which I give in The World's Great Books presents a not inadequate notion of this great man.

As to Johnson's influence on prose literature, Macaulay says:

> His constant practice of padding out a sentence with useless epithets till it became as stiff as the bust of an exquisite; his antithetical forms of expression, constantly employed even where there is no opposition in the ideas expressed; his big words wasted on little things; his harsh inversions, so widely different from those graceful and easy inversions which give variety, spirit and sweetness to the expression of our great old writers—all these peculiarities have been imitated by his admirers, and parodied by his assailants, till the public has become sick of the subject.

Gibbon, the peerless historian of Rome's decadence, lived to write; Johnson, a greater personality but a lesser genius, wrote to live. To-day, Johnson's Lives of the Poets are read more, perhaps, than anything he wrote, but not for the accuracy of their data or their infallibility of judgment. They disclose to us not fine literary instinct so much as fine human sympathy.

His prose tale of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, written to defray the cost of his mother's funeral, has been aptly described as a prose version of his poem on The Vanity of Human Wishes. His great Dictionary was the first of its kind. It stands almost alone as the work of one man. Its value and influence have been great, and even to-day, except for its weakness on the side of etymology, a weakness due to the fact that Johnson's Latin learning was not approached by his knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, it is a standard book of reference. The common reader should have some acquaintance with the Lives of the Poets, and Rasselas he is not likely to miss. For the rest, to know this grand old character in Boswell's biography is, as it was to love Aspasia, 'a liberal education.'

THE friendship between Steele and Addison was not greater than that between Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74). But no greater contrast could be imagined than that afforded by the writings of the two men.

In prose style as in poetic (says Sir Edmund Gosse) it is noticeable that Goldsmith has little in common with his great contemporaries, with their splendid bursts of rhetoric and Latin pomp of speech, but that he goes back to the perfect plainness and simple grace of the Queen Anne men. He aims at a straightforward effect of pathos or of humor, accompanied, as a rule, with a colloquial ease of expression, an apparent absence of all effort or calculation.

Goldsmith's prose approximates to that of Addison. The best examples of it are to be found in A Citizen of the World and The Vicar of Wakefield. The first named work consists of a series of letters supposed to have been written by a Chinaman, resident in London, who was jotting down his experiences for the benefit of his friends in the Far East. The idea was not original, and it has since been imitated by innumerable writers, but the delightful wit and humor of Goldsmith's work have never been excelled. Ninety-eight of the letters appeared in the periodical called The Public Ledger in 1760. Twenty-five more were added when the letters were printed in volume form in 1762. The Vicar of Wakefield, Goldsmith's chief prose work, is discussed in another chapter in its relation to the history of the English novel.

At the period we are now considering, there were many historians, philosophers and essayists whom in an ampler survey one would recall, but I shall limit my observations to three only before lingering a little with the most illustrious of them all.

George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne (1685-1753), was a man whose life apart from his writings is full of interest. As a philosopher he aimed at the overthrow of materialism. He was an acute and original thinker, he possessed a style of great force and elegance, and he is one of our most accomplished writers of dialogue.

Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham (1692-1752), was the author of a work on the Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature, which won for him the name of 'The Bacon of Theology,' and remains a standard work in its own department.

David Hume (1711-76) was distinguished as an essayist, a philosopher and a historian. Possessing wonderful clearness of mental vision, his style is marked by exceptional lucidity. An opponent of popular government, he yet was the first of our writers to recognize the importance of the social and scientific as well as the constitutional and political factors in the making of history. His influence as a philosopher was most appreciable in Scotland and Germany.

On the Greatness of Gibbon

Edward Gibbon was the son of a Hampshire gentleman, and was born at Putney on April 27, 1737. After a preliminary education at Westminster, and fourteen 'unprofitable' months at Magdalen College, Oxford, a whim to join the Roman Church led to his banishment to Lausanne, where he spent five years and acquired a mastery of the French language, formed his taste for literary expression, and settled his religious doubts in a profound scepticism. He served some years in the militia and was a member of parliament. It was in 1764, while

musing amid the ruins of the Capitol of Rome, that the idea of writing The Decline and Fall of the city first started into his mind. The vast work was completed in 1787. A Study in Literature, written in French, and his Miscellaneous Works, published after his death, which include The Memoirs of his Life and Writings, complete the list of his literary labors. He died of dropsy on January 16, 1794.

Here again am I keenly conscious of the limitations of my space, for I would gladly dedicate to the author of The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire a chapter or two of my book. A personal avowal will best serve, perhaps, since no adequate treatment of Gibbon and his work can else be attempted.

If I were asked to name my favorite author out of all the multitudes to whom I have given ear, I should unhesitatingly stand for Gibbon, and on the traditional desert island, marooned from all human intercourse, with the forethought to possess one book, mine would be The Decline and Fall. I have many favorites in poetry, in the drama, in romance, but in the last resource they would all give way to Gibbon. His immortal history is to me the greatest of all books, and I love to perceive the eager enthusiasm that gleams in the eyes of the true Gibbonite when exchanging opinions on its study.

Had one read nothing else but Gibbon's massy history one would still have a claim to be well-read, for its text occupies seven stout and closely printed volumes in the excellent edition edited by Professor J. B. Bury. It is thus a long book, but the unfailing charm of the author's style, his astonishing power of moving forward a multitude of unrelated matters as one dramatic whole, engages the mind of the reader so completely and with a continuous freshness from which all possibility of mental fatigue is remote, that these seven volumes do not seem too many, and the only regret is to see the end of them drawing near.

I have twice read the entire work throughout and how many times I may have re-read it by 'dipping' into it on occasion I cannot guess, but I know that I have only to refer to it for some fact or episode to find myself, an hour or so later, reading on for the sheer pleasure of the fascinating narrative, the occasion of my immediate reference forgotten.

A Marvel of English Literature

THE manner in which Gibbon contrived a literary style that fitted the magnitude of his theme remains one of the marvels of our literature. Much nonsense about its 'pomposity' has been written: it moves with becoming gravity and produces a sense of formality which is impressive without becoming wearisome, and must, by that token, be most ingeniously varied without any appearance of effort at variety. The dominant feeling is that of the author's serenity; there is never a hint of haste; there is a wonderful illusion of continued progress in the narrative even when the essence of it is associated with things that are static. One is impressed with the drama of history: the historian seems by some subtle process of art to have fitted all the episodes of fourteen centuries into one congruous drama of humanity, and the

multitudinous historic characters that tread his vast stage in a pageant beyond the dreams of imaginative poets, though shown in true historic perspective, are all endowed with their dramatic values to the furtherance of the grandiose scheme of the archdirector who summons them back with how wonderful an illusion of life to retread the stage of history.

The Decline and Fall is one of the inevitable items in any list of 'books to read,' and to those who have not read it I would commend the very able epitome—the work of a fine scholar and historian, A. D. Innes—included in my own compilation *The World's Great Books*, which should serve as an introduction to and foretaste of Gibbon's masterpiece. Gibbon's Memoirs is also one of the books that must be read and re-read; it is the best autobiography in English, and I have not heard of a better in any other language.

EDMUND BURKE (1729-97) was a statesman and orator as well as an author. Matthew Arnold has described him as the greatest master of English prose style. Apart from his speeches, Burke's principal prose works are: A Vindication of Natural Society, written to ridicule Bolingbroke's views on religion; A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideals of the Sublime and the Beautiful, and Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790).

Of all the eighteenth century writers, perhaps Burke is the one with whom the student can least afford to palter. De Quincey, who was no hasty eulogist, considered him the supreme writer of his time. Whether that judgment can be entirely justified it is not easy to show, unless I could enter at much greater detail into comparisons between Burke and his contemporaries; but the fact remains that, for much that makes for true citizenship as well as for the literary graces, the student must have recourse to the works of Edmund Burke—his speeches not less than his writings. He helps us marvelously to a clear understanding of the public life of our country, though he may not always convince us. Indeed, his purpose was not to persuade and convince so much as to expound, in the most logical and reasonable manner of which he was capable, his own conclusions; and by our observing the process of his mind, we also acquire, in our own varying capacities, something of the orderly command of ideas and facts of which he was so able an exponent.

We must not be content with knowing Burke in The Sublime and the Beautiful; his Reflections on the Revolution in France, though far less known to the ordinary reader, is even more worthy of study, and his speeches present a rich field whence we may glean knowledge of life and wisdom.

HORACE WALPOLE, fourth Earl of Orford (1717-97), set up a private press, whence he issued A Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors. He also wrote Anecdotes of Painting in England; a tragedy, The Mysterious Mother; and a romance entitled The Castle of Otranto. He left nearly 3,000 letters and a History of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II.

Byron described Walpole as the 'father of the first romance and the last tragedy in our language,' an

absurd piece of hyperbole. Yet Walpole possessed a brilliant style, which may serve to keep his works alive and render his letters readable apart from their historical value.

Adam Smith (1723-90) wrote a book entitled The Wealth of Nations, which originated the study of political economy as a distinct branch of science, inspired a world-wide interest in the sources of wealth and was responsible for the rise of the theory of Free Trade. The Wealth of Nations may still be studied with pleasure and profit. It is an example of the way in which a 'dry' subject may be made to appeal to the popular mind.

XIV

AN AGE OF SCHOLARSHIP

Concluding the Study of Eighteenth Century Prose

ENOUGH has now been said to make it evident that the study of English prose must be pursued on lines different from those on which English poetry is to be studied. Whereas poetry is universally the voice of inspiration, prose in its development departs from the sphere of literature proper. Sometimes retaining, but frequently losing, its claim as literature, it becomes in turn the servant of theology, the handmaid of history, the medium of science, the channel of philosophy—essential alike to 'fundamentalist' and rationalist propaganda, to practical and to theoretical ends.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the reader stands at a parting of the ways. He has to distinguish between what is prose literature and what is not. To a certain extent the answer will depend upon his own bent or humor. But he still has to ascertain why and when and by whom particular books were written. He must learn not only the history of those books, but become acquainted with their relationships—their position in regard to the treatment by others of the subjects with which they deal—before he is able to satisfy himself as to their value. A French book of scientific, theological, historical or philosophical importance is usually of literary importance also; but the rule in France is the exception in England.

TURNING aside for a moment from my historical review of the literature of this period, to take stock of what has been learned so far, I must urge the advisability of some study of the political and social developments of which particular books were either a cause or an outcome. The extent of this study will depend largely upon the reader's desire to confine himself to, or to range beyond, the scope of belles-lettres. By belles-lettres is meant literature that is distinguished by the charm of its style or form apart from its claims as a vehicle of instruction. It has to be borne in mind in this

connection that in the last result prose lives because of its power; not for its prettiness.

Charm and distinction of style are peculiarly characteristic of our eighteenth century prose. The century 'found English prose antiquated, amorphous, without a standard of form; it left it a finished thing, the completed body for which,' as Sir Edmund Gosse says, 'subsequent ages could do no more than weave successive robes of ornament and fashion.' The wider our knowledge of the literature of this period grows, the more clearly shall we see the injustice of the common indictment of the age as one of shams and sentiment. Apart from the influence of Johnson, the age of Berkeley and Wesley and Whitefield cannot truthfully be described as devoid of healthy enthusiasm.

It was the age of our great historians. It was adorned by some of our greatest philosophers and keenest critics. If it questioned the bases of religion, it quickened both faith and good works. English writers of the time influenced Continental thought more, perhaps, than did the writers of any other period of our history. Eighteenth century England, as we have already seen, discovered Shakespeare before the Germans did. It standardized the essay, sowed the seeds of modern nature study and modern chemistry, gave birth to our first great novel, laid the foundations of our periodical literature, stood sponsor to the beginnings of daily journalism, and crushed the system of literary patronage. It was the age also of political economy and of public eloquence.

Chesterfield's Letters to His Son

THE eighteenth century is also rich in its letters. The correspondence of Horace Walpole has been mentioned. Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), was a statesman and wit who is remembered to-day chiefly for his Letters to his Son. Given to the world in 1774 by the son's widow, these letters were described by Johnson as displaying the morals of a courtesan and the manners of a dancing-master. They argue, nevertheless, despite their worldliness, a sincere solicitude for the welfare of the son to whom they were addressed. A great French critic, Sainte-Beuve, has said of them: 'If Horace had a son I imagine that he would address him in this way, and no other.' Here is a representative example of Chesterfield's style:

> Style is the dress of thoughts; and let them be ever so just, if your style is homely, coarse and vulgar, they will appear to as much disadvantage, and be as ill-received as your person, though ever so well proportioned, would, if dressed in rags, dirt and tatters. It is not every understanding that can judge of matter, but every ear can and does judge more or less of style; and were I either to speak or write to the public, I should prefer moderate matter, adorned with all the beauties and elegances of style, to the strongest matter in the world, ill-worded and ill-delivered.
>
> You have with you three or four of the best English authors, Dryden, Atterbury and Swift; read them with the utmost care, and with a particular view to their language, and they may possibly correct that curious infelicity of diction which you acquired at Westminster. . . . Cicero says, very truly, that it is glorious to excel other men in that very article in which men excel brutes, speech. . . . If you have not a graceful address, liberal and engaging manners, a prepossessing air, and a good degree of eloquence in speaking and writing, you will be nobody, but will have the daily mortification of seeing people with not one-tenth of your merit

or knowledge get the start of you and disgrace you both in company and in business.

Much might be written of the argument set forth in the foregoing extract. It is quoted for its own sake, but the passage is given also as an example of writing that is at once clear, simple, forcible and polished. The aim of the writer is apparent throughout. The means he adopts to further that aim are direct. He describes things that are desirable and against them sets the means by which they are to be attained. The chance that ambition may not be sufficiently stimulated is provided for by the closing appeal to fear—the fear of ridicule.

Among other letter-writers of the eighteenth century must be named the poets Cowper and Gray. The letters of Cowper afford, perhaps, the best argument against the effectiveness of ornamental diction when it is confronted with a style that is simple and sincere. Cowper's delightful letters describe in the most natural and most charming of language the surroundings and incidents of the poet's life at Olney and Weston. Gray's letters possess the qualities of the bookman and the scholar, and represent a man who seems never to have permitted himself to appear in 'dressing-gown and slippers.'

The Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) describe in the simple and elegant style of an accomplished if worldly woman her experiences of travel in Europe and the Near East between 1716 and 1718. Though circulated in MS. during her life they were not printed until a year after her death.

The Natural History of Selborne, by Gilbert White (1720-93), marks the beginning of popular nature studies. It is composed of letters to the writer's friends, written, it is believed, at the suggestion of the Hon. Daines Barrington (1727-1800), who was an antiquary and a naturalist as well as a lawyer.

Thomas Pennant (1726-98) was another famous naturalist and a friend of Gilbert White; his British Zoology and History of Quadrupeds were for a long time accepted as classics of their kind, while his Tour in Scotland appreciably stimulated travel in that country.

Among the divines whose work continues to be read may be named William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester (1698-1779), author of a voluminous work entitled The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated. Warburton was a friend of Pope, and a man who, said Dr. Johnson, 'Praised me, sir, when praise was of value to me.' Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, was a pupil and biographer of Warburton.

Dr. George Campbell wrote a valuable Philosophy of Rhetoric, which is remembered where the Lectures of Hugh Blair are rather ungenerously ignored. William Paley (1743-1805) wrote lucidly on the subject of Christian evidence. His Treatise on Natural Theology and View of the Evidences of Christianity are still read; but his Horae Paulinae, a defense of the genuineness of St. Paul's Epistles, is his most important work.

An interesting controversy was raised by the coarse satire of The Fable of the Bees, a work of doggerel verse and prose commentary in which Bernard de

Mandeville (c. 1670-1733) ridiculed humanity with none of the moral fervor, but all the savage contempt of Swift. The butt of Mandeville's personal gibes was Lord Shaftesbury; he was attacked in turn by Bishop Berkeley (already mentioned) and William Law (1686-1761), whose Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life influenced men so dissimilar as Johnson, Wesley and Keble, and stands by the side of Jeremy Taylor's Rule and Exercises of Holy Living as one of the most impressive devotional treatises in the language.

Conyers Middleton (1683-1750) wrote a Life of Cicero (largely a plagiarism) and a remarkably rationalistic Free Inquiry into the miraculous powers which were supposed to have existed in the Christian Church. His vigorous, direct style has many admirers.

The History of Civil Society, by Dr. Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), has been ranked as a companion to Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations. Thomas Reid (1710-96) who wrote An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, had a distinguished follower in Dugald Stewart (1753-1828).

Following David Hartley (1705-57) and Abraham Tucker (1705-74) in adopting the theory of the association of ideas came Joseph Priestley (1773-1804), who, as a controversialist as well as a writer, was distanced by Bishop Horsley (1733-1806), the accomplished editor of Sir Isaac Newton's works. Priestly is best remembered as the father of modern chemistry, the author of a History of Electricity, and as the man who discovered oxygen, but by a blind attachment to theory failed to appreciate its significance, leaving that honor to Lavoisier.

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) wrote an influential book on The Rights of Man, in answer to Burke, and was himself very ably answered by Gilbert Wakefield. The Greek scholarship of Richard Porson; the translation of Demosthenes by Dr. Thomas Leland; the still unapproached translation of the Koran by George Sale; the version of Plutarch's Lives by J. and W. Langhorne; the standard translation of Josephus's History of the Jews by William Whiston; the still popular version of Gil Blas by Tobias Smollett, whose History of England must also be noted; the translation of the Satires of Horace by the unhappy Christopher Smart; the Don Quixote and the Rabelais of Peter Anthony Motteux, who completed the work of Sir Henry Urquhart, all testify to the learning and literary activity of the eighteenth century.

But this list, long as it is, and irrespective of the fact that I reserve fiction for separate consideration, is far from comprehensive. I have not yet noted, and here can only mention, Sir William Jones's translations from the Sanskrit, the scholarly Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds, John Horne Tooke's valuable Diversions of Purley, the histories and biographies of John Strype, the educational manuals of Isaac Watts, the History of England and History of the Puritans Down to 1689 of Daniel Neal, the sprightly Memoirs of the Reign of George II by John, Lord Hervey, the Dialogues of the Dead by the first Baron Lyttelton, Sir William Blackstone's

authoritative Commentaries on the Laws of England, the Biblical Concordance of Alexander Cruden, the Anecdotes of Joseph Spence, Mrs. Thrale's Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson, the Travels of Mungo Park, or the admirable Shakespearean studies of Farmer, Steevens and Dennis. Even the bare rehearsal of these names will impress the reader with the fact that the eighteenth century was an age of scholarship.

In the domain of journalism it is of interest to remember that The Times, first started as The Daily Universal Register in 1785, came out with its present title on January 1, 1788; that The Gentleman's Magazine was originated in 1731; and that there was a London Magazine in 1732, a Monthly Review in 1749, a Literary Magazine and a Critical Review in 1756; while, in addition to other encyclopaedias, The Encyclopaedia Britannica appeared for the first time in 1771, in three volumes.

At this point the great distinction has to be noted between the eighteenth century and our own time: that the term 'a man of letters' formerly stood—even into the middle of the Victorian Age—for one who had ranged at will in all those fields of study represented in my review of eighteenth century prose writers: philosophy, travel, history, fiction, science, religion, etc. Unhappily, but perhaps inevitably, the nineteenth century saw a great change in the direction of 'specializing,' not only by writers, but also by readers. Authors now find it profitable to limit themselves to one branch of literature only; readers are prone to fall into the same habit. In the eighteenth century it was accounted no discredit to a writer that he expended his energies in many fields of thought: that he wrote histories, poems, criticisms, philosophies, stories.

That is the author's excuse, and it is a valid one; but the reader who confines himself to only one class of reading has no excuse. The man who to-day would be well read should go for example or precedent to the 'men of letters' of the eighteenth century, who regarded the whole varied field of literature as their hunting ground.

XV

'THE RENASCENCE OF WONDER'

and the Earlier Prose Masters of the Nineteenth Century

Nineteenth century prose, infinite in its complex variety of style, is distinguished by the common characteristic of critical inquiry; it aims at truth; it strives to touch the very heart of life. There are, as Goethe said, many echoes, but few voices. This is largely true of all literary periods; but the voices of the nineteenth century will compare advantageously with those of any preceding period. Where prose is concerned they are heard at their best, perhaps, in the novel. But the 'new note' is hardly less resonant in the essay, the biography, the history, the book of theology, the narrative of travel, the scientific treatise, the studies of philosophy, art, politics, and economics.

If the twentieth century opened for us with a wider and a nobler outlook on 'the things that matter,' it is due largely to the work accomplished in the preceding century in the domain of English letters, when our great writers took to heart the aphorism of an eighteenth century poet. They saw with Pope that 'the proper study of mankind is man.'

The literature of knowledge and the literature of power belonging to this period are alike marked by the dominating but informed interrogative, for it was not only in imaginative writing that the last century witnessed what Watts-Dunton called 'the Renascence of Wonder,' but in all fields of literature—in criticism and science, not less than in poetry and romance, this rebirth of 'wonder' took place. The originator of the phrase thus explains it:

> The Renascence of Wonder merely indicates that there are two great impulses governing man, and probably not man only, but the entire world of conscious life: the impulse of acceptance—the impulse to take unchallenged and for granted all the phenomena of the outer world as they are—and the impulse to confront these phenomena with eyes of inquiry and wonder.

BEFORE studying the effects let us glance at the causes of this change in the nation's literary life. The French Revolution shattered the scholastic formalism of English letters. Jean Jacques Rousseau stirred up a feeling for humanity such as England had never before acquired from French or Italian writers, much as she had been influenced previously by Continental models. The effects of the Red Terror threw the thoughtful back for a time into the slough of despond. Wordsworth, for one, was bowed down in this way.

Then a Scottish teacher read Mme. de Stael's De l'Allemagne, set himself to master the German language, put Jean Paul Richter in the place of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and by the exercise, on the one hand, of the extraordinary knowledge he acquired of German philosophy and German individualism, and his painstaking elucidation of the Cromwellian epoch on the other, set aloft an ideal of manhood and patriotic duty which, faulty in many respects as the design may have been, influenced materially the popular view of history and the outlook on nature.

There were others who drank deeply at the Teutonic spring. Wordsworth was one of these, Coleridge was another, Byron a third; Scott and De Quincey were also of the company. Each was affected differently, but at the same time profoundly. A new spirit was introduced into our literature—the spirit of wonder, which is of all human characteristics the most natural, the most fruitful in its influence, not merely upon literature and the other arts, but upon every work of the hands of man.

The Secret of Literary Style

HAD there been no 'Renascence of Wonder,' we had seen few, if any, of the marvelous inventions which rubricate the nineteenth in the calendar of the centuries. Thus it was that romance was reborn; that metaphysics acquired a new meaning; that humor was reincarnated. Men longed to look at things as they were; to see them 'whole.' Carlyle entered as an iconoclast into the temple of 'the Gigmanities'; and of

all the master-minds of the time, he is the one who, both directly and indirectly, has stirred most deeply the heart of the vast reading public called into being by the mechanical inventions of 'the wonderful century.'

The history of the essay, both critical and constructive, in the century we are considering, is bound up with the history of the periodical.

Something of the same kind may be said of both poetry and the novel. The various periodicals having a political bias, if not basis, literature developed more or less under the aegis of politics. The writers made the reviews and the reviews helped to make the writers. If the student, happily versed in more modern literature, approaches some of these old masterpieces in a spirit of wonderment at the fame attached to them, he must try to forget his later knowledge. He must look at the work with the eyes of the generation upon which it was sprung with such magnetic effect.

Herein lies the value of the historical and comparative method in the study of all literature. To-day much of the vital force which animated the work of earlier writers has been dissipated, much of their thunder has been stolen, the knowledge in the light of which they wrote has been found to be misleading. But the saving salt of an individual style preserves many an obsolete book from the blight of oblivion.

Among the influences on later prose must be remembered the prose of the poets—the prefaces of Wordsworth, the miscellanies of Scott, the critical essays of Coleridge, the letters of Byron, Shelley and Keats. But the student has a wonderful variety of object lessons in style before him, apart from these great names.

There are the Puritan fervor and grim humor of Carlyle, the gentle intimacy of Charles Lamb, the graceful confidences of Leigh Hunt, the aerial cadence of De Quincey, the emphatic, unmistakable vigor of Cobbett, the brilliant antitheses of Macaulay, the incisive phrases of Hazlitt, the wit of Sydney Smith, the beautiful imagery of Ruskin, the flowing sea-music of Swinburne, the classic beauty of Landor's dialogues, the perfect serenity and harmony of Newman, the scholarly prose of Matthew Arnold, the undecorated diction of Hallam and Freeman, the picturesque pages of Froude, the jeweled sentences of Walter Pater, and the sparkle of Stevenson. In the main the prose writer who aspires to style must be an artist just as the poet is an artist, but the secret of style is, ultimately, the harmony between the subject and its treatment.

For general purposes style has been considerably influenced by the usage of journalism. The Press is responsible for a marked lessening of the distinction between written and spoken language. There must always be some distinction between the two. The skilled writer must of necessity possess a close acquaintance with the meaning of words; and it is, perhaps, a defective knowledge of the meaning of words which lies at the root of most failures in composition.

The speaker, by means of accent, emphasis, look, gesture, personality, can lend significance to a comparatively poor speech. The writer, if he would impress his readers as ef-

fectively as the speaker impresses his audience, must find literary equivalents for the methods and circumstances of platform and pulpit. But the aim of the writer who addresses himself to a wide public should be directed to the perfection of a style that shall be distinctive—a copied style is but a mask—clear and colloquial, yet avoiding baldness and vulgarity, and in which foreign words, so plentiful in the 'spotted Dick' period of English prose, shall be but sparingly employed.

While the essayists have done much to increase our knowledge of bygone, and particularly of Elizabethan, literature, as well as to popularize various branches of scientific learning, the biographers have given to the prose of the period some of its greatest intellectual assets. Southey's Nelson, Lockhart's Scott, Carlyle's Cromwell and Sterling, Lewes's Goethe, Froude's Carlyle, Masson's Milton, Spedding's Bacon, Stanley's Arnold, are classics that for one reason or another are never likely to be superseded.

The influence of English historical methods has been world-wide. The nineteenth century historians are worthy successors of Gibbon. They have determined the unity of history, brought the study of evolution and environment to a pitch of scientific accuracy, and made history fascinating.

Theology and science, philosophy, politics, economics, art, education and travel will be briefly touched upon in our chronological study of the leading prose writers of the period. Meantime two facts of especial interest must be noted. One is the high literary value of much of the scientific literature of the time, as disclosed, for example, in the writings of Huxley; the other is the distinction attained by women writers. The latter is a portent that should commend itself to some philosopher of the future; its ultimate significance is hidden from our ken.

No serious reader of English criticism can afford to neglect the prose writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). By no means easy to read at the outset, when the author's point of view has been appreciated they will prove most stimulating and suggestive. The Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare are especially valuable on account both of their great intrinsic worth and of the effects they had on later estimates of the national poet.

Sydney Smith (1771-1845), Francis, Lord Jeffrey (1773-1850), and Henry Peter, Lord Brougham (1778-1868), were jointly responsible for the early numbers of The Edinburgh Review. They were politicians first and men of letters in a secondary sense.

Sydney Smith's was a natural wit, but it was always under the control of good taste. His style was natural, and he used with unequaled effect against the forces of pretense and pomposity the process of logical inquiry known as the reductio ad absurdum. Jeffrey was master of a style the importance of which is derived from the fact that it served as a model to his greatest contributor, Macaulay. Brougham's zeal for popular education was greater than his discretion as a critic.

William Gifford (1756-1826), the first editor of The Quarterly Review, was another 'man with a bludgeon,'

ose best services were those he ndered to the Elizabethan drama- ts and especially to the memory Ben Jonson.

Few men whose names are re- embered in literature ever wrote ore that has been forgotten than d Robert Southey (1774-1843). s fertility of production was as azing as its variety. He was a holar and, considered as a stylist ne, claims a high place among s contemporaries. And yet 'of at is called style,' he said, 'not a ought enters my head at any time. nly endeavor to write plain Eng- h and put my thoughts in language ich every one can understand.'

IR WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832) wrote almost as incessantly and variously as Southey, but with ch greater success, independently his greatest work. His essays on ivalry, romance and the drama, d his letters on demonology and tchcraft are still eminently read- le; and he was a painstaking as ll as a capable editor, especially of ift.

John Wilson (1785-1854), the hristopher North' of Blackwood's agazine, is chiefly remembered as e literary parent of De Quincey, as rt author of that brilliant series of logues, Noctes Ambrosianae, and author of a work entitled Lights d Shadows of Scottish Life. John bson Lockhart (1794-1854), Scott's n-in-law, and Wilson's friend and lleague on Blackwood's, who suc- eded Gifford as editor of The uarterly, gave to journalism much at by right should have been de- ted to literature. His masterpiece the Life of Scott, second only to swell's Johnson as a model biography. Every student should read it, but may neglect his novels, though Adam Blair is worth reading if one happens to come across it.

Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt

ONE of the greatest, as he is one of the least pretentious, of English prose writers, is Charles Lamb (1775-1847); but the now world-famous Essays of Elia originally issued from the press, at all events in their collected form, upon a cold and unresponsive world.

In the history of English prose Lamb stands as much alone as Landor or Sir Thomas Browne. He is master, not of one style, but of as many styles as he possessed moods. He is full of elusive echoes of the old writers whom he loved. His is the art that conceals art, for seemingly he is as frank and as communicative as Montaigne. His character is written in his Essays; his autobiography in his Letters. He wrote for magazines—the London in particular—but he wrote what he would, and not merely or principally for the pecuniary proceeds of literary work. Herein, undoubtedly, lies part of the secret of his enduring charm.

Then, he was a man of many friends. His life-story is as inspiring as that of Scott. Posterity reverences Lamb almost as a memory of a golden age, as the embodiment of a quality of heart from which it has parted; it looks on him as Lucifer looked on Paradise lost. But Lamb was not only an essayist of unique charm; he was also a critic of rare insight and surprising accuracy. Nothing that he wrote, and wonderfully little that his life inspired others to write of him, can the studious reader afford to neglect.

In William Hazlitt (1778-1830) we have a strong contrast to the man who regarded him as 'one of the finest and widest spirits breathing.' Hazlitt was indebted to Lamb, and acknowledged the indebtedness; but with a critical faculty as keen as that of Lamb, he possessed not a scintilla of Elia's human sympathy; hence, whereas the one is loved the other is given the meed of almost frigid praise. Yet Hazlitt's is a name of first importance. 'We are mighty fine fellows,' said Stevenson, 'but we can't write like William Hazlitt.' He is the master of the apt and illuminating phrase.

The student of Shakespeare owes much to Coleridge's Lectures; he owes much also to Lamb's Critical Essays, but he should also study, and study with attention, Hazlitt's Characters of Shakespeare's Plays—a work dedicated to Lamb—and the Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Elizabeth. Of equal note are the Lectures on the English Comic Writers and Lectures on the English Poets. It must be confessed, however, that there is more venom than justice in the personal sketches he called The Spirit of the Age.

The English Opium Eater

With Hazlitt and Lamb, Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) was a contributor to the London Magazine, in which his Confessions of an English Opium Eater appeared. De Quincey stands sponsor to the modern school of 'prose poets' of which Swinburne is the great exemplar. He has much to attract, but is dangerous to follow. He lacks a certain dignity, is normally without what we understand by the word 'reverence,' and he is at times terribly discursive; but we must remember that the bulk of his work, which has been collected in fourteen volumes, was anonymous journalism, and that the writer kept up a weak physique by the use of opium. The Confessions, the historical essays, Levana or Our Ladies of Sorrow, and the Autobiographic Sketches, should be read with care.

De Quincey has been styled the 'Boswell of Essayism,' so intimate are his revelations of both himself and his associates. He possessed to an almost amazing degree an instinct for dramatic expression. Whatever some of whom he wrote may have thought of his character drawing, he was well liked personally, and in his later years he proved a good husband and a devoted father. Perhaps Augustine Birrell is right when he declares that De Quincey will always be 'above criticism.' This great essayist was a rhapsodist, but he was, too, an inquirer, and his influence was against cast-iron formality in prose.

The Virility of William Cobbett

William Cobbett (1762-1835) started life by scaring crows but left a name which will be remembered with those of the most famous writers of his own time. He may be said to personify the whole art of self-education. By self-denial and perseverance he acquired a vast sum of varied knowledge, and wielded immense influence as a politician and a journalist, inspiring his countrymen with a reasoned love of their native land.

Despite extraordinary difficulties, Cobbett learned English and French so well as to be able to write grammars in both languages, and de-

loped a literary style as natural Defoe's, as vigorous as Swift's, ghtened by humor and telling vective, and perhaps as charac- istically Saxon as any that could named. He was a clean-living n, who delighted in the open air, ing a born student and lover of other Earth. Above all, Cobbett w clearly, thought clearly, and tered clearly. His varied career om plow to Parliament will well pay study. His works are as versified as was his life.

Cobbett's English Grammar and ench Grammar are written in the rm of letters to his son, and are surpassed in the lucidity of their rangement and their quality of nuine liveliness. Everyone ought read the first named. Despite unattractive title, it may be com- nded as vastly entertaining as well instructive. His Weekly Political gister, started in 1802, was con- ued, apart from one small break, til his death; it was for two years ited from prison, where he was nt for his strictures on flogging in e Army; and for a time from nerica, whither he fled to escape om further imprisonment. In 03 he began the Parliamentary bates, whence originated Hansard. e wrote a History of the Reforma- n, which is still read, though iefly by Roman Catholics; but his lvice to Young Men is full of actical common sense for all. very young man should read it, d young women also. Its vigor d frankness are as refreshing as e breath of the sea.

His best work is to be found in e picturesque accounts of his litical tours on horseback, which e familiar as Cobbett's Rural Rides, and the student in search of a guide to muscular English would do better to read a chapter from this each day than from almost any other prose work. Cobbett is not a great literary character; but his style is the best of models for all who aspire to write clearly and correctly.

Isaac D'Israeli (1766-1848), the father of Lord Beaconsfield, wrote a number of anecdotal works which, though somewhat slipshod, offer evidence of much culture and wide reading, being chiefly notable for the entertainment they afford and the stimulus they give to further inquiry in the by-paths of literary history. The Curiosities of Literature is the best of these; its companions are Calamities and Quarrels of Authors, Amenities of Literature, and The Literary Character.

Landor's Imaginary Conversations

Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864) was an author who, as Birrell says, 'preferred stately magnificence to chatty familiarity.' He lived, in a sense, alone, and his work is also independent. He wrote poetry for amusement (I have already dealt with him as a poet) and prose as an occupation. His Imaginary Conversations reveal strong dramatic qualities which have caused many to wonder that their author failed to write a great play. Describing these Conversations, Henry J. Nicoll, in his Landmarks of English Literature, says:

> They are full of fine thought, expressed in a style so finished, so eloquent, so clearly bearing the impress of genius and cultivated taste, so felicitous in imagery and diction, that one wonders why they are in general so little read. The reason probably is that their subjects have little interest to people in general, and that their tone of sentiment does

not, for the most part, appeal to the ordinary sympathies and emotions of humanity.

The Conversations were published between 1824 and 1853; they range over a vast area of topics, and are 125 in number.

In these lofty and earnest pages we are (says a writer in The Edinburgh Review of 1846), by turns, in the high and goodly company of wits and men of letters; of churchmen, lawyers and statesmen; of party-men, soldiers and kings; of the most tender, delicate, and noble women; and of figures that seem this instant to have left for us the Agora or the schools of Athens, the Forum or the Senate of Rome. At one moment we have politicians discussing the deepest questions of state; at another, philosophers still more largely philosophizing; poets talking of poetry; men of the world of worldy matters; Italians and French of their respective literatures and manners.

Landor, in fine, is our English Lucian: that classic writer of dialogues who flourished in Greece during the second century. Among Landor's dialogues especially admired for their dramatic intensity are those between Peter the Great and Alexis, and Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. 'I shall dine late,' said Landor, in an oft-quoted phrase; 'but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select.' Yet we may all some time or other 'dine' with Landor as our host and be assured of excellent entertainment. When one is studying the life of Shakespeare, Landor's Citation of William Shakespeare may be read as a charming piece of imaginative prose.

William Hone (1780-1842) was a sort of minor Cobbett, with something of D'Israeli's feeling for letters. His Every-Day Book, Table-Book, and Year-Book bear tribute to his industrious study of old manners and customs. The first-named contains a tenderly-worded dedication to Charles Lamb, and to the Table-Book the 'gentle Elia' contributed his selections from the Garrick Plays. But Hone's books are chiefly valuable as works of reference for the literary man.

The Papers of John Wilson Croker (1780-1857) and Thomas Creevey (1768-1838) supply much intimate detail of the Court, literary, and political life of their time, the one from a Tory and the other from a Whig point of view. Croker, who is much the better known, Creevey, having been a 'discovery' of Sir Herbert Maxwell in 1903, was a frequent contributor to The Quarterly Review. His chief work was an edition of Boswell which drew forth a remarkably bitter criticism from Macaulay. He also began an edition of Pope which was completed by Elwin and Courthope.

XVI

CARLYLE & HIS CONTEMPORARIES

A Further Study in Nineteenth Century Prose

NO SUSTAINED effort has been made in this work to parcel out the different epochs—real or fanciful—into which the history of English literature might be divided, under the names of the dominant personalities in the literary world of their times. That is not a bad plan, but it does not make for brevity of treatment. There is little

ethod in such plan as I have fol-
wed, which consists chiefly in a
mewhat casual commentary on
nglish writers looked at chrono-
gically, in their relation to poetry,
ose and the novel, occasionally,
with Chaucer and Shakespeare,
large and 'dating' figure being
ade a subject of special study.

In the present chapter, however,
confess that I have hit upon
arlyle rather as a convenient break
the examination of nineteenth
ntury prose than because of any
tention to engage in the more de-
iled consideration of the man and
s work. Time was when Carlyle's
as a name to conjure with. Does
remain a force? That he is still
orth reading may be asserted with-
ut dubbing oneself old-fashioned.
nd, after all, when he surveyed
ankind from his window in Chelsea
sufficiently dominated his epoch
r it to be named after him and
to justify my chapter heading,
ough I shall make no attempt to
alyze the Carlyle period as distinct
om the main current of the nine-
enth century.

ORN a full decade ahead of Car-
lyle, James Henry Leigh Hunt
784-1859) had a reputation as a
itic and journalist before Carlyle
d begun to attract attention.
eigh Hunt was an essayist of con-
derable charm and versatility,
hose friendships secure for him a
eater meed of recognition than his
itings, though these are not unim-
rtant. He introduced Shelley and
eats to one another, and brought
ese poets before the public in The
xaminer, of which he was editor.
The student of English literature
ll find much profit in his Imagina-
tion and Fancy, Wit and Humor, and Men, Women and Books. His Dante's Divine Comedy: the Book and its Story, is also of value, while his Autobiography contains enough to secure for it the permanent interest of all bookmen. London and The Cockney School found in him an energetic champion, and his gossipy volume on The Town: Its Remarkable Characters and Events, retains a certain measure of popularity.

There is need to do little more than mention the intervening names of Nassau William Senior (1790-1864), an eminent critic of the time, William Maginn (1793-1842), scholar, critic, humorist, then a great force in the magazine world and the original of the Charlie Shandon in Thackeray's Pendennis, and Anna Brownell Jameson (1794-1860), who wrote a book on The Characteristics of Shakespeare's Women that is still a favorite.

THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881) began his literary career as a writer in The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia, for which, between 1820 and 1823, he wrote articles on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Dr. John Moore, Sir John Moore, Necker, Nelson, Mungo Park, Lord Chatham, William Pitt, and several papers of a topographical character. Only one of these—the paper on Sir John Moore—can be described as inadequate.

From the first Carlyle seldom spared himself. In 1824 he published two translations—one from the French (Legendre's Geometry) and one from the German (Goethe's Wilhelm Meister). The latter work, praised by Blackwood's and The

Edinburgh, was attacked by De Quincey in The London Magazine, to which Carlyle had been contributing his Life of Schiller, the last chapters of which actually appeared simultaneously with the unjustifiable attack. Whatever pain may have been caused by De Quincey was more than assuaged by the commendation from Goethe, who wrote a eulogistic introduction to a translation of the Schiller volume which was published at Frankfort in 1830, three years after Carlyle's period of apprenticeship may be said to have been brought to a close with his studies of German Romance. Meanwhile, Carlyle had met Jeffrey and become a contributor to The Edinburgh Review, his connection with which lasted for seventeen years.

One of the real curiosities of literature is the distinction between the form of Carlyle's early writings and that known as 'Carlylese,' the undoubtedly powerful, but electrical, explosive, ejaculatory style whose beginning may be noted in his Sartor Resartus, a work of autobiographical as well as of philosophical interest, which, originally published in Frazer's, first won adequate recognition in America.

The reader who would study Carlyle aright should begin by digesting Professor Nichol's masterly monograph in the English Men of Letters series; Froude's contentious pages may be left for a later stage.

Characteristics of Carlyle

CARLYLE'S greatest works are those in history, sociology and politics. But there is a great deal in his miscellaneous essays—those on Burns, Johnson, Scott, Voltaire, Diderot, and Mirabeau, for example—that must not be overlooked by any reader who desires to understand the man himself. Carlyle has been greatly misunderstood; but his influence has been almost incalculable in Germany as well as in England. He was 'human, like ourselves'; more, perhaps, of an iconoclast and a prophet than a constructive power; but he looked to the 'foundations of society,' he had a genuine love of truth, and his striving after truth has left to posterity a standard of thought which must remain a permanent social as well as literary force.

Essentially masculine in view, Carlyle has yet had a marked influence on women readers. The Swift of the nineteenth century, many a Stella has been his pupil. Appreciations—and depreciations—of his labors there are in abundance, but perhaps Walt Whitman in his Specimen Days touched the reality:

> As a representative author, a literary figure, no man else will bequeath to the future more significant hints of our stormy era, its fierce paradoxes, its din, and its struggling periods than Carlyle. He belongs to our own branch of the stock, too; neither Latin nor Greek, but altogether Gothic. Rugged, mountainous, volcanic, he was himself more a French Revolution than any of his volumes. . . . As launching into the self-complacent atmosphere of our days a rasping, questioning, dislocating agitation and shock, is Carlyle's final value.

Carlyle began life, in a sense, by teaching mathematics in a Fifeshire school; he remained a teacher to the end of the chapter. As a stylist he is the greatest 'free lance in the language; but the reader should beware lest he impute to the leader the sins of his would-be followers, as many a one has sought to thunder in Carlylean strain with the most

nhappy results. Where Carlyle's tyle is concerned we must not judge im by the standard of any other riter; he claims by right to be idged by the vivid (and vivifying) esult. Of no great writer could it e said with more cogency that 'the tyle is the man'.

T IS impossible in a few words to formulate any plan for the especial study of Carlyle. From the vide range of his writings the general reader will take to such works s his fancy prompts, the student to hose his studies suggest, and both nay be left safely to come under he all-compelling influence of this irile and original thinker. Of Carlyle's works the common reader hould at least be acquainted with The French Revolution, Sartor Resartus, Heroes and Hero Worship, nd The Life of John Sterling. If ne begins with Heroes and Hero Worship, the appetite is more likely o be whetted than by entering the Carlyle treasure-house through the ate of The French Revolution.

Well-nigh as interesting as anyhing Carlyle wrote was the story of is own married life, which, indeed, as been fruitful of more controversy han any of his boldest assertions in he domain of philosophy. Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801-66) was almost s notable a personality as her husand, for her Letters and Memorials rove her to have been one of the ost accomplished women of her ime, a shrewd critic, and fit to rank vith the great letter-writers who ave contributed no inconsiderable roportion of what we call our naional literature. Mrs. Alexander reland wrote an excellent Life of Mrs. Carlyle.

The Qualities of Lord Macaulay

CARLYLE'S greatest contemporary as an essayist and historian was Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59). Unlike Carlyle, Macaulay did not confine his labors to the desk. He was a public official and a member of parliament as well as a man of letters. After a careful education, he became famous at the age of twenty-five as the writer of an essay on Milton in The Edinburgh Review. In this review all his best-known essays appeared, if we except the biographies of Atterbury, Bunyan, Goldsmith, Johnson and Pitt, which were contributed to The Encyclopaedia Britannica. The Essays are rich in applied knowledge, drawn from the exceptionally retentive memory of an omnivorous reader. The judgments they contain, where these are not affected by the author's Whig sympathies, are usually sound. For a parallel to their diversity of subject matter we must go to Landor's Conversations.

Macaulay was essentially a popular writer, one whose purpose was to think for his readers and to leave nothing to chance. Whole generations may be said to have been nurtured on his writings. His influence will always be considerable both as a stylist and as a historian, though he needs careful editing. The essays on Warren Hastings and John Hampden, for example, are both based on inaccurate data.

His great quality is clearness of diction, which he shares with Cobbett; but his use of a succession of short sentences, while agreeable to the eye, is not invariably acceptable to the ear. He is apt to over-burden

his theme with detail. His use of antithesis is responsible for much deplorably ineffective imitation. He remains, withal, a brilliant writer; but, being brilliant, is hard. What he gains in glitter he misses in emotion; he does not delve very deeply into the heart of things; but without his aid many men and women of average insight and ability would never have been able to see so far or so well as they have seen. In this connection the educative value of Macaulay's writings cannot easily be exaggerated; it may be more easily satirized. In the realm of prose his relation to Carlyle is that of Tennyson to Browning in the realm of poetry. It is curious to notice that, in judging Scott, both Carlyle and Macaulay erred, if at all, on the side of severity; but it is useful to remember that neither of them had the Journal before him.

Macaulay has been infinitely happier in his biographer than was Carlyle; the fine tribute of his nephew, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, to his memory reveals to us a family affection, for any sign of which we might search the Essays in vain.

John Stuart Mill

PERHAPS the greatest of Carlyle's contemporaries was John Stuart Mill (1806-73) the philosopher, whose System of Logic and On Liberty will not be read for any literary graces if they do not attract the student in search of profitable mental exercise.

Carlyle's influence can be detected upon the other writers of his day: not in any futile efforts to copy his very individual style, or his attitude to life, but in a vigorous freedom of criticism, a display of conscience in judgment, and a certain earnestness in matters of the mind which remained a worthy characteristic of the Victorian age, though tending to ponderosity and eventually declining into mere dullness.

Many are the names that might be mentioned in this relation. I shall allude very briefly to four: Edward Fitzgerald, of Omar Khayyám fame, mainly for his wonderful letters; John Brown, for his exquisite Rab and His Friends; John Forster for his excellent Life of Dickens, and George Eliot's friend, George Henry Lewes (1817-78), a most able encyclopedist with a great gift of popularizing the abstruse. His History of Philosophy is a very competent work, and On Actors and the Art of Acting is another of his books that will repay study. Lewes founded The Fortnightly Review which still exists—as a monthly. These four names bring us to three others that have acquired much wider fame: Froude, Ruskin and Arnold.

The name of James Anthony Froude (1818-94) has been the center of a veritable whirlwind of controversy, which relates to literary history rather than to the study of literature. The friend of Carlyle, whose literary executor he was, Froude had much of Carlyle's sincerity and he was not less able as a writer. Indeed, he stands with the supreme prose masters of the century, his thought often soaring to heights of true eloquence. But he rivaled Macaulay in partisanship when he wrote of history, which was the main concern of his literary life. Froude's contentious character colors all he wrote, yet his Nemesis

Faith and Oceana are fascinating
oks, and I know of no such series
brilliant and engaging essays and
pers by one hand as his Short
udies on Great Subjects.

John Ruskin as a Teacher

OHN RUSKIN (1819-1900) proved
a great social force as well as a
eat critic. Perhaps his paramount
vice was his defense of Turner.
imparted an incalculable impetus
the raising of the standard of
or; whatever nature of labor it
y be, it can hardly be regarded
thout respect by anyone who has
me under the influence of Ruskin's
ching.

Like Carlyle, and, in a lesser de-
e, like Froude, Ruskin gloried in
power of imparting and inspiring
husiasm. He sought after the
th with all the ardor of Carlyle,
d the student of his works will
ness with mingled feelings how,
e after time, he was compelled
his own discoveries to relinquish
sitions he once thought to be un-
ailable. He was the embodiment
the spirit of reverence and a high
est of the temple of beauty. He
s opened our eyes to the infinite
iety and charm of external nature,
d even the clouds have a different
aning to us since Ruskin wrote
ut them. His style glows with
h color and is full of musical
etness. It is impregnated with
influence of Bible study, an in-
nce, however, which can be real-
d only by those whose knowledge
the Bible corresponds in some
asure to his own.

Yet none of the great Victorians
so fallen from his high estate as
skin: once a social prophet ac-
ted by all, a veritable lawgiver in the criticism of art, his name is no longer evocative of unquestioned respect in either sphere. But Ruskin is worth reading in almost everything he wrote, from The Seven Lamps of Architecture to Fors Clavigera.

Two Great Critics: Arnold and Masson

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822-88), whose work as a poet has already been discussed, combined social with literary criticism. He foretold the fall of the aristocracy and distrusted the middle classes, but much that has been written and said concerning 'his contempt for unintellectual people' is unjustified, and caused him no small amount of disquiet, as his Letters—especially the epistle to his mother in 1868—testify. First and foremost he was a scholar, and valued scholarship highly. As a writer, he had much in common with Sainte-Beuve, perhaps the greatest literary critic of the nineteenth century, his standpoint in regard to art and letters being in many respects more French than English. His Essays in Criticism, Culture and Anarchy, Literature and Dogma, and an earlier work, On Translating Homer, are his most widely-read books.

Another great critic was born in the same year as Arnold, but long outlived him—David Masson (1822-1907). One of the foremost men of letters in the nineteenth century, Masson, like Dugald Dalgetty, was a student of Marischal College, but Dalgetty was a sad pedant, whereas Masson's great erudition was surpassed by the breadth of his sympathies and the volume and versatility of his writings. Famous as a

writer who lent weight and substance to the periodical press, his pen was employed in the encyclopedias as well as in the reviews. He edited Macmillan's Magazine from its start in 1859 until 1868, and his contributions to our knowledge of the English novelists, and of De Quincey, Chatterton, Carlyle and Drummond of Hawthornden have been of the greatest value. He was the one writer since Gifford who had thrown new light on the life of Ben Jonson until Herford and Simpson in 1925.

But Masson's greatest work is his Life of John Milton, Narrated in Connection with the Political, Ecclesiastical and Literary History of his Time, a work in five noble volumes which has been described as the most complete biography of any Englishman. He began his career as editor of a Scottish newspaper, and in 1852 became Professor of English Literature in University College, London, and in 1865 in Edinburgh University, resigning in 1895, after 30 years of singularly fruitful labor in the advancement of learning.

Goldwin Smith (1823-1910) had the true Carlylean independence and intolerance in his outlook on society and, although most that he wrote has a professional dryness of style, he could be attractive on purely literary subjects, as witness his books on Cowper and Jane Austen, and also his Essays. But he was essentially an exponent of history and a controversialist. Another of that generation of thinkers was Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), who wrote a good fluent style, especially in Travels on the Amazon, while Augustus Jessopp (1824-1914) had also an attractive manner in such books as The Coming of the Friars and Trial of a Country Parson.

Journalism the Handmaiden of Literature

Periodical journalism was now at its literary best in the weeklies like The Saturday Review, The Examiner, and The Spectator, and in the monthlies like Blackwood's, The Cornhill and Good Words, and of course, in the quarterlies. It is comforting to notice how many of these still survive the assaults of new rivals in days of changing taste. Their peculiar use was to give encouragement to good writers and also to produce men like Holt Hutton of The Spectator, William Minto of The Examiner, Henry Morley, who also edited that journal in the course of his really wonderful career as a popularizer of good literature, and Walter Bagehot (1826-77), editor of The Economist, who wrote an authoritative work on the English Constitution, and two volumes of very readable and sound Literary Studies.

Frederic Harrison (1831-1923) was a young man when Carlyle had his generation by the ears, and he profited accordingly. He was a true scholar, who found his chief delight in the study of history, on which he wrote much and wisely. His interest in the Byzantine period induced him to try his hand at historic romance with Theophano, but he was essentially a biographer, a literary critic —I commend his instructive volume On the Choice of Books to my readers—and a writer on philosophy and religion.

Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), brother and biographer of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen of The Saturday

eview, edited The Cornhill and ote much in biography. He was e original editor of The Dictionary National Biography, and in An gnostic's Apology made one of the st valuable additions to the litera- re of rationalism. His clear, un- orned style, just a trifle icy, is tirely suited to his clear argument. the same year as Stephen was at brilliant Irishman, Stopford A. rooke (1832-1916) who won re- wn as a preacher as well as a itic of literature. His study of ennyson is still unexcelled for in- rpretative value.

Poet-Critics: Watts-Dunton & Swinburne

One of the most sensitive critics of literature—especially poetry that have graced modern letters as Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-14). He abandoned the study of tural history and the law for the lds of fiction and criticism as well poetry; in criticism he was one of e forces of the last century. His udies of Shakespeare and The enascence of Wonder are notable oductions; but for some of his st remarkable work the student ust turn to the pages of The Ex- miner, The Athenaeum, the En- clopaedia Britannica, and the ading reviews. He was for some rty years the close friend and com- nion of Algernon Charles Swin- rne (1837-1909), of whose poetry have already written.

As a critic Swinburne had the ults of over-statement and pas- nate praise, which anyone would pect who first met him as a poet. is prose was the fine vibrant prose a poet, and his biographical and itical studies ranging from the Elizabethans to the Victorians offer unusual opportunities for the awakening of enthusiasms. If the reader is careful not to place himself too completely at the critic's disposition, he will have considerable increase of literary understanding and a great deal of exhilaration.

Carlyle had written everything of his that mattered by the time John Morley (1838-1924) was twenty-one, but although we know that Morley was the pupil of John Stuart Mill—whence the austerity of his literary style—there are few whose names occur in this chapter that gave more evidence of having been influenced by the liberal ideas which the Sage of Chelsea set himself to implant in the mind of his generation. His Life of Gladstone is his magnum opus, but before it appeared in 1903, he had won a European reputation by his Studies of Burke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Cobden, Cromwell and Macchiavelli.

Eminent among the other critics who lent distinction to English letters in the latter part of the nineteenth century was Walter Horatio Pater (1839-94), whose exclusiveness was akin to that which so long kept Matthew Arnold aloof from the average reader, and whose Sketches in the History of the Renaissance, Imaginary Portraits, and Appreciations are marked by an exotic beauty of style, refinement of taste, breadth of culture and keenness of insight. Into the point of view of Walter Pater I need not enter here, but this must be considered where the permanent value of his literary contribution is under appraisement.

A similar remark is called for in regard to the writings of another and a less 'precious' hedonist, John Ad-

dington Symonds (1840-93), who also helped to bring the bright side of the Renaissance, as well as that of Elizabethan England, before English readers. Philip Gilbert Hamerton (1834-94) wrote a series of letters on The Intellectual Life which should not be neglected.

XVII

PROSE WRITERS OF THE LATER XIX CENTURY

CENTURIES may be convenient periods of time wherein to follow the course of history, but a hundred years offer at best an arbitrary measure. Although it might be possible—I do not say it is—to point to marked differences of national taste as between 1894 and 1914, that would have no peculiar significance as between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, for such contrasts could as easily be detected within one century.

It is when the end of a century looms nearer that the weakness of the system of 'thinking in centuries' is left; yet it has its merits in presenting to the mind an easy means of thinking progressively in time.

There is also about the end of centuries a sort of intellectual stock-taking and a bustle of preparation for the 'good time' pathetically expected with the new century which in matters of the mind would appear to produce a certain difference in the end-of-the-century era from the middle years of a century. There certainly was in the 'nineties of last century a display of literary activity of a very remarkable kind in which all of us who were then active with our pens had some share, experiencing the exhilaration of being 'in the movement.' Many plausible explanations of that activity are available, and as the subject intrigues me, in addition to being directly related to the matter in hand, I would readily examine some of these, but that the number of writers still awaiting attention under my general scheme is so considerable that I must carry on my review of them without regard to end-of-the-century influences.

MANY of them come into the present century and some are still alive or have but recently left us. There is Austin Dobson, who was born in 1840, and lived until 1921: not a great prose writer, but a moderately good one. While he was elegant and charming in verse, he was somewhat self-conscious in prose, for avoiding the ornate he tended at times towards the bald. His Eighteenth Century Vignettes are full of old-world charm. Then Edward Dowden (1843-1913) the gifted Irish critic, did fine service in Shakespeare study: I always recommend the young student to possess himself of Dowden's concise and invaluable Introduction to Shakespeare.

In his own day we gave Andrew Lang (1844-1912) a more generous measure of adulation than he is likely to receive from posterity. He was happy in being the subject of a myth about his vast scholarship, which he was supposed to wear as lightly as a flower. He was the Admirable Crichton of letters. Noth-

g he couldn't do: translator from e Greek, poet, critic, philosopher, ographer, essayist, novelist, hisrian. And, in truth, there was not uch in a literary way that he did ot try his hand at, with a high deee of success. He was the brightt literary journalist of his age; but s historical work abounds in error, s literary judgments, always devered in the most engaging phrases, e not free from asperity and prejuice, and in matters where he was no rt of authority he spoke with a ocksureness that did not always ersuade his readers. But the literry student will delight in all ndrew Lang's critical works, such Books and Bookmen, Letters to ead Authors, Letters on Literature, d Essays in Little. He was a olific writer and most that he rote is worth reading, his style beg always light and allusive.

A veritable storehouse of literary owledge, with a range well-nigh iversal and a fine humanity in his terests, is Professor George Saintsry (b. 1845) still happily active hen I pen these lines. His works e numerous, and their scholarship never in question, but I know of literary critic in any way comrable with Saintsbury for knowlge and perception who is content express himself in such ragged d unkempt phrases.

ORD ROSEBERY, who was born in 1847, is in literature as he was politics—a might-have-been. But s literary achievement is the more sting: it is indeed so substantial at we cannot but regret he did not vote himself to the life of letters, ere the highest success as a master prose was easily within his attainment. It used to be a commonplace that John Morley had given to politics what was meant for literature, but there is a cold and bloodless quality about Morley's work that awakens hardly any sensation of pleasure and none of affection in the reader. Not so with Rosebery. Everything that he wrote is informed with the subtle charm of a winning personality and the magical contact of a true bookman. There is some excellent criticism of letters in his Appreciations and Addresses, and also in his later work, Miscellanies Literary and Historical, while such studies in biography as his Pitt, Napoleon: the Last Phase, and Oliver Cromwell prove that he could have stood with the best of his age. Which reminds me that Sir George Trevelyan (b. 1838) and Lord Bryce (1838-1922) are two other men of affairs whose literary works rank them among the prose masters of the century: Trevelyan with his Life of Lord Macaulay and Bryce with The Holy Roman Empire and The American Commonwealth, both long accepted as standard works.

The Writings of Richard Jefferies

AT THE time of my writing it is nearly forty years since Richard Jefferies died (1848-87) and he was born eight years later than Thomas Hardy, who happily is still alive and active. Thirty-nine years, and three or four of them years of pain and hardship, were all that this brave poor soul had measured out to him, so that his work is almost as astonishing in its volume as it is in its high and gracious beauty. Merely an obscure country journalist, he was thirty before he had made a real success with The Gamekeeper at

Home. Nine years later he was dead, yet a whole shelf-full of memorable books form his legacy to us: novels, descriptive essays, autobiography.

The reader will not regret whatever time he gives to Jefferies, and he will find in him how his native tongue can be written with a joyous expressiveness which on analysis seems to be so simple that it might be thought to be entirely effortless, though writers know that the greatest pains have often been exerted where there is least evidence of any. Jefferies was a conscious artist in words, just as he was a conscious philosopher in his reading of earth's secrets; never a mere impressionist. The Story of My Heart is one of the most engrossing books of confession in our language.

Churton Collins (1848-1908) was a skilled professional critic of literature. His knowledge of English literature prior to his own day was as profound and accurate as his knowledge of contemporary letters was slight and perfunctory. His most competent works, such as Studies in Shakespeare, Greek Influence on English Poetry and Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau in England, are all hard in style but should be read for their scholarship.

For the happy combination of urbanity and literary scholarship the next critic in succession of time is a favorite of mine and one whose work is as assured of permanence as any modern criticism of letters can be. I refer to Edmund Gosse (b. 1849) so recently added to the plethoric ranks of knighthood. Although he has written much, he has seldom written hastily and his judgments are usually convincing. Either in critical biography or in pure criticism the student has a wide choice among the works of Sir Edmund Gosse. My own favorites are Gossip in a Library, his Life of Congreve, and French Profiles, but in Father and Son he has also given us a fine and dignified study in the intimacies of biography.

A nephew of Froude, William Hurrell Mallock (1849-1923) was the master of a very brilliant and incisive prose style, which he used with great effect in his many philosophic and fictive writings. He was greatly concerned all his life with religious and political questions, and although The New Republic and The New Paul and Virginia, which came about the beginning of his literary career, have both had a vogue and may still find readers, the stuff of immortality is not in his work despite all its cleverness. Almost anything that Mallock wrote is worth reading if one comes across it and the occasion serves, but, on the other hand, it would be nothing for tears did one never chance upon any of his seven and twenty volumes.

And now I may as well confess to a vision I have just had of the morass I have been heading for with my wayfaring chat of this writer and that. I have just been casting my eye over a set of articles which I published some years ago on the prose writers from R. L. Stevenson (1850-94) to the eve of the Great War, and so many are the names mentioned in these articles, set up, too, in a distinctive type, that the pages look just like some swamp in which innumerable trunks of trees had foundered and lay about in inert disorder. All through the present

book I have been fighting this tendency to give too many names and I am now resolved to overcome it! For, whereas I could find good reason for printing two or three hundred names of recent and living writers with at least some claim to be mentioned, I shall limit my concluding notice of the period to not more than a score; and in doing so I shall feel that I am best serving the interests of my present readers.

Chief of this group of moderns who must still engage us stands R. L. Stevenson. When I look upon the veteran and beautiful face of Augustine Birrell and realize that he was born in the same year as R.L.S. who has been dead for more than thirty years, I am impressed by the marvel of achievement which a short life may contain and also by the immortality of youth in which the name and character of Stevenson so happily endure. Youth is immortal and the whole secret of R.L.S. is a contagious sense of youth.

Stevenson as a Master of Prose

OF LATE there has been some effort to minimize Stevenson's posthumous popularity, and as his fame may have been augmented by a good deal of meretricious hero-worship, originating chiefly in that home of so many meretricious things, the United States of America, a squirt or two of cold water on the votive flames will do no harm. Few indeed in the annals of literature are the reputations that are secure against all the assaults of time.

Stevenson's is not of these few: while he is sufficiently distant to be appreciated with some detachment, he is still too recent for the mind of his lingering generation to be swept so clean of prejudice as to pass unclouded judgment. But of this we may be sure: his name more than that of any other contemporary prose master will rubricate the two closing decades of the nineteenth century. And that because Stevenson was the true herald of a return to literary style in an age when slovenliness was common. Stevenson realized with Lowell that the true preservative of literature is style: he never wrote a careless or ill-considered phrase. Read Kidnapped and Treasure Island, remembering that they were originally written for a boys' paper in which he might have flung off his story without the least regard to literary grace and with only a slight concession to the laws of grammar. Yet they were written with all that sensitive feeling for the rhythm of prose, with all that savor of the right and just word, which marked his finest work at the height of his intellectual powers. He carried the banner of literary style and set it on an alp, where it has since fluttered to some purpose, as no writer of real note who has arisen since the 'eighties of last century has been able to disregard the improved standard of taste in prose form.

Stevenson has been described as 'the happiest master of vagabond discourse in the whole of the nineteenth century.' He traveled directly for his health's sake; the indirect benefit of his travels to English literature it is difficult to overestimate. He began as an essayist, and his chief prose works, apart from fiction, are An Inland Voyage, Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes, Virginibus Puerisque, Familiar Studies of Men and Books, Memories and Portraits, and Across the

Plains. He won fame first as a writer of romance, and then, turning to the hitherto almost neglected prose essay, captured the public with the most intimate and delightful self-revelations of a winning personality.

Some of his best prose is to be found in his short stories, wherein he excelled all his contemporaries; but nothing that Stevenson wrote should be passed over by the lover of good reading, despite the extraordinary extent to which he has been exploited by the publishers and editors of two hemispheres and the way in which every scrap of his juvenilia and every letter and postcard he wrote has been turned to account by friends to whom he addressed himself perhaps too generously.

My reference above to Augustine Birrell was prompted by the thought of what R.L.S. might have achieved and what he would have looked like at the age of seventy-five. Somehow one feels he was never meant to live into the age of completed things. It is difficult for the mind to picture Stevenson supervising 'final' editions of his essays, his travels, his short stories and his romances. That glorious sense of youth which distils from all his works must have sensibly diminished had the magician lived to grow paunchy and grandfatherly. But as for Augustine Birrell, no years short of a hundred could sit awkwardly upon the author of Obiter Dicta, and we rejoice that he has lived to collect all his charming essays into a completed set of volumes to which he has contributed a characteristically frank and revealing introduction. Birrell belongs, like Lamb, to the amateurs of the pen, as literature has never been more than a walking stick to him; the law and politics have been his crutches. But it was a very elegant walking stick!

William Robertson Nicoll and Robert Blatchford are two names that have seldom been brought into conjunction, but both were born in the same year, 1851, Nicoll, who died in 1923, played a unique rôle in the literary world of his time. He was a critic of the utmost catholicity, nearly always right in his opinions, as his taste in letters was delicate and true, and if his own style had none of the polished beauty of a Stevenson, or even the suave and poised movement of a Birrell, it was still supple and pleasing. I should hardly class him among the prose masters, but at his best he seemed almost worthy of the succession of the great critics of literature and failed of a high and permanent place only because he was too much a journalist to take the excessive pains which literature demands.

And what of Blatchford in this galley? Simply this, that no man who has taken to journalism and the craft of writing in our day has, in my estimation, a better natural gift. He resembles Cobbett in many ways. He has done more for socialism with his pen than any contemporary, and in his old age I doubt if he contemplates his political achievement with the joy he had in dedicating his pen, some forty years ago, to the service of the under-dog. But Blatchford's gift of prose makes his best work—not his later and possibly hastier journalism—well worth reading even if we are left cold by his arguments.

The Author of Green Mansions

W. H. Hudson, who died in 1922, probably dates from about this period; he was one of those men who have a feminine reticence about the date of their birth. Hudson must be placed with the best of the prose masters of his age. His style, which is so perfectly contrived for the forthright expression of his observations and opinions that it seems to make use of the only possible words, and these the simplest, has that rare and tenuous charm which pleases continuously without ever making you conscious of the art that is the source of your pleasure. He has no sort of resemblance to Stevenson and yet in this matter of pure prose he is his peer. Everything of Hudson's will repay reading; no man in our time has looked upon wild nature with a more understanding eye or depicted it with a more friendly pen. The Naturalist in La Plata, and Far Away and Long Ago are my own favorites among his many books, and if I have a strong affection for The Purple Land and Green Mansions, it is for their style rather than their stories; in which neither quite succeeds.

Arthur Bingham Walkley (b. 1855)—to give his cumbrous baptismal appellation to one who has been so long known and admired as 'A. B. W.'—must at least have mention in any review of the prose writers of the last fifty years, although his books are almost without exception reprints of his newspaper criticisms. The theater chiefly, literature frequently, and occasionally aspects of life, are the subjects that have engaged his most adroit and pleasing pen and, if he makes overmuch parade of his classic lore, we can forgive that for the unfailing entertainment to be derived from his nimble wit.

The women writers worthy of note for their mastery of prose are lamentably few. Alice Meynell (1850-1922) never wrote anything that was not distinguished, but her work in prose was slight and ephemeral. Violet Paget (b. 1856), under her pen-name of Vernon Lee, is the woman writer that comes first to one's mind when thinking of the feminine hand in prose-writing. At a later date Dora Sigerson Shorter (1872-1918), one of the most gifted of Ireland's latter-day poets, also produced some finely sensitive work in prose, but Vernon Lee remains of modern women writers the one who can rank in this matter with the best of her contemporaries. Her sketches of travel, her essays and studies of Renaissance Italy, her short stories —all are instinct with an enduring charm of manner.

Clement Shorter (b. 1858) as a critic and biographer, who specialized on the Brontës and George Borrow; Havelock Ellis (b. 1859) as a brilliant writer on social science and philosophy; Sir Sidney Lee (b. 1859) as our leading biographer with a classic to his credit in A Life of William Shakespeare; Sir Walter Raleigh (1861-1922) who gave us so much important literary criticism in his monographs on The English Novel and on Style, and in his studies of Milton, Wordsworth and Stevenson; Arthur Christopher Benson (1862-1925) who won for the essay a popularity rivaling that of the successful novel; Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (b. 1863) who as 'Q' first made a reputation as a novelist and

then a later and perhaps more enduring name as a critic of literature; Arthur Machen (b. 1863), who in The Hill of Dreams, The House of Souls, Far Off Things, and other rare and individual works, has shown himself almost too much of an artist in words, but still an adept at suggesting color and atmosphere, a master of the short story and the essay; Arthur Symons (b. 1865), a real prose master, author of numerous works in criticism, interpretive biography, description and the spirit of place; Richard Le Gallienne (b. 1866), an essential man of letters who has written with distinction on many literary subjects since he produced his brilliant study of Meredith in 1890; Herbert George Wells (b. 1866), the most astonishing figure in the English world of letters to-day, concerning whom I shall have a good deal to say in a later chapter—all these and many another that could be mentioned might profitably engage my pen were I writing regardless of space, but having noted them and two more who claim special mention, I shall make an end of this subject with some observations of a general nature.

Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton

Of the two that must be particularized, the first is Hilaire Belloc (b. 1870), one of the most accomplished and versatile of English men of letters. An essayist of lightest touch, deft artist in descriptive narrative, an engaging novelist, brilliant biographer, a writer of verse, learned exponent of French history, authoritative critic of military affairs, a student of politics—he is one of the few who, in an age of narrow specialization, have maintained the larger tradition of the finest periods of literature by displaying a wide range of interest and confident power in many branches of the art.

But first and last he is an essayist with a notable gift of humor, at once urbane and hearty, which lights up most of his writing. The Path to Rome is one of his most characteristic works, and is worthy to stand with any of Stevenson's travel books; The Four Men is also a masterpiece of imaginative adventure; but indeed anything of Belloc's, if we exclude his ventures in politics, is worth reading.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (b. 1873) is preeminent among our present-day critics and miscellaneous writers. Here I am in no way concerned with his opinions on social and religious matters, to which he has treated us with engaging frankness. Nor shall I discuss the possibility that his use of paradox as a literary device may have led him whither he had not intended to go, but being arrived decided to remain. Ian Maclaren used to say that his fellow-countrymen would follow a logical argument even if it carried them over a precipice; G.K.C. is no Scot, but paradox may have served him as logic does the Scots. That he is always interesting, and probably most interesting when the reader least agrees with his opinions, is a commonplace. Assuredly the Chestertonian slogan is: 'To be Interesting is Everything.' Nevertheless you cannot read him in such works as his Dickens, George Bernard Shaw, or The Victorian Age in Literature without stimulation, and his numerous collections of essays, like All Things Considered and Tre-

mendous Trifles, are unfailing sources of entertainment. His literary style, though always nervous and bright, lacks that agreeable touch of courtliness which gives distinction to the prose of his friend and sometime collaborator, Hilaire Belloc.

The twentieth century prose writers carry forward the literary tradition on lines somewhat different from those that were followed by their immediate predecessors. It has been shown how the newspaper and the magazine diverted the great eighteenth century talent for letter-writing into public instead of private channels. We have now to notice how the changes in the newspapers and magazines themselves have modified the style and, to a considerable extent, the point of view of the writers of to-day. Here and there are a few young writers who haunt the old paths, the 'bookish' shades; but in the main the essay has become the 'article,' and the article, as a rule, has a very definite character foreign to the essay proper. That is due in its turn to the progress of that popular movement inaugurated by the first Reform Act and the rise of the newspaper press. The article is, in other words, the answer to the demand of the people for concise information on subjects which they have had no special opportunity to study.

With the development of education the specialized power of the pen passed from the hands of an exclusive 'literary' class; the men of letters ceased to be a sort of priesthood. There is no literary class to-day, although vastly more men and women make their livelihood by the pen than in any previous age. There is no literary class because so many who are potentially literary are content to remain readers. Then, again, those who write for a livelihood must address themselves to the interpretation and solution of what are called 'questions of the day,' since it is 'journalistic interest' that rules. These 'questions,' it is true, are often literary in a sense, but every writer who now secures any considerable hold upon the public is compelled to recognize that life is greater than literature.

Certain imaginative thinkers have forecast a time when the human intellect shall have invented some means of thought communication that will be of more instantaneous effect than the written word. The railway, the penny post, the electric telegraph, the telephone, wireless, the many inventions of the printing press, may be but landmarks on the way to a time when the finished essay or article, the most graphic literary art, shall take its place with the pictographs of the primeval savage and the clay tablets of ancient civilization.

But that time is not yet, and the pathetic imbecility of the drivel which is 'broadcast' by wireless for the supposed entertainment and instruction of the million-eared public of listeners makes one doubt if the medium that is to eclipse the printed word has yet been discovered. Meanwhile, the demand for the 'human,' as distinct from the 'literary' in letters has led to a vast increase in the output of fiction. The vogue of the novel has been attended by revolutionary changes in the form of that species of literary work, and has drawn into the service of fiction great numbers of men and women who under less competitive conditions

might have devoted their gifts and talents to other departments of literary production.

A notable example is found in George Meredith, whose avowedly critical work is represented by one tiny volume, his Essay on Comedy. J. M. Barrie is another whom the novel, and later, the stage has claimed, though his miscellaneous writings in literary criticism, not yet, and little likely ever to be, collected into book form, disclose a very uncommon talent for criticism.

The most appreciable effect of the Great War upon the habit of reading was to discover to a wide public that fiction was not the only sort of prose that might be readable; notably the essay, or at least the 'article' form of the essay, came into vogue, and of late years a hundred books by essayists and descriptive writers have seemingly found readers where before the war not more than five would have tempted a publisher to put them into circulation. This is a healthy sign and so is the extraordinary demand for books of personal recollection and reminiscence. History also has been vastly more favored of the 'common reader' and withal the novel has actually grown in popularity. Though it is often lamented that our literary standards are low and commercial, the student cannot escape from the conclusion that the general level of prose literature in the first quarter of the twentieth century is wonderfully high, higher than the mean of the nineteenth.

XVIII

THE NOVEL AND ITS CREATORS

Some Notes on the Novelists Who Preceded Scott

Prose fiction may be the very essence of truth; in the hands of the master writers it is truth. An historical novel, wherein the actual facts of history are altered by the romancist to suit his plot, may present a picture of the time in which its action takes place that is closer to life than a factual chronicle would be. By sheer mental vision the novelist sees and conveys to us an impression of the truth that is more vivid, more lasting, than the historian, with his procession of recorded facts, may be able to make it to us.

Cut out the romance, the novel and the short story from English literature, and it would be small comfort to protest that there still remained to us the history, the essay, the poem and the drama; yes, even though these preserved a Carlyle, a Lamb, a Wordsworth and a Shakespeare. Our prose fiction must be accounted one of our greatest national treasures.

The great novel, is, in a word, one of the most indispensable means of modern culture. Jane Austen's description of the novel as it should be can hardly be improved upon. A novel, according to this charming exponent of one phase of the art of fiction, is a work—

> in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest varieties of wit and humor, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen words.

And R. L. Stevenson wrote

The most influential books, and the truest their influence, are works of fiction. They peat, they rearrange, they clarify the les- ns of life; they disengage us from ourselves, ey constrain us to the acquaintance of hers, and they show us the web of ex- rience, but with a singular change—that onstrous, consuming ego of ours being, for e nonce, struck out.

When worthy of the name, the ovel combines the essential qualities f drama and poetry; when perfectly shioned it is as much a work of rt as a statue by Pheidias or Prax- eles, or a painting by Raphael or itian, and it demands and deserves be judged accordingly. It is too requently forgotten that novels, as form of art, must be regarded as e regard dramas and poems. Drama is composed of two main di- isions, comedy and tragedy; but ach of these divisions has many sub- ivisions, and the quality of a play s to be judged by its relation to the tandard of its particular division. his is true of the poem and its re- ation to what we understand by the pic, the narrative, and the lyrical tandards. What is true of the play nd the poem is true of the novel: vith the further point, that the novel s susceptible of more numerous radations, a more intricate classifi- ation.

Beginnings of the Novel

IT DOES not fall within the scope of this short study of the begin- nings of English fiction to trace the rigin of the novel back to the dawn f folk-lore and legend. There is o trait in human nature more uni- ersal than the love of story-telling nd story-hearing. The first of nov- lists were most probably the pro- essional story-tellers of the East. The old tales and legends and ro- nances, from which the modern novel has sprung, passed from one generation to another by word of mouth. Their history is akin to that of the Hindu Scriptures. One evidence of the love of the story and of its utility is the interest awakened in the young by the stories and parables of the Bible.

It was due to the first English translators of The Decameron, Lazarillo de Tormes, Don Quixote and other imaginative works that the novel of adventure and gallantry, the pastoral romance, and the picaresque novel (or novel of roguery, of Spanish origin, but inspiring that immortal work Gil Blas, by the Frenchman Le Sage), had become naturalized in Britain by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, England had produced a form of prose fiction which was indigenous. The outstanding examples were the Latin allegories of More (Utopia, 1516), Barclay (Argenis, 1621), and Bacon (New Atlantis, 1627). In 1579-80 appeared Euphues, the first original prose novel written in English. The author of this work was John Lyly (c. 1554-1606), of whom as a dramatist I have already written. The story is quite uninteresting to the modern reader; but the style in which it was written suggested a new word, 'euphuism,' and promoted a form of popular 'polite' dialogue, the influence of which is traceable in Shakespeare (Adriano de Armado, in Love's Labor's Lost, and Malvolio, in Twelfth Night); Ben Jonson (Puntarvolo, in Every Man out of His Humor), and Sir Walter Scott (Sir Piercy Shafton, in The Monastery). Lyly has been unduly despised and much misrepresented. His importance as one of the first writers of witty prose dialogue in English

is the chief fact in regard to him that the student has to bear in mind.

Next to Lyly's Euphues the posthumous Arcadia (1590) of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) claims attention. Indebted as Sidney was to foreign influence, and particularly to the Italian Sannazaro and the Portuguese Montemayor, both disciples of Boccaccio, his pastoral romance enshrines true passion and has a ring of chivalrous sincerity that is absent from Euphues. Sidney borrowed, but gave also. French and English writers felt his influence. Shakespeare is one of his debtors, and Sir Walter Raleigh points out that Richardson is the direct inheritor of the analytic and sentimental method in romance which Sidney developed.

The Arcadia (as Raleigh observes) is in some sort a half-way house between the older romances of chivalry and the long-winded 'heroic' romances of the seventeenth century. Action and adventure are already giving way to the description of sentiment, or are remaining merely as a frame on which the diverse colored flower of sentiment may be broidered.

The Pilgrim's Progress, written by John Bunyan (1628-88), in Bedford gaol, and published in 1678, was addressed to the simple understanding of the 'common people.' It is the first great popular allegorical narrative in the language, and its history provides a permanent moral for all writers who seek to influence their fellows by the use of the pen. Twenty years after the appearance of The Pilgrim's Progress, two works by Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-89), Oroonoko and The Fair Jilt, were published posthumously. With these works the novel of contemporary life may be said to have begun. The Fair Jilt is of little importance; Oroonoko anticipated Rousseau.

Then came Daniel Defoe (1659-1731), one of the greatest realists in English letters. With him the art that conceals the author from the reader, and induces the latter to believe that what he is perusing is a transcript from unquestionable first-hand evidence, attained a standard that has been but seldom if ever excelled by later writers. The world-famous Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner (1719), is Defoe's finest work; but his Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, and Roxana are still read as typical examples of the Newgate Calendar novel at its best.

The realism of Robinson Crusoe finds a counterpart in The Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver, of Jonathan Swift (1667-1745). In neither work, it will be observed, is any great appeal made to the emotions.

Samuel Richardson

The 'literature of the drawing-room,' which Lyly began, was humanized by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), who may be called the father of the domestic novel. As a lad he was the confidant of the young women in the neighborhood of his home in Derbyshire, the whereabouts of which, for some obscure reason, he successfully concealed. He read and wrote their love letters for them, which accounts in some measure for his extraordinary success as a writer, chiefly for women, in his later years.

At the age of two score and ten, when he was a printer in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, and possibly, it is suggested, after he had read Marivaux's Vie de Marianne, as translated and continued by Mme. Riccoboni (1736), Richardson—who

new no language but English—was duced by two bookseller friends to ake up the task of writing a book f Familiar Letters on the Useful oncerns in Common Life. He was oubtless engaged in this work when e became acquainted with the story hich inspired his first novel, Pam-a; or Virtue Rewarded (1740), lthough the latter was published everal months before the Familiar etters. Clarissa Harlowe followed n 1748, and Sir Charles Grandison n 1753. These three works form, s Sir Walter Raleigh has remarked, kind of trilogy, dealing respec-vely with humble, middle-class, and igh life. One of the most remark-ble things in connection with Rich-rdson's work is the deep and abid-ng interest it has aroused in France. Richardson's adoption of the epis-olary style was at once condemned y Fielding; but, though Fielding's rotest was well grounded, the nethod had its advantages, and is ometimes adopted even now. Per-aps the greatest obstacle in the way f a popular appreciation of Rich-rdson to-day is his prolixity; and nother drawback is his passion for noralizing.

To be perfectly honest, I am un-ble to urge Richardson upon the eneral reader. The abnormal length f his novels, their sluggish move-nent, their lack of real dramatic ction, their mawkish sentimentality —these are defects enough to en-ourage the dust upon them. Let nyone who has not yet attempted o follow the adventures of Pamela, ne of the least attractive females n the whole realm of fiction, or the mpossible story of Clarissa Har-owe, or the soporific and interminable history of Sir Charles Grandison —let anyone do so, the attempt may at least be made—and none will blame him if he concludes that Richardson is not his favorite romancer.

For the student of eighteenth century life, however, the novels of Richardson contain much that is invaluable, as the little printer could certainly observe and portray character as he saw it. Indeed, the fact that he could have won with these three books such immense popularity as he enjoyed in his own day is of itself a valuable index to the mind of his age. We live in brisker times, and are happily less sentimental in the twentieth century. Compare modern character as a whole with that illustrated by Richardson, and it will be found that the change is all for the better. Andrew Lang could not read Rob Roy until he was forty. I read Pamela when I was nearer fourteen—chiefly because my mother prohibited the book—and it would have been no deplorable thing had I postponed its reading until after forty, or even until four-score years! But it is unwise to dogmatize over Richardson, and the taste of each reader must decide the matter for himself.

Two years after Pamela was issued there appeared The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams, Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes, Author of Don Quixote.

Henry Fielding

IN THIS work Henry Fielding (1707-54), barrister, journalist and playwright, essayed a satire and achieved a masterpiece, just as Cervantes himself had done. The Parson Adams of the story takes rank in the gallery of the heroes of English fiction with

Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose as surely as Sophia Western sits with the daughter of the Vicar of Wakefield. The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling, appeared in 1749; Amelia in 1751. The History of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great was published among his Miscellanies in 1743.

Thackeray, whose outlook on the world was similar to Fielding's, has said of him: 'He may have low tastes, but not a mean mind; he admires with all his heart good and virtuous men, stoops to no flattery, bears no rancor, disdains all disloyal arts, does his public duty uprightly, is fondly loved by his family, and dies at his work.' Thackeray's appreciation is a good antidote to much of the depreciatory criticism that has been passed upon Fielding the man.

As a literary artist, if not as a reader of the human heart, Fielding has a place above Richardson, and Sir Walter Scott styled him the Father of the English Novel. He is a humorist, which Richardson is not. His knowledge of life is wide, his sympathies are catholic, his humor is of the rarest vintage, his style is like the vigor of a spring morning and his constructive faculty is classical. 'There could,' says Raleigh, 'be no better school for a novelist than is afforded by the study of Fielding's plots.'

Fielding is securely a classic; his novels are as charged with life to-day as when they first won the admiration of his contemporaries. Dr. Johnson considered Tom Jones vicious, though he was fascinated by Amelia; but if the former great novel is too indulgent to the frailties of man, it is an open question whether it may not be so and yet remain a work of sounder morality —certainly far less nauseating—than Richardson's Pamela, in which we are supposed to witness 'virtue rewarded,' but a brand of 'virtue' that will not bear analysis. Fielding has created a crowded gallery of memorable characters—the true test of the novelist—and student and general reader alike must read him, though neither will need compulsion to the task.

Sterne, Smollett, Goldsmith

IN ADDITION to Fielding, three other novelists are included among Thackeray's representative humorists of the eighteenth century. In the case of Laurence Sterne (1713-68), however, a distinction is made with which most modern readers will agree. The distinction is that Sterne is a great jester rather than a great humorist. 'He fatigues me with his perpetual disquiet and his uneasy appeals to my risible or sentimental faculties. He is always looking in my face, watching his effect, uncertain whether I think him an impostor or not; posture-making, coaxing, and imploring me.'

The author of The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (1759-1767), and A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy (1765) owed much, doubtless, to an acquaintance with the works of Rabelais and Cervantes and Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621); but, as Augustine Birrell has said, 'Sterne is our best example of the plagiarist whom none dare make ashamed.'

Careless, usually of his grammar, he can on occasion find the 'only word.' He is ribald, but not salacious. As a sentimentalist, he may be —he is—tedious and tiresome. His

morals may be bad, but one doubts with Coleridge if they can do much harm to anyone who was not bad enough before. At the lowest estimate, Sterne is a great master of the art of telling a story in an interesting way.

THE Hogarth of English Letters is a phrase applied to Tobias Smollett (1721-71). Like Fielding, Smollett commands respect because he was a hard worker. He had 'the very deuce' of a temper, maybe; but he sustained many hard, unkindly blows of ill-fortune. He was a stout and manly-hearted Scotsman.

Masson includes The Adventures of Roderick Random (1748), The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751), and The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (1771), with Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, as novels nearly as amusing as any we have' (1859). In them, he says, 'for the first time, British literature possessed compositions making any approach, in breadth, bustle and variety of interest to that form of literature, always theoretically possible, and of which other countries had already had specimens in Don Quixote, and Gil Blas—the comic prose epic of contemporary life.'

In the novels of Fielding and Smollett is represented the kaleidoscope of life, whereas Richardson keeps the attention more intimate with the feelings of his chief characters. It is one of Smollett's assets that he is Scots; and though Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle should cease to be read, Scotsmen, in the opinion of Masson, 'would still have an interest in preserving Humphrey Clinker.' Like Fielding and Sterne, Smollett was a creator of types; but his own life affords a singular contrast to that led by some of his literary creations.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S (1728-74) one novel, The Vicar of Wakefield, written though it was with a moral motive akin to that which induced Richardson to write Pamela, is a work that stands alone. 'There are a hundred faults in the thing,' says the author in his preface; but as it has been wittily observed, a hundred things might plausibly be said to prove them beauties. The 'charming prose idyl of dear Irish Goldy' may be described both as highly improbable and as intimately true to nature. Written in 1761, The Vicar of Wakefield was not published till 1766.

The Novel's Growing Popularity

THE future all-consuming popularity of the novel was already beginning to be revealed in the multiplicity of works of fiction that preceded the epochal appearance of Waverley in 1814. Although Fielding had set up a definite and adaptable form for the novel of character—Tom Jones, which appeared in 1749, is as modern in style as though it had been written by a novelist of our own day—and despite the fresh naturalness of The Vicar of Wakefield, the tendency was to tickle the palate of the common reader with tales of so-called 'Gothic romance,' a euphemism for crudely conceived stories of improbable adventures in remote and gloomy castles. Horace Walpole in The Castle of Otranto produced one of the best of this bad type. There were, however, many other fictions of merit and some that have endured

in reputation at least until our own day: Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling, for example; The Monk, by Matthew Gregory Lewis; Vathek, by William Beckford; Charles Robert Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer; and William Godwin's Caleb Williams.

The number of women writers who came forward in response to the demand for interesting and sensational novels is very noteworthy: Sarah Fielding, the sister of the author of Tom Jones; Clara Reeve, highly popular with romantic trash like The Old English Baron; Ann Radcliffe with The Mysteries of Udolpho, and the original creator of the villain type that later developed into a stock figure of Victorian melodrama; Mrs. Inchbald, who wrote A Simple Story, which still finds readers; Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Opie and Regina Maria Roche—these are some of the names that occur in this connection; but there were in particular four women novelists whose work excelled the standard of any of those mentioned, and I shall conclude this chapter with some observations upon them.

Fanny Burney, Madame d'Arblay, is one of the most attractive literary figures of her day, which was a long one as she lived from 1752 until 1840. When she was twenty-six she published Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World, which, according to Macaulay, 'was the first tale written by a woman, and purporting to be a picture of life and manners, that lived or deserved to live. It took away reproach from the novel.' In many respects the publication of Evelina, which was written in the epistolary manner, resembled that of Jane Eyre, a century later. It was issued anonymously by a firm that did not know the name of the writer. Only the children of the household from which the book came knew its origin. It attained an immediate and immense success, which gave the author, a shrinking and modest little lady, a foremost place in the literary world of her day.

Fanny Burney, who was the second daughter of Dr. Burney, had picked up an education at home, without any tuition whatever, but had the advantage of browsing in her father's large miscellaneous library, and observing his brilliant circle of friends. She knew something of the Johnson circle before she wrote Evelina, and became the doctor's pet. Later, Fanny Burney wrote Cecilia, longer and more complex than Evelina, and for this she received two thousand guineas. Camilla brought her three thousand guineas.

The appearance of Evelina was a real event in the annals of fiction, for Fanny Burney had caught the secret of the quiet charm that may be disengaged from a narration of a series of entirely credible events imagined as taking place in the course of everyday domestic life. In this she was the precursor of a greater than herself—Jane Austen.

But some ten years before the immortal Jane had made her public appeal another woman novelist of classic measure had arrived in the person of Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), whose delightful character finds eloquent expression in her first novel, Castle Rackrent, published anonymously in 1800. This is in many respects her best work. Later came The Absentee, Belinda, Helen, Tales of Fashionable Life, and Moral

Tales. Sir Walter Scott confessed hat reading these stories of Irish peasant life made him feel 'that omething might be attempted for ny own country of the same kind s that which Miss Edgeworth so ortunately achieved for Ireland,' omething that would procure for is own countrymen 'sympathies for heir virtues and indulgence for their oibles.' As a study of Irish fidelity n the person of old Thady, the teward who tells the story of Castle Rackrent, the book is a masterpiece. Miss Edgeworth applied a splendid corrective to the passion for the weird and horrible romances which Mrs. Radcliffe, 'Monk' Lewis, and others had made so popular, but which was o be aroused again in 1817 by the Frankenstein of Mary Shelley.

The Genius of Jane Austen

JANE AUSTEN (1775-1817) wrote six novels—Sense and Sensibility (1811), Pride and Prejudice (1812), Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1816), Northanger Abbey (1818), and Persuasion (1818)—all which, together with Fanny Burney's Evelina and Cecilia, are reprinted to-day.

Macaulay suggested, Goldwin Smith adopted, and Raleigh looked favorably upon, a comparison between Jane Austen and Shakespeare. This is derived partly from the absolutely impersonal character of her works. She tells us nothing about herself, and is oblivious of the happenings in the great world beyond her own circle. She is a satirist minus indignation; hers is the quiet irony of the cultured mind. To study her books is to be given a series of invaluable lessons in the art of observation and in precision of detail.

Jane Austen's method was appreciated by Scott. 'The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like any now going, he said; 'but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and sentiment is denied me.'

That appeals to me as in no wise an affectation and scarcely an exaggeration; but when a person of sense reads in Macaulay's diary, 'Read Northanger Abbey; worth all Dickens and Pliny together,' he must feel that Macaulay had his silly moments. Believe me, it is untrue that Jane Austen is worth 'all Dickens and Pliny,' or all Thackeray and Thucydides, or all Trollope and Livy, or any other two such incompatibles you care to name. Quite competent critics occasionally write nonsense in their letters and diaries; Macaulay did not set down that opinion in a reasoned review.

Superior persons who pose as critics will tell you that they make Jane Austen a test of literary taste. If you do not go into raptures when you have read through her novels and instantly begin re-reading them, looking forward with feverish greediness to the third, fourth and heaven-knows-how-many more re-readings to be accomplished before you are lowered into the grave, you are not of the elect.

I know that if I had the choice as between 'all Dickens and Pliny' and Jane Austen I should have no qualms about standing for the Cockney and the Roman. There are many novelists that attract me more than the author of Pride and Prejudice, although I am alive to

all her great merits and her enduring value as a mirror of her time. If any of my readers find that Jane Austen does not engage them they need not therefore despair of acquiring a proper literary taste, always provided that they do not prefer to her a Marie Corelli or an Ethel M. Dell! Nevertheless, I would have everyone read the six famous novels of that marvelous young woman whose life ran to less than half the years of Fanny Burney, and whose work excels her precursor's in durable qualities.

The last name to engage us in this chapter is that of Jane Porter (1776-1850), who wrote two novels that still retain a measure of popularity, Thaddeus of Warsaw and The Scottish Chiefs. Both are eminently readable; and they entered a field which so far had been untrodden—the field of historical romance, the chief glories of which were soon to fail to the anonymous author of The Waverley Novels.

XIX

THE NOVELISTS: SCOTT TO THACKERAY

THERE is a tendency among some latter-day critics to belittle the great figures of our literary history. It is an easy way of attracting attention to oneself; to quibble about Shakespeare, to grow querulous with Scott, to snear at Dickens. To write of our literary heroes with the old enthusiasm, to avow oneself their thrall, is regarded, in certain quarters, as evidence of a commonplace mind.

Well, these little critics have their day and cease to be; their scribblings vanish as the grass that withereth. The heroes remain; nay, they grow greater, for their roots are deep-struck into the fruitful soil of their country's life. Let us be nowise afraid of displaying too much enthusiasm in their praise, though we may be denied the gift of eloquence.

If we are told that nobody reads Scott nowadays; that he's out of date; let us forthwith see that we re-read him. Happier still will be our condition if we have any or all of his novels with which to make first acquaintance. One of the noblest heritages of the Briton is that glorious library of romance, The Waverley Novels. And soon or late most of us awaken to this knowledge; he who fails to apply it remains a poor man in the midst of plenty. As Hazlitt said, Scott's works 'taken altogether are almost like a new edition of human nature.'

There are some writers who appeal to the instincts of men and women only at particular periods of their lives. Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) claims the love and homage if not of the seven ages, of five of them at least. He is easily first of the great writers of English fiction. He is the father of the historical romance. If from the wide range of English literature two champions only had to be selected as representative, the selection would surely fall on Shakespeare and Scott. From every point of view we could spare these least of all of our great imaginative writers.

The career of Sir Walter Scott illustrates the renewal and decision of the old battle between verse and prose for the prerogative possession of romantic themes. Scott 'took the bread out of the mouths of the novelists' by his metrical romances, The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805), Marmion (1808), The Lady of the Lake (1810); then he turned to prose, at first anonymously, as the calling of a novelist seemed derogatory to one who had made a name as poet—a name so soon to be eclipsed by that of Byron. And in prose he quickly proved that the historical and romantic interests need not be imperiled by the admixture of qualities that are known only to prose. In his works the novel proper and the romance, which had long been coquetting with each other, were wedded.

Scott's genius was stirred by several causes—among them being the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, the songs of Burns, the ballads of Bürger, and the early poems of Goethe. Nor should the example of Fielding be discounted. But, as we have heard, it was the Irish novels of Maria Edgeworth that first inspired in him the thought which found such wondrous expression in the Waverley novels.

As a preliminary to their reading one should study the General Preface, written by Scott in 1829, which will be found in the first volume of all good editions; and also the Epistle Introductory to The Fortunes of Nigel, written in 1822. He explains, in the Epistle, that he was quite aware of the aims of Fielding, Smollett, Le Sage and others as writers of novels, but he goes on to remark that it was enough for him could he

> write with sense and spirit a few scenes, unlabored and loosely put together, but which had sufficient interest in them to amuse in one corner the pain of body; in another to relieve anxiety of mind; in a third place to unwrinkle a brow bent with the furrows of daily toil; in another to fill the place of bad thoughts or to suggest better; in yet another to induce the idler to study the history of his country; in all, save where the perusal interrupted the discharge of serious duties, to furnish harmless amusement.

Others before Scott had attempted the historical novel, 'but wholly without his knowledge of history and of the actual way of living and thinking in various periods of the past.' He it was who first made the dry bones of history live. The casual reader needs to be reminded of the stores of varied and accurate learning which were garnered in Scott's capacious mind. This man was a student from his youth upwards. It is important also to secure at the outset of a study of his romances a knowledge of his methods of dealing with history. Scott's plan was never to make a famous character of history the central personage of his tale. He never coped with the records of actual events. But he achieved effects denied to some of the most painstaking and letter-faithful among historians proper.

In all that Scott wrote we breathe the free air of mountain heights. He made goodness interesting without beauty, without overmastering tragedy, without surfeit of sentimentality, without passion. His chivalry is a reproach to all who seek to achieve fame by meaner methods.

> Scott and Homer had a sense of reverence of human things; they did not lack the imagination necessary for the portrayal of the evil and terrible, but they did not seek success

in that popular region. Scott was no prude, but he held the young in reverence, knowing that among them he must have many readers.

SCOTT'S novels, it must be remembered, do not finally depend for their popularity upon their plots. Taking time to arrange a story was a sore point with Scott. He confesses that 'the regular mansion' he always strove to build 'turned out a Gothic anomaly.' But one may be permitted to doubt whether we should have been so long held captive by the spell of the Wizard if he had achieved those trim-built mansions he set out to construct, instead of the crazy gargoyled edifices his rich and vigorous imagination reared for us. In their very irregularity of plot and style lie half their charm and all their vitality. It has to be remembered, also, that much which was new when Scott wrote has long become hackneyed, and as we do not base our claim for Scott on the excellence of his plots, so we do not fall back upon his style, of which the best that can be said is that it is a free and easy medium wherewith he brings more valuable things than style alone before us. R. L. Stevenson, who loved Scott and understood him as well as any critic that ever wrote of him, said many severe things about his literary style. Scott was to Stevenson so gigantic that he could be made the subject of the severest criticism in details without in the least seeming to detract from the mighty mass of his merits.

A Method of Reading the Waverleys

BY TAKING up the novels in the order in which they were published rather than as fancy or other reasons may dictate, the reader will be able to discern the workings of the author's mind when dealing successively with special phases of character and particular situations in human life. As to the introductions and notes, these are not essential to the story in hand, and may be reserved for consideration until each story has been read. The following table gives the date of publication of the novels and an indication of the period with which they deal.

When pub'd	Title	Period
1814	Waverley; or 'Tis Sixty Years Since	1745
1815	Guy Mannering	1760
1816	The Antiquary	1798
1816	Old Mortality	1679
1816	The Black Dwarf*	1708
1817	Rob Roy	1715
1818	The Heart of Midlothian*	1736
1819	A Legend of Montrose	1644
1819	The Bride of Lammermoor*	1700
1819	Ivanhoe	1194
1820	The Monastery	1559
1820	The Abbot	1570
1821	Kenilworth	1575
1821	The Pirate	1700
1822	The Fortunes of Nigel	1620
1823	Quentin Durward	1470
1823	Peveril of the Peak	1660
1823	St. Ronan's Well	1804
1824	Redgauntlet	1770
1825	The Betrothed	1187
1825	The Talisman	1193
1826	Woodstock	1651
1827	The Surgeon's Daughter	1765
1827	The Two Drovers†	1765
1827	The Highland Widow†	1755
1828	My Aunt Margaret's Mirror†	1700
1828	The Tapestried Chamber†	1780
1828	The Laird's Jock†	1600
1828	The Fair Maid of Perth	1402
1829	Anne of Geierstein	1474
1827, 1830	Tales of a Grandfather	1707, 1788
1831	Count Robert of Paris*	1090
1831	Castle Dangerous	1307

* Tales of My Landlord.
† Chronicles of the Canongate.

A glance at the foregoing list will serve to show that with few exceptions Scott, with all his love of the Gothic, preferred to deal in his novels

th periods not far remote from his n time; but he did for Scottish nance what Cervantes did for anish chivalry.

The first seven chapters of Waver- were written in 1805, but, on the vice of a friend, were put away, d only recalled by the success of iss Edgeworth and the task of com- eting Queenhoo Hall, an unfinished nance by James Strutt. The lost anuscript was discovered when ott was in quest of fishing tackle, d the story was finished in four eks. These facts are of particular terest as showing that Scott did t take to the writing of prose tion because Byron had outrun n in poetry.

Thenceforward, for sixteen years, ys Herford, in his Age of Words- rth:

> wonderful series of the 'Scotch novels,' they were called, issued from the Bal- tynes' press without a pause; and for the t ten, at least, their appearance was tched for as eagerly in Paris and Weimar in London. The poems had thrown the itish world into a passing excitement; the vels enlarged the intellectual horizon of Europe, created in half a dozen nations novel of national life, and opened a new och in the study of history.

ONE ever had any measure of doubt as to the importance of the vel in English literature, one could but a little way in the study of neteenth century fiction ere realiz- that among its chief glories, if t, indeed, the chief glory, of Eng- h letters during that period, was e novel. We have seen how his erary form originated, how it was climatized in England, and how in e prose fiction of Scott it quickly ached the very height of its possi- ities.

As we proceed we shall find the vel developing immeasurably be- yond the conception of its earlier exponents; we shall note what was originally no more than a form of amusement, touched and immortal- ized at times by true art, becoming an instrument of social, political and religious propaganda.

One of Scott's contemporaries and followers in fiction was John Galt (1779-1839), who wrote a long series of Scottish tales, and was the real progenitor of the so-called Kailyard School, revived with so much clatter in the nineties. Any of Galt's novels is worth reading; Annals of the Parish, The Entail, The Provost, and Sir Andrew Wylie I recall among those I read with pleasure some thirty years ago. The pathetic Auto- biography of Mansie Wauch, often attributed to Galt, was, however, the work of David Macbeth Moir (1798- 1851). In The Adventures of Hajji Baba, James Justinian Morier's (c.1780-1849) intimate knowledge of Persian life is displayed to advantage, and there is some of the real stuff of romance in Salathiel by George Croly (1780-1860).

Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) poured no little wit and knowledge of character into the seven novels which stand to his name: Headlong Hall, Melincourt, Nightmare Abbey, Maid Marian, The Misfortunes of Elphin, Crotchet Castle, and Gryll Grange. These works remain, like those of Landor, caviare to the gen- eral reader, but must not be neg- lected by the student. Their whim- sical humor is set off by the songs and lyrics scattered through them.

FRANCES TROLLOPE (1780-1863), the mother of Anthony Trollope, was an industrious writer, of whose many novels The Vicar of Wrexhill and

The Widow Barnaby are best remembered. Her books throw much illumination on the manners and temper of one of the most interesting periods of modern English history. Susan Edmonstone Ferrier (1782-1854) was a caustic but kindly-hearted delineator of old maids, pretty inanities, gauche doctors and mock heroes. Like Maria Edgeworth and Fanny Burney, Miss Ferrier in Marriage, The Inheritance, and Destiny, laid bare the 'humors' of her time. A gifted satirist of her sex, she found a wealth of material in the society amid which she moved in Edinburgh. Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855) wrote Our Village, a series of delightful sketches which enshrine the life of the little hamlet of Three Mile Cross, near Reading, with a fidelity borrowed from Crabbe, a smoothness that recalls Jane Austen's pictures of Steventon, and a pleasant humor that was all her own.

With William Nugent Glascock (1787-1847) began the novel of the sea, which developed in the hands of Michael Scott (1789-1835), author of Tom Cringle's Log and The Cruise of the Midge, two of the best sea stories ever written, though discursive and lacking literary grace, and other writers until Captain Frederick Marryat (1792-1848) made the fiction of the sea a real asset of our national literature. When we think to-day of sea stories the name of Marryat almost instantly leaps to the mind, and that is as good a test of literary fitness as any. Marryat's Peter Simple, Jacob Faithful, and Mr. Midshipman Easy are, perhaps, the best and most popular of his many works, whose author owed much to his study of Smollett.

With William Hamilton Maxwell (1792-1850) we come into touch with a school of military novelists which also included George Robert Gleig (1796-1888), Charles James Lever (1806-72), author of Charles O'Malley and some three dozen other rollicking Irish stories, many of them extremely entertaining and extremely untrue to life, and James Grant (1822-77), of whose fifty-odd works The Romance of War and Adventures of an Aide-de-Camp are still worth reading.

Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry well represent William Carleton (1794-1869); and of the writings of Samuel Lover (1797-1868), another Irish novelist, He Would Be a Gentleman and Handy Andy are among the best. John Banim (1800-42) and Michael Banim (1796-1874) collaborated in The O'Hara Tales, a series of melodramatic stories illustrating Irish life, also reflected in the novels of Mrs. Carter Hall (1800-81). Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) wrote in Frankenstein a novel which, despite its horrible theme—the creation by a student of a semi-human monster—possesses sufficient of the elements of human interest to preserve it from oblivion.

We shall pass G. P. R. James and W. Harrison Ainsworth with no more than a nod, but I confess to having read the latter's Old Saint Paul's and The Tower of London with some exhilaration in my youth and have no doubt that worse fiction is in demand from living writers at higher rates per thousand words than James or Ainsworth received. But George Henry Borrow (1803-81) holds us for more than a moment. There is a sort of cult of Borrow, which glori-

ies the gipsy life, the foaming tank-
ard and a swagger of scholarship.
With this I have little sympathy, al-
though in common with many an-
other bookman I owe some of the
beatific hours of life to Lavengro
and The Romany Rye, as well as to
his inimitable travel books. Borrow
s only a novelist in the picaresque
sense, his fictional works lacking
form and being mainly rambling
records of imaginary adventures and
experiences, probably in some in-
stances as actual as the happenings
n his travel books. For I confess
that I have doubted many of his
statements in The Bible in Spain,
The Zincali, and Wild Wales, but
never felt that his veracity mattered
two pins so long as he continued to
fascinate me with the manner of his
tale. Borrow did much to help on
the renascence of wonder' with his
two fine stories. They are unrivaled
n the virile simplicity of their style
and they charm by reason of the in-
tense interest immediately felt in the
autobiographic narrative.

The Novels of Bulwer-Lytton

We encounter a novelist in a large way of business, as against one who might be described as an inspired amateur, when we turn from Borrow to Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton (1803-73). One of the most prominent and, during his lifetime, one of the most popular of the Victorian novelists, he played a part in fiction similar to that fulfilled by Byron in poetry. He posed as the man of the world in Pelham, as the man of feeling in Ernest Maltravers (which Elizabeth Barrett admired against Browning's severer judgment), and as the man of mystery in Zanoni. The novel of horrors has in A Strange Story a supreme example; than The Haunted and the Haunters, contributed to a magazine which had hailed Lytton as a charlatan, no better ghost story has been written. With high success, too, Lytton entered the historical romance, and in The Last Days of Pompeii, The Last of the Barons, Rienzi, and Harold, if he cannot rank with the author of Waverley at his best, he is at least equal to Sir Walter's second best; the criminal novel in Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram; and the novel of domestic life and ambition in The Caxtons, My Novel, and What Will He Do With It?—all, to say the very least, eminently readable fictions, even though we can discern in them the parentage of the penny novelette.

It is easy to condemn Lytton, as it was easy, once the trick of his style had been caught, to imitate or to satirize him; but his work has a certain importance in the evolution of the novel. For a time Lytton's success eclipsed the popularity of Scott; that Scott came to his own again, and that Lytton now occupies quite a minor place in English letters, are facts the reasons for which will soon be fairly obvious to any conscientious student.

A writer who, with Ainsworth and Lytton, came under the lash of Thackeray's pungent satire, but who was a much greater man than either, was Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81). Disraeli's career and versatility afford a parallel to the life and activities of Lytton; but he won greater distinction as statesman than as novelist, and his works are valuable chiefly as so many keys to the secret of his extraordinary progress from obscurity to power and place. Con-

ingsby, Sybil, Tancred, Lothair, and Endymion possess permanent interest for the student of politics.

While there is much of interest that I might touch upon in naming the lesser novelists such as Julian Pardoe, Samuel Warren and Anne Manning, I would rather give this paragraph to Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-65) before passing on to discuss Thackeray and Dickens. For the fictional writings of Mrs. Gaskell form a real link between the work of Jane Austen and that of Charlotte Brontë, whose biographer she was. Mary Barton is a passionate tale of the sorrows of the Manchester poor, and a book of real power. Although latter-day realism has accustomed us to stories of the under-dog and 'harrowing details,' in 1848, when the industrial conditions were such as the present generation has nowhere had to endure in Great Britain, the story of Mary Barton was received with some unrighteous indignation. But Cranford is a thing of lavender and old lace, surely the mother of all the prose idyls that have followed and an assured classic.

The Two Aspects of Thackeray

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63), one of the giants of English letters, has to be considered, as Scott is considered, in two aspects—as a great novelist and also as a great moral influence. No one who knows Thackeray can ever misinterpret the meaning of the word gentleman, or, with Thackeray in his mind, fail to distinguish the real from the sham in character or in sentiment.

Thackeray has been lightly called a cynic. That word applied to him is wholly misused. No writer since Scott had so true or gentle a heart as Thackeray had, and his works are indeed, like Scott's, 'a liberal education.' At the same time there is a great deal of force in the contention that, whilst Thackeray saw, loved, felt, and makes us love, the higher, brighter, purer side of life, he had a surer hand when depicting what was base and artificial. For explanation of this we must look to the political and social circumstances of the time in which he lived and wrote, and to his peculiar sensitiveness to all around him. Thackeray is no cynic. He is the greatest of English satirists, who gibbeted snobbery for all time.

With Thackeray, philosophy worthy of the name first showed itself in English fiction; by the side of Thackeray's work, what Lytton passed off as philosophy is seen to be mere affectation. Of Thackeray's novels, Pendennis, Esmond, and The Newcomes are unquestionably the masterpieces. They reflect life. As Professor Saintsbury says:

> Every act, every scene, every person in these three books is real with a reality which has been idealized just up to, and not beyond, the necessities of literature. It does not matter what the acts, the scenes, the personages may be. Whether we are at the height of romantic passion with Esmond's devotion to Beatrix, and his transactions with the duke and the prince over diamonds and title-deeds; whether the note is that of the simplest human pathos, as in Colonel Newcome's deathbed scene; whether we are indulged with society at Baymouth and Oxbridge; whether we take part in Marlborough's campaigns or assist at the Back-kitchen—we are in the House of Life, a mansion not too frequently opened to us by the writers of prose fiction.

Of the much-debated Vanity Fair it must suffice if I say that it admirably exemplifies Thackeray's creed, which is that goodness, however it may be scorned, is its own sufficient great reward.

XX

THE NOVELISTS: DICKENS TO HARDY

It is beyond all computation how many have been helped to smile through their tears and to take their courage in both hands under the influence of the inimitable, imperishable humor of Charles Dickens (1812-70). Dickens saw the soul of goodness in things evil; his was the saving grace of humor; and his books, appealing to a far wider circle than the works of Thackeray, are among the best examples English literature has to show of the novel with a purpose. Where Thackeray inspires our admiration, Dickens compels our love. In his wonderful portrait gallery he not only enshrined the short and simple annals of the poor of a period happily now no more, but he shows us the possibilities of goodness and of happiness even in the most unlikely circumstances and characters. He molded and fashioned common clay till we see its relationship to that which goes to the making of the finest porcelain. Through him the rich have come to understand the poor, and the poor have arrived at a clearer realization of themselves. What Dickens stood for in a social sense has been long since largely attained; and the pose that affects to find his writings crude or obsolete is an unworthy affectation to be pitied, perhaps, as much as condemned.

Dickens was self-educated; he had obvious limitations, but his absolute genius is even more pronounced than that of Thackeray, of whose pictures of high life Dickens's transcripts from humble life may be said to form a necessary counterpart. Indirectly, Dickens may be taken as a warning by the young writer. When, as in Oliver Twist, he wrote of what he knew, he fashioned for himself a permanent niche in the temple of fame. When, as in Nicholas Nickleby, he attempted to illustrate a phase of life with which he was unacquainted, he failed sadly.

Of Dickens's novels it has to be said that they are chiefly tales of town life; that, in the main, their plots are indifferent, though he is not lacking in the element of drama; and that their success depends upon their character studies, or 'humors,' as Jonson would have called them. As he wrote so largely of social conditions which have passed away, later generations may find their interest in his works less readily excited than was the case with our fathers; for the present generation is not quite so devoted to Dickens study as the preceding; but his novels are among the imperishable possessions of our national literature.

Charles Reade (1811-84), who, like Dickens, 'wrote with a purpose,' but who, unlike Dickens, was a scholar of no mean attainments, attacked prison scandals in It Is Never Too Late to Mend, private lunatic asylums in Hard Cash, and coffin ships in Foul Play. He has left us a vivid picture of factory life in Put Yourself in His Place, but his greatest book is indubitably The Cloister and The Hearth, a medieval romance based on the Colloquies of Erasmus.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-73) was an Irish novelist with a

strong bent towards the 'uncanny.' He wrote some sixteen books in all, of which Uncle Silas is, perhaps, the best. No one has excelled him in the writing of the ghost story; not even R. L. Stevenson could 'achieve the grue' with such weird effect.

Anthony Trollope (1815-82) should be approached first of all in his Autobiography. His many novels, of which Barchester Towers, Framley Parsonage, and Orley Farm are the chief, contain some charming studies of women, and represent very faithfully English clerical life. They are invaluable to the student of the Victorian era, and for that reason alone they will almost certainly enjoy in the future a greater popularity than they have had since Trollope passed away.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-55) struck in Jane Eyre, Shirley, and Villette the first clear bell-notes of modern womanhood. Her work is part of her own pathetic life-story. Emily Jane Brontë (1818-48) also displayed exceptional, if morbid, power in Wuthering Heights; and Charlotte's youngest sister Anne (1820-49) wrote two novels, Agnes Grey, and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, which, while they gain in interest from their personal associations, vividly picture moorland scenery and the life of a governess. Before taking up the works of the three sisters the student should read Mrs. Gaskell's classic Life of Charlotte Brontë, and Clement Shorter's valuable appreciation, Charlotte Brontë and Her Sisters. I fear that I do not share to the full the splendid enthusiasm of the critic whose book I have last named. To me George Eliot is a vastly more interesting personality and a much finer novelist. Jane Eyre is essentially melodramatic in detail, but there is the real charm of faithful observation and sympathetic portrayal of character in Villette. On the whole, though it is the custom to credit Charlotte with the honors of this remarkable trio of sisters, Emily, in both her prose and her poetry, appeals to me as the strongest and most gifted of them. But there is probably no more humanly moving story in the annals of literature than that of these three shy and timorous women, away there in the bleak and dismal surroundings of Haworth, transferring to paper their emotional experiences and adventures of the soul, and making, eventually, the whole English-speaking world listen to them.

Charles Kingsley (1819-75) was a follower of Frederick Denison Maurice and Thomas Carlyle, and a manly exponent of 'muscular Christianity,' or 'Christian Socialism.' His books possess the prime quality of stimulus: Alton Locke and Yeast in particular. Westward Ho! and Hereward the Wake, fine historical romances, will always have a warm place in the hero-loving, adventure-seeking heart of youth. At one time perhaps a little over-rated, he has now rather fallen into neglect and may possibly read a little 'old-fashioned' to-day, but even so I am sure anything of Kingsley's—including the charming Water Babies—is worth reading. His brother Henry Kingsley (1830-76) was in some respects a better novelist. Ravenshoe at least is, in my opinion, a finer piece of romantic fiction than Westward Ho! which I suppose would be named by most critics as the fine

flower of Charles Kingsley's story-telling powers.

In George Eliot (Marian Evans) (1819-80) we have one of the greatest of English women novelists. Like Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot put herself and her actual experiences into what she wrote. Her books are for the most part real, sincere, earnest. Her genius flowered late; some of her writings have the effect of finished buildings from which all the scaffolding has not been taken down; but her contributions to the novel of manners, and particularly of the rural life of her native Warwickshire, are of lasting merit.

With George Eliot the writing of fiction was the art of thinking aloud, the novel was a form of philosophy; but in the forefront of her philosophy, which, like Carlyle's, was devotion to duty, her characters stand out with lifelike fidelity. She was influenced more, perhaps, than any other English woman writer has been by her foreign, and especially German, studies.

Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, and Silas Marner display her genius at its best. Romola, a story of the Italian Renaissance, will always have its admirers. It betrays scholarship of no ordinary kind; but it was brilliant task work, and its author said afterwards that she was a young woman when she began the book and an old one when she finished it.

ONCE again I find myself moving into a perfect jungle of novelists, of whom had I to set down no more than one sentence of criticism on each I could not dispose under three or more chapters. Compared with the writers of but one generation earlier, the contemporaries and immediate successors of George Eliot show a remarkable advance in literary craft. The novel had now become a much more definite art form in the hands of numerous brilliant exponents, among whom were many women. The names of Mrs. Henry Wood, T. A. Browne ('Rolf Boldrewood'), Mrs. Lynn Linton, Charlotte Yonge, Dinah Maria Mullock (Mrs. Craik), Mrs. Oliphant, Ada Ellen Bayly ('Edna Lyall'), G. J. Whyte-Melville, Thomas Hughes, Wilkie Collins, George Macdonald and James Payn each stand for one or two novels which after more than sixty years are still finding admiring readers.

NONE of them wrote so sure a masterpiece as Lorna Doone by Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825-1900), which is an inevitable selection in any list of modern classics of romance. The centenary of Blackmore's birth, although marked by no public ceremony, evoked sufficient attention in the Press of the British Empire to prove that the charm and fame of his great story still endure. It is on record that its original success in 1869 was due to a confusion in the public mind between the Lorna of the tale and the Lorne which became Princess Louise's name on marrying the Marquis of Lorne. The fictional Lady Lorna is the heiress of the Earl of Lorne, and on this most adventitious interest a masterpiece of romantic fiction, which was else sinking into oblivion, enjoyed a blaze of popularity. The marvel is that criticism and the affection of a later generation approved. The novelist himself

put at least two of his other novels in front of Lorna Doone, but this tale remains his outstanding achievement, although he has depicted womanly girls equal in charm to Lorna in Cradock Nowell, Alice Lorraine, and The Maid of Sker.

George Meredith

Born three years later than Blackmore, George Meredith (1828-1909) had the good fortune to become the most eminent figure of his later days in the English world of letters, sharing with Hardy the sunset glories of the 'last of the great Victorians.' Though his first book, a volume of poems, was published in 1851, Meredith did not begin to be appreciated by the public until quite thirty years later. We may reasonably doubt if he will ever be read as widely as, say, Thackeray; if he will ever become a 'classic.' But to the student of contemporary English fiction Meredith is something greater than a popular writer. He is, and has been for two generations, a great influence.

There are various reasons for the power exerted over his contemporaries. The chief is that he chose to look at life with his own eyes, and to describe it in his own words. The life he depicts may not be the life with which we are all familiar. His people are, as he has described them, 'actual, yet uncommon.' Meredith is a social satirist. Full often he smites and spares not. But, to vary the metaphor, it is scalpel work, never mutilation. He was a poet before he was a novelist, a philosopher before he was a poet, and his novels are poetry and philosophy combined. His place is with Browning and Carlyle. They and he have the defects of their qualities. But what splendid qualities these are! Meredith is thought-compelling. He gives exercise to the mind. He is a fellow-traveler on life's journey who gives readily from a store of experience vastly greater than our own.

It is a most important fact that we get no more from a book than we bring to it; minds have to be 'worked' as well as mines. The Meredithian mind is an intellectual Golconda. The right way to 'work' it is to study the man and find out the origin and motive of his writings.

None of Meredith's novels can be fully appreciated at a first reading. Knowledge, as well as industry, is essential. How, for example, can The Tragic Comedians be understood unless the reader know something of the career of the German Socialist, Lassalle? But the diligent student will find Meredith to a very considerable extent self-critical and self-explanatory.

As to his style, this is admittedly difficult; it is like a river with many tortuous windings, but with noble reaches. But his English, at its best, is the best English of the time. He is to be studied, not imitated; and the study should result in a disregard for the iteration of toil-worn phrases. 'A writer,' he says, 'who is not servile and has insight must coin from his own mint.' It has been very happily said of him that 'he thinks in metaphor,' which is precisely what the ruck of mankind does not do. Hence, it is not surprising that to the average reader the works of this great novelist should present grave difficulties of style. Curiously enough, his poetry presents a clearness and grace of diction, a simple beauty of

words, often foreign to his prose manner.

THERE can be no question that the best of Meredith's novels to begin with is The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. If we ask 'What is education?' we have here an answer equivalent to many debates in parliament and many speeches on political platforms. We have education not merely described, but seen in action. If we ask 'What is love?' 'What is passion?' we have but to take up Richard Feverel to see these two dominating attributes of our common human nature set forth with a freshness, a vigor, a reverence, a sympathy, a feeling for external nature—with a knowledge, in short—unrivaled by any other writer of contemporary fiction.

If we seek an example of the analysis of motive we cannot do better than study, and we shall be the better for studying, the dissection of Sir Willoughby Patterne in The Egoist, in modern fiction surely the most finished portrayal of any type of character, an 'uncommon' character in which every reader will find some phase of his own self revealed to him. Beauchamp's Career, Diana of the Crossways, and Harry Richmond are the best of Meredith's other novels; The Shaving of Shagpat, the most richly imaginative.

If Meredith, like Landor, 'dined late,' in that sense William Hale White (1831-1913) might be said to have gone without his dinner. Yet there were critics who did not hesitate to put him before Meredith and in the matter of style to acclaim him one of the greatest writers of English. No novelist of our time has witnessed more frequent or less availing efforts to 'log-roll' him into fame. The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, Mark Rutherford's Deliverance, and The Revolution in Tanner's Lane have never at any time approached in popularity The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Diana of the Crossways or Rhoda Fleming, to name only three of Meredith's many fictions that attained to wide circulation. And I do not think it would be difficult to guess the reason.

For all the truth of Mark Rutherford's observation and wisdom of reflection, there is in his style an excessive coolness, a detachment, that does not make for warmth of appreciation in the ordinary reader of novels. A greater stirring of red blood in the veins of this very quiet, clear-eyed observer of human life would have won multitudes of readers where handfuls only were held. He lacks neither humor nor pathos, but is too continuously, and always somewhat sadly, concerned about immortality and the sectarian creeds that seek to confine it to their own narrow borders, to awaken the real glow of affection in his readers. That, at least, is my opinion, but I hasten to confess that I write from a partial knowledge of his work, limited to the novels named and to some of his short stories, one of which, Mr. Whittaker's Retirement, is an absolute masterpiece. 'Mark Rutherford,' as Hale White is usually called, may win a posthumous popularity, but fiction that is 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought' is seldom taken to the heart the common reader.

Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914) was the author of only one romance, Aylwin, which he did not allow to leave his fastidious pen until he was sixty-six, but I think that

beautiful story of the Romany life ranks easily among our modern classics. Sabine Baring-Gould and John Henry Shorthouse were both born in 1834, though the one outlived the other by twenty-one years, as Shorthouse died in 1903 and Baring-Gould in 1924. If we except the prolific hack-work of Percy Fitzgerald, probably no author of his time wrote so much as Baring-Gould. John Herring, and Mehalah were his best novels, and Shorthouse did nothing else to compare with his own John Inglesant, a most agreeable tale in the historical manner with a strong religious bent. I believe a charge of plagiarism has been brought against Shorthouse in respect of this masterpiece, but that will not impair the reader's pleasure in the tale, and the author got well away to Valhalla with targe untarnished more than a score of years before, which may be accounted to him as the luck of the sport!

Sir Walter Besant (1838-1901) was a good but not a great novelist. He wrote to some purpose, however, as his All Sorts and Conditions of Men—not much read to-day, I suspect—gave a real fillip to social work in the East End of London. Besant was not an inspiring figure of romance: he was too eminently respectable; but he never did a really poor piece of work, and in collaboration with James Rice (1843-82) I think I liked him better—Ready-Money Mortiboy and The Golden Butterfly are instances—than in any of his single-handed fictions.

The Art of Thomas Hardy

THE true note of the finest imaginative writers of the later Victorian era was a rich and noble paganism; it sounds in varying degrees in Meredith, in Swinburne, in Rossetti, in Hardy, and yet it cannot be said that the novels of Meredith and those of Thomas Hardy (b. 1840) have any noteworthy qualities in common. Meredith's earth-worship makes him in some sort a chastened optimist, while Hardy's reading of earth, with all his merry humor and brave fronting to fate, leaves him rather an unquerulous pessimist, resigned, uncomplaining, thrilling with pity for his fellows, but calm with the courage of those who have not fed themselves on illusory hopes.

To a far greater degree than we find it in Meredith, Hardy has dramatic power. But his voice—I am thinking of his novels only—is that of the countryside—of the countryside that is far removed from town. To him the greenwood tree suggests not merriment, but destiny; a pair of blue eyes not heaven, but fate. Life is a tragedy with a few interludes. Yet the philosophy of this old Dorset seer is stern, not weeping. The words of religion are quoted freely in his novels, but in the spirit of the educated pagan.

The peasants he introduces to us belong to a part of England, the exclusiveness of which has only now been broken into. Their ways and modes of thought are depicted with a realism that is pitiless, though the novelist lightens his narratives with many a flash of genuine humor. Hardy is a writer who must be approached with an understanding of his own environment, which is the environment of the characters of his novels. The student must gain the novelist's point of view; then, even in the case of Jude the Obscure, in

place of the repulsion that many might otherwise experience, simple admiration of the writer's art will be awakened.

This art may be circumscribed, but it is great art, nevertheless. Every incident in the novels written by Thomas Hardy is calculated with unerring skill; the movement is controlled from the outset with the deliberation of conscious art. The style is as direct as the plot; its distinction is derived from its subject matter.

With Hardy, style without thought is mere vanity. 'A writer's style,' he once wrote, 'is according to his temperament; and my impression is that if he has anything to say which is of value, and words to say it with, the style will come of itself.' Like Meredith, Hardy is a poet; like him, again, he is scarcely a 'popular' author, though both enjoyed in their later years far more public favor than in the prime of their lives. His best works appeared in the following order: Under the Greenwood Tree (1872), A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873), Far From the Madding Crowd (1874), The Return of the Native (1878), The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), The Woodlanders (1886-7), Tess of the D'Urbervilles (his greatest novel, 1891), and Jude the Obscure (1894-5). The reader would do well to take up his novels in this sequence; but Far From the Madding Crowd may be mentioned as thoroughly representative of his art.

A Test of Great Fiction

Mention of Far From the Madding Crowd suggests to me that here I might, profitably to my reader, illustrate the main quality of Hardy's fiction—and of all great fiction—as contrasted with the lower (and usually much more popular) fiction that is built up on 'melodramatic' or artificial situations. The melodramatic story is one in which incidents are of first importance. Human nature, the facts of life, do not concern writers of this class of fiction. Their chief stock-in-trade is the 'thrilling situation.' True, in life there are many incidents as thrilling as any ever invented by the most ingenious sensation-monger, but the difference lies in the fact that the great episodes of life, like the great rivers of the world, have their sources in little things, and convey no lesson to us unless we know something of the source whence they spring. In all works by masters of fiction it will be found that the 'supreme moments,' the crises which they describe, have grown steadily, remorselessly, fatefully, out of the lives of their dramatis personae, and have not been invented merely to 'thrill' or shock the reader. This does not mean that the supreme moment must come late in the story; it may occur early in the narrative; but when such is the case it will be found to dominate the entire book, to shape and color everything that follows.

In the fifth chapter of Far From the Madding Crowd one of the most tragic episodes in modern fiction is related in a simple, unaffected style, but it comes like a peal of near thunder on a summer day, startling, portentous, 'thrilling' if you will, but absolutely inevitable in the drama the novelist is unfolding.

It tells how Gabriel Oak, the young farmer who is the hero of the story, has come within sight of his

long-toiled-for success, and has thoughts of marriage, when one night he is reduced to ruin by the misguided zeal of a sheepdog, which drives some two hundred of his flock, whose lambs have not yet come, into a chalkpit.

> The sheep were not insured. All the savings of a frugal life had been dispersed at a blow. . . . It was as remarkable as it was characteristic that the one sentence he uttered was in thankfulness: 'Thank God I am not married! What would she have done in the poverty now coming upon me?'

This tragic episode is described with perfect literary art and fidelity to life. It keys the whole story through the fifty-odd chapters that follow. It exercises a mighty influence on the character of the hero and his relations with the other personages of the romance. It is essential to the story, woven into the web of it, impossible to be removed without ruin to the whole. That is what is meant when we speak of the incidents in the works of great novelists as being 'inevitable.' That is the distinction between the novel of true character and drama and the novel of false character and melodrama.

XXI

THE NOVELISTS: STEVENSON AND AFTER

THERE is probably no better reason available for this heading than the fact that, having used Thomas Hardy as the terminal god of my preceding chapter, and the next novelist in point of time being of much less significance, I have honored a personal favorite in choosing R. L. S. as the figurehead for this, as I shall have less to say of him than of at least one of those included in the 'After.'

Before we arrive at Stevenson there are four or five fiction writers of some note to be discussed. Robert Buchanan (1841-1901) was a restless soul who wielded the pen of poet, playwright, novelist and critic with varying success. God and the Man is, I think, his best novel, and though he wrote about a score, I doubt if any of them will survive into the next generation. His poetry may have a revival, and deserves it. Highly successful in his lifetime, but not greatly read to-day, was William Black (1841-98), author of A Daughter of Heth and many a pleasantly competent tale in which Scottish scenery, 'complete with trout stream,' formed the background. I wonder also if William Clark Russell (1844-1911) finds many readers in our day. He had the real sense of the sea, and was no indifferent successor to Marryat, though he never just managed to achieve that last unmistakable touch which carries a good story into the category of the great. The Wreck of the Grosvenor established him as a novelist, although one publisher's reader had declined the book as a mere catalogue of ship's furniture. There was a higher quality in the work of Louis Becke (1875-1913), but I think he never essayed the full-length novel, his special gift being for the short story of adventure in the south seas. Rodman the Boatsteerer is the finest tale ever written of those alluring latitudes.

In my judgment the author who vrites short stories as well as Louis Becke wrote them is more likely to engage a future generation than the novelist who writes no better than Besant or Clark Russell. There is David Christie Murray (1847-1907) as another instance. He wrote numerous long novels, many of which were widely read, and while his best fell short of classic heights, my recollection of Despair's Last Journey, written near the end of a somewhat clouded and unhappy life, was that it might be ranked with the finest fiction published in the last decade of the nineteenth century. And to-day . . . ?

With Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) as a predominant influence in nineteenth century prose I have already dealt; here it is his fiction, especially his novels, in which we are interested. Having already set down many personal preferences, I need not hesitate to add another in the avowal that it is Stevenson the traveler, the essayist, the writer of short stories, for whom I have an even greater admiration than for Stevenson the novelist. In this preference I am far from singular. I would not give even for The Master of Ballantrae the two little books of travel, An Inland Voyage and Travels with a Donkey, yet I am persuaded that it was as a novelist that Stevenson brought the greatest influence to bear upon contemporary literature; simply because it was as a novelist he made his largest conquests.

His best writing is to be found in his short stories, his travels and his essays, and his main service to contemporary letters, we are all agreed, was concerned with style. In literature the leaders can lead only by example, precept is of slight avail, and Stevenson had to write novels to become an influence among novel writers. He brought to the novel a keener sense of form, and the world being still young for him he set about furthering the revival of the latent spirit of romance, which Blackmore a full decade earlier had awakened in Lorna Doone.

Treasure Island and Kidnaped restored to literature a story material that had been long worked only by crude writers for young uncritical readers, and Catriona alone, written seven years later, as a continuation of Kidnaped, ought to silence the critics who talk of Stevenson's inability to draw feminine character, though like most sequels, it suffers by comparison.

Stevenson was too good a critic of himself to attempt to fill the great canvasses which the genius of Scott could so easily crowd with unforgettable figures of romance: his was a smaller and more fastidious talent. But he was as much above Scott in the difficult art of the short story as Scott excelled him in the long sustained imaginative narrative.

After Stevenson—not in rank but in point of time—who are the great novelists, which the greatest?

George Gissing & Henry James

George Gissing (1857-1904) and Henry James (1843-1916) are two others whose names might be suggested in answer. Presumably one must class George Gissing with the realists, but that is rather from his subject matter than his manner. He is capable of wonderful graces of style and the astonishing thing is to

find so much pessimism and stark despair enshrined in such admirable prose. We need not turn to him if entertainment be our desideratum; but if we would understand the sordid side of our social life, the struggles and sorrows of the rayless poor, we could not have a more truthful or more observant guide. Gissing's thinly veiled autobiography given in the fictional form of The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft has all the importance of a human document, and should be on any list of modern books 'we ought to read.'

Henry James, although born in New York, was an Englishman by adoption, and most of his work was done in England where he had lived from early manhood. He was one of those fortunate authors who enjoy their 'classic' period during their own lifetime and have not the pain of ceasing to provide a subject for the literary gossips. He was never 'popular,' but he became a cult, and to admire Henry James was a touchstone of literary percipience. Some of his short stories, such as The Turn of the Screw, are likely to outlive all his long novels. He had great charm and some obscurity of style, and he was a sound critic, especially of French literature.

But if the middle-aged novel reader were to offer any answer to the question which are the greatest novelists after Stevenson it is, I shall dare to say, of Conrad, Wells, Galsworthy, Bennett, Doyle, Haggard, Hope, Locke, and possibly in that order, that he or she would be inclined to think. There would, however, be no agreement on any one name. What list a younger reader would throw off at a moment's notice I cannot presume to guess, for I frequently observe in the daily papers glowing references to the world-wide fame and the staggering wealth of novelists whose names sound so remotely in my ears that they might exist upon another planet.

We live in changed times: it is no longer an achievement to be a published author. I believe one could not throw a stone down the main street of any town, especially in Scotland, without hitting someone who had written a book. In truth I believe we have arrived at the stage pictured by Mr. Dooley, when

> They's a publisher in ivry block, an' in thousan's iv happy homes some wan is pluggin' away at th' romantic novel or whalin' out a pome on th' type-writer upstairs.

And that is why I do not intend to discuss who's who in English fiction later than the outbreak of the Great War: considerations of time and space demand that I draw the line just when the task threatens to overwhelm!

But to return to my question: Who is the greatest novelist after Stevenson? The names I have given offer a sufficient choice and the finest writer of fiction is not in the list —Rudyard Kipling. I omit him, because he is not so great in the novel as in the short story form, and yet I do not know a much better novel than Kim, written within the present century. There are hundreds better than The Light That Failed. But if I were to name all the authors who have one brilliant novel to their names the list would be many times seven or eight.

The Vitality of H. G. Wells

I SHALL not answer the question I have put. Instead, I shall say that of the eight novelists mentioned it is Herbert George Wells (b. 1866)

who makes the strongest appeal to me, not only as a novelist, but as an author at large. Of the many brilliant men of the pen who 'arrived' in those wonderful 'nineties, if H. G. Wells has not gone farthest, there is none that has outdistanced him; not Kipling, nor Barrie, nor Shaw. He stands in the foremost rank of contemporary English authors. His intellectual vitality is astonishing; his range of interests immensely wider than that of Thomas Hardy or Rudyard Kipling, though his purely literary qualities rival those of neither. More subjective than objective in his style, his books are not to him ends in themselves. All his novels, stories, histories, philosophic and miscellaneous writings are expressions of a mind profoundly curious about life and its meaning. Wells, indeed, is more an intelligence than a personality. He has instructed, while entertaining, an entire generation.

The Time Machine was the forerunner of that memorable succession of scientific romances which includes The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Sleeper Awakes, The First Men in the Moon, and The Food of the Gods, while Tono-Bungay is a good example of his skill in the novel of character, afterwards developed with even more intimacy of analysis in Ann Veronica and The New Machiavelli. During the Great War no writer of established reputation so considerably extended his influence and usefulness as H. G. Wells: the direct discussion of old and new problems raised by the war taking the place of the fictional appeal, though of all his war-time writings it is a fiction that will endure: Mr. Britling Sees It Through.

Having set down another preference, I shall return to the group of names and take the others in the order of their mention, starting with Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), who wrote a rich and characteristic English although he was a Pole, and so far as I can judge by his fiction never quite grew into the true English habit of mind. Perhaps in some subtle exoticism lay the secret of his charm. For years I refrained from reading him because there seemed to be a Conrad cabal among the critics bent on forcing this Polish writer of English stories upon a half-reluctant British public. Then I began to read him in a hypercritical mood and soon was so caught by his splendid powers of descriptive narrative and characterization that I went eagerly from story to story.

The Nigger of the Narcissus, for all the abounding merits of his later books, strikes me as his most characteristic piece of work, his finest plotless novel, just as The Arrow of Gold, written a quarter of a century later, is in my opinion his least successful. But what a choice of delightful reading he has left for the generations arriving!—An Outcast of the Islands, Almayer's Folly, Lord Jim, Typhoon, Nostromo, and his many volumes of short stories; a treasury of intellectual enjoyment. As a novelist Conrad is no doubt superior to Stevenson; as masters of the short story there is little to choose between them, but that little is with Tusitala, the teller of tales.

John Galsworthy

In John Galsworthy (b. 1867) we have a real ornament of English letters. His rise to fame and authority has been deliberate and

steady, like his own character, so far as that is revealed in his work. I may be quite wrong in this impression, but such is that left upon me by his plays, his novels, his stories. Of the last named, recently brought together in the volume entitled Caravan, he will not be held by any competent critic to be a master comparable with a dozen other living writers that might be named; yet they are all, in a proportionate degree to his novels, informed with the same cool irony and warm sympathy for the under-dog, and seem to suggest a very pleasing personality as their author.

No novelist of fame takes his work more seriously—not, of course, in the sense in which the preposterous Marie Corelli took herself seriously, but as implying a sense of deep responsibility in the possible influence of his novels. He chronicles the fortunes of his Forsyte family with something of the care and minuteness of concern which Zola gave to his much more ambitious record of the Rougon-Macquart family. His seriousness of purpose is most happily reinforced by the highest literary gifts and the saving grace of humor, the absence of which might have produced merely boredom where we have sustained and approving interest. At times he is not above resort to melodrama, as in the death of Bosinney in The Man of Property, which seems to me to be dictated by no purpose other than the needs of a denouement: it is arbitrary, not inevitable. And if he has a fault of attitude, it is that he assumes a virtue if the clothes be shabby and a vice if they are modish. But withal Galsworthy is a great novelist and The Man of Property is a great novel. It is the first of a trilogy, the others being In Chancery and To Let, which with two 'interludes,' Indian Summer of a Forsyte, and Awakening, make up that noble volume The Forsyte Saga, representing the apex of his achievement in the art of fiction.

Arnold Bennett

Arnold Bennett (b. 1867) stands next in that suppositional list of great novelists given above. His name used to be bracketed with that of Wells, though they have hardly any quality in common. They were both engaged in the thrilling process of making reputations at the same time and seemed to be moving ahead simultaneously in their top gears. Wells is an earnest apocalyptic person who happens to write because that is essential to the prophetic rôle in modern times. Bennett went into the writing business as open-eyed as others go into stockbroking, engineering, or the brewing trade. He did not 'drift' into it. From the first he was master of the event. He could write and he mapped out what he would write: this to make money, that to make reputation, and the other just because he liked to do it. The wonder is that he did it all 'according to plan,' and incidentally proved himself a genius.

His masterpiece is probably The Old Wives' Tale, a really great novel, in which the genius of the author fuses into a living work of art the most ordinary and indeed unpromising material. That is, I think, his most worthy characteristic: the ability to take the commonest appurtenances of life in a group of smoke-wreathed pottery towns and

present them to us with such a ersuasive air that we find ourselves terested in his narrative as though had been woven out of the time-pproved stuff of romance. Only a reat novelist can do that, and rnold Bennett, who has written me quite ordinary novels—Whom od Hath Joined, for example—has chooled himself to the doing of it, y the will to achieve great fiction ather than by any heaven-born gift f narrative power. Clayhanger, Hilda Lessways, and These Twain re a trilogy which show the novelist t his best, and of his more recent ork Riceyman Steps is as good as nything he has done or is likely to o: character, atmosphere, story, umor and sympathy are all exem-lified in this moving tale of mean treets. Bennett has added five and possibly six enduring books to Eng-ish fiction, and his skill in the short tory is inferior only to that of Kipling and of Wells.

I AM not forgetting that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (b. 1859) made his worldwide reputation as a writer of short stories. But the artistry of the interminable Sherlock Holmes series is not of a very exalted order, although there is undeniable creative power in the conception of the central character. Doyle is most likely to stand the test of time in such a purely romantic and beautiful story as The White Company. Micah Clarke and Rodney Stone are also fine novels, and there are short stories in the collection The Last Galley that show a complete mastery of the story-teller's art.

As a teller of tales Rider Haggard (1856-1925) needed elbow room; he could get effects only on large canvasses and, if the metaphor will serve, with rather loud colors laid on with a big brush. He wrote a great many novels and most of them bore a family resemblance to She or King Solomon's Mines in choice of theme and treatment. Allan Quatermain was very popular in its day, and I recall my youthful absorption in Mr. Meeson's Will, which came out in 1888 and which I feel I should place among the crude and melodramatic variety if I read it again to-day. Indeed, high-class melodrama would be descriptive of most of the popular novels that bear the name of Rider Haggard, for his talent was to invent and describe happenings, hairbreadth escapes, perils by land and sea; not with deft unnoted touches to fashion living and memorable character, which is the essential power of all really great novelists.

WHICH, if any, of the novels of Anthony Hope (b. 1863) is selected for permanence it would not be easy to determine. He is one of those considerable novelists of our time of whom, when contrasting them with the great ones of the past, say with Scott or Dickens, it might be said, 'oceans divide' them 'and the waste of seas.' Nevertheless, the author of The Prisoner of Zenda has to his credit the imperishable distinction of having founded a school in fiction, and although the vogue of his school may not have outlasted his generation the fact of his achievement remains.

Ruritanian romance, in which the play of love and adventure had to be dressed in the costume of to-day and performed in imaginary realms that bore close resemblance to certain

minor European states as they existed before the Great War, called for a delicate fancy and a precise art if it was to avoid the impression of unreality. These were abundantly present in The Prisoner of Zenda, which is certainly one of the most delightful romantic stories written in our time, and in Rupert of Hentzau the novelist almost succeeded in producing a sequel that rivaled the first story. The King's Mirror is a really brilliant and durable novel; but the Great War was a crushing blow to the Ruritanian school, for with the passing of so many emperors and kings of reality, the glitter of these fictive kings and statesmen and great ladies became noticeably tarnished. But all the original and characteristic cleverness of the Anthony Hope novels in his earlier manner, in which the romantic element did not impede the development of character, is unaffected by the changed times, and a recent re-reading of The Prisoner recalled much of the delight with which I read it thirty years ago and increased my admiration for the skill of the novelist.

Some penetrating studies of modern social life have been added to English fiction by William John Locke (b. 1863), the last of the casual list of popular novelists I gave above. He is one of our finest and most finished story-tellers and is excelled by none of the favorites of our time in portrayal of character. His cultured style, his restraint, his 'divine sense of humor which rainbows the tears of the world'—for he has this attribute of his own Paragot in The Beloved Vagabond—his breadth of vision and sympathy, all go to the making of a novelist who is easily one of the leaders of his age in the art of fiction. The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne, which appeared in 1905, is probably the best of his stories, and there is high entertainment in the connected tales which make up The Joyous Adventures of Aristide Pujol.

MANY readers will complain that I have omitted from the list of eight a name that should have headed it or at least should have been added to make it nine: that of Sir Hall Caine (b. 1853). Of the popularity of Hall Caine there can be no doubt: sales are the test of that! But vogue and value in a literary sense have no actual relationship, though it is the hope of every writer, artist or hodman, to appeal to the largest possible reading public. Hall Caine has sold vastly more novels than Joseph Conrad, more than Wells or Bennett, but—well, they are Hall Caine novels. I have a theory based upon some of his earlier stories, such as The Shadow of a Crime, The Deemster, and The Bondman, that his work might not only have been popular but important. That it is not important is due to the assiduous manner in which he has sought with large subjects and grandiose effects to impress the multitude in such novels as The Christian, The Eternal City, and The Prodigal Son. In all these the dramatic becomes overstrained and the melodramatic results. I doubt if Sir Hall Caine has exceeded A. S. M. Hutchinson in the matter of sales, though he is a far superior novelist from every point of view, but his appeal has always been rather deliberately to the mob

readers, and that is not the way produce novels of the 'real, right rt.'

OF THE recent and living novelists that must be recognized in any ronicle, however sketchy, the most teworthy of those who concern emselves with the interpretation of cial life is Mrs. Humphry Ward 851-1920), whose Robert Elsmere eated a clamor years ago, but es quite peacefully in its grave to-ay. This is less the fault of the ook than of the age; it was so ntirely characteristic of its own me that the problem interest does ot arrest the reader of a more so-histicated day, and its chief use in he future will be to illustrate a cial phase that has passed. The leavenly Twins by Sarah Grand, in very different way, is also a 'dated' ovel. It is astonishing how far we ave traveled since 1893, when the rst stirrings of the sex problem ere vexing society.

When one remembers the high emperatures of the reading world aused by the two books just named nd by others such as The Story of n African Farm by Olive Schreiner, Dodo by E. F. Benson, Ships That Pass in the Night by Beatrice Harraden, and, making a jump of hirty years, by so notorious a best eller as Hutchinson's If Winter Comes, one hesitates to dogmatize on he qualities of permanence in mod-rn fiction.

I would, however, venture the ob-ervation that If Winter Comes, which far out-stripped in popularity ny of the other books mentioned, s in every way unworthy by com-parison with the least of them and is to be regarded as nothing more than 'the success of a season.' Owing to the development of the instruments of publicity and the fact that the vast American audience of half-wits has got the money to spend on novels and spends it, the modern novelist who can tickle the limited intelligence of that giant has struck something richer than Pluto's mine, and in a month or two he may achieve with a worthless book a success greater than Dickens with his works of pure genius won in a life-time.

THE times have so changed that the writing of novels now approaches the dimensions of a 'national industry'! Thus criticism becomes increasingly difficult: presently it may entirely cease to concern itself with fiction and nothing but the voice of the trade 'boomster' be heard. So that I am now tempted to hasten to the end of my task, offering no more than a few names which in my judgment stand for good work done in English fiction up to the time of the Great War.

As I have been writing of those who take their themes from the social life of their time, I shall add two: Leonard Merrick, author of The Man Who Was Good, whose long series of really brilliant novels ought to have made him one of the most popular, as he is certainly one of the finest, writers of his time, but somehow did not; and W. B. Maxwell, author of The Guarded Flame and other really fine novels, who is a son of that famous and able novelist of a vanished day, Miss M. E. Braddon.

Maxwell is one of the most accomplished practitioners of the art of fiction-writing to-day, and on reflection I would put him with any of the octet I have discussed above. That I have not put him there is because I was giving a list that might be named by a middle-aged person other than myself, and I fancy he rivals none of them in popularity.

A figure of some note in modern fiction is that of George Moore, who wrote Esther Waters and a number of novels in which the influence of the French realists is unmistakable. He might be chosen as our outstanding representative of the realist school, but being an Irishman of a various talent, he is not so easily 'placed.' In The Brook Kerith he gave us a beautiful imagining of the romance of the life of Jesus, on which neither the shadow of Zola nor that of Baudelaire falls. Then we have that very brilliant novelist, W. Somerset Maugham (b. 1874), whose Liza of Lambeth so long ago as 1897 placed him very definitely with the realists. He is almost alone in being a novelist who is also a playwright, and whose work for the theater is not merely the dramatizing of his novels. As I am writing he has just scored another success in fiction with The Painted Veil. Of later realists my admiration is strongest for D. H. Lawrence (b. 1885), and especially in Sons and Lovers, where his exceptional gifts of characterization are seen at their best.

It is in the realm of romance that modern English fiction is strongest, and the names of acceptable novelists most readily multiply in the mind. Maurice Hewlett, with The Forest Lovers and The Queen's Quair; S. R. Crockett, with The Raiders; Stanley Weyman, with A Gentleman of France; Neil Munro, with his John Splendid; John Oliver Hobbes (Mrs. Craigie), with Robert Orange; A. E. W. Mason, with The Courtship of Morrice Buckler—though later turning to modern life as in The Four Feathers; J. C. Snaith, with Broke of Covenden; Flora Annie Steel, with that fine romance of the Indian Mutiny, On the Face of the Waters; Quiller-Couch in Troy Town, The Splendid Spur, Hetty Wesley, and many another fine romance; John Buchan, with his John Burnet of Barns and his Greenmantle stories—these are the names among the later novelists that to me connote the pleasures of reading when in the mood for the romantic; but there are others—scores, I doubt not—who could rank with them if I cared to pursue my explorations in that particular field in a methodical manner and not to rely, as I have done, chiefly on my memory.

The Author of Joseph Vance

In the novel of character probably no more valuable additions have been made in the last twenty years than the series of belated Victorian studies by William De Morgan (1839-1917). Here we touch one of the curious phenomena of literature: a novelist who makes his first try at the art when he is sixty-nine, by which age Thomas Hardy had ceased for nearly fifteen years to write novels! And, moreover, in the brief remainder of his days De Morgan produced another half-dozen novels of such unusual length that they would equal in volume a dozen of any modern novelist—and all are good! Joseph Vance, with which he made an immediate success, is typ-

al, and it is like nothing written in he twentieth century; as a story it formless and inert, but it is a veri- able portrait gallery of Victorian haracter, charged with the most greeable humor and a happy sort f philosophy, the lesson of which ould seem to be that life, despite ll its sadness and sorrows, is so evilishly interesting that it is worth ving. Alice-for-Short, which fol- owed, is a sort of female Joseph ance, and is well-nigh the equal of he first book in every respect. De Morgan has nothing to tell the hasty eader; you must take him at your ase and your reward in pleasure will e great. He reminds me of the alker who used to look forward to neeting certain friends in heaven so hat they could say, 'Let's sit down nd have a chat for fifteen years.' But eternity may have its terrors or some of us!

Archibald Marshall has written much fiction of a high order of merit, nd has been not inaptly dubbed the modern Trollope; Eden Phillpotts is true artist who has written many good novels, notably The Secret Woman and Widdicombe Fair; Hal- iwell Sutcliffe has made the York- shire moors the background of his iction, just as Phillpotts has identi- ied himself with Devonshire, and in Ricroft of Withens he has produced ne of the best Yorkshire stories that know; Israel Zangwill has The Master, and Children of the Ghetto o his high credit; J. M. Barrie's best novel is Sentimental Tommy.

To R. S. Hichens as the author of The Garden of Allah may be ascribed the doubtful honor of founding the 'desert' school of modern fiction which has culminated in the pas- sionate drivel of The Sheikh and many another meretricious novel. Still, The Garden of Allah is a fine work, although it does not rank with the fiction of the great Victorian masters. Alfred Ollivant has written one book that may become a classic in Owd Bob, that moving and dramatic tale of the grey dog of Kenmuir. A very brilliant writer of the period under review is Morley Roberts—his Rachel Marr is a great novel—who is at his very best, perhaps, in the short story, such as The Man Who Stroked Cats and The Miracle of the Black Cañon.

It is as writers of short stories—though they have all produced good novels—that we are most apt to think of those delightful humorists, W. W. Jacobs, Pett Ridge and Barry Pain. The last-named, in company with Jerome K. Jerome, who wrote that fine novel Paul Kelver, cultivated what we used to call 'the new humor,' although I could see no difference in it from the old; but even old things seemed new in those heartsome 'nineties.

Much could have been written of the lady-novelist—Gilbert's Lord High Executioner, it will be recalled, 'had her on his list'—as her name became legion towards the close of the Victorian era. Lucas Malet (Mrs. Harrison), Mary Cholmondeley, Mrs. W. K. Clifford, Jane Barlow, Katharine Tynan—the names of those worth mention might be strung out by the dozen. Probably none of them excelled Sheila Kaye-Smith or Margaret Kennedy, the two leading woman novelists of today; but it is proof of the ascendancy of the novel that it has called to its service such an array of talent as is represented by the names I have cited in this chapter alone.

The average good novel of to-day is as superior to the average novel of the mid-Victorian days as a modern express locomotive is superior to the old 'Puffing Billy.' This means that the literary art, as distinct from genius, which may be, but is not always, above and independent of convention, has vastly improved from the days of our grandfathers. We have only to examine any representative story by such writers as Hugh Walpole, Stephen McKenna, Sir Philip Gibbs, Warwick Deeping, Ernest Raymond, John Ferguson, Alec Waugh, and at least a score of other novelists of the younger school, to realize how firm and admirably wrought is the texture of our contemporary fiction.

XXII

A SHORT STUDY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Until the beginning of this century American literature was no more than a province of English literature, and it would have been entirely reasonable to include their American contemporaries in any survey of English writers. The one characteristic contribution which America had made to literature was in humor: a contribution of a much higher order than some may be ready to allow. Even the now forgotten pioneers of that humor, such as Augustus B. Longstreet (1790-1870) or Solomon F. Smith (1801-69), has something extraordinarily fresh and clear-eyed in his attitude to life, especially that rough, uncultured life which they all knew so intimately. This was the only 'new humor' that has come to lighten literature in modern times; it implied a certain lack of reverence for ancient, 'grey Gothic things'. Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) (1835-1910) was the greatest of these humorous writers, and he is far more a characteristic product of the United States than Emerson or Longfellow.

American literature was bound, by its nature, to be an offshoot of English letters. An English wit might ask—it was Sydney Smith—"Who reads an American book?" But that was more than a century ago. Today, the question is rather, "Who does not?" For, a remarkable thing has happened,—more remarkable, on consideration, than surprising—during the past half century, American literature, which drew its inspiration from the English fount, is now a broad and powerful stream in its own right, deriving its character and genius from the national and social environs through which it flows. Nay, it has done more than that: it has deeply impressed its character and its technique upon the literature of the mother-tongue to a degree that is little less than amazing.

The stream of American literature begins with the first Colonial writer of any note, John Smith (what a British cognomen!) and his True Relation of Virginia (printed in England, 1608), followed by William Bradford (1665-1743) and John Winthrop (History of New England, 1630 to 1649), and with the Bay Psalm Book which was printed on the new press set up at Cambridge,

ass. Then the stream broadens th unforgettable names such as tton Mather (d. 1726) and Jonhan Edwards (d. 1758) the theogians. Benjamin Franklin and his oor Richard's Almanak" links that riod with the Revolution and with mphleteers such as John Adams, trick Henry, Richard James Lee, mes Otis, Samuel Adams and Joh Quincy, with the Thomas Jefferwho drew up the Declaration, d Thomas Paine who came from ngland and who set forth the true eaning of the struggle with the other-country. Other names which ill engage the student are those of lexander Hamilton who, with John y and James Madison, wrote The ederalist, together with that of ood John Woolman", the New rsey Quaker, and not forgetting e imperishable Autobiography of ranklin, which was edited and pubshed so late as 1868.

Poetry grew with diffidence amid e years of unrest. The first true et of America was probably Philip reneau (1752-1832) who, besides riting satires, composed The Indin's Burying Ground; closely allied as John Trumbull (1750-1831), lawer and poet, author of a burlesque ic satirizing the American Loyalts, a work resembling Hudibras, in hich occur the Pope-inspired lines—

> No man ere felt the halter draw
> With good opinion of the law.

s for novelists, the first was Charles rockden Brown, author of Weiland 1798) and other "tales of terror". With the settling of the Mississippi alley leisure and stimulus came, and our famous names were soon to win ecognition at home and abroad. hese were Washington Irving with his ever-delightful Sketch Book, which reads as fresh today as when it was written in 1820, the acid test of all literature, Fenimore Cooper who made the new world a new stage for stirring scenes of forest, plain and sea—The Spy (1821) was a success then unprecedented in American literature—as well as with The Pilot (1824), and who created a new cult in romance with The Last of the Mohicans (1826). In the third we meet the first great American versifier, William Cullen Bryant, (1794-1878), with his Thanatopsis and his translations from the Iliad and the Odyssey —a poet-journalist of great distinction who edited the New York Evening Post for fifty years—and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), whom the French called "the American genius". was the fourth, with his thrilling Tales of Mystery and Imagination, and the word-music poems such as Ulalume, The Bells and The Raven. Closely contemporary are found the names of Joseph Rodman Drake (America's Flag), Fitz-Greene Halleck (Marco Bozzaris) and John Howard Payne (1791-1852) who was the first American dramatist of any note, and whose opera, Clari, with music by Bishop, enshrined the immortal Home, Sweet Home.

Meanwhile the influx of national questions, and the War of 1812 had produced a group of orators such as Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, Wendell Phillips and Edward Everett, worthy of note since oratory is closely allied to literary expression. And it was natural enough that the opening of the American Golden Age of Literature—about 1840—should be centered in New England. Then came a widening of national thought and culture, and an

ampler knowledge as well. We meet with names that are household words: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82), who did more than any other man in his age to make America a nation of thinkers and philosophers, and to raise the standard of essentially American literature; and of the first of her nature-philosophers, David Thoreau (1817-62). The well-loved Henry Longfellow (1807-82) was writing his simple and melodious verse—who does not know Hiawatha, The Tales of a Wayside Inn, or The Courtship of Miles Standish? John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92) began to sing his stirring war poems and compose pictures of simple life on an American farm, where he had himself been "a barefoot boy with cheek of tan"; and Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-94), charming essayist and poet of tenderness and humor, with his Breakfast Table series (1857-72) and novels that mingled science with romance, such as Elsie Venner, were all swelling the current that had already become a splendid affluent of the main stream of English Literature.

Emerson had also written some remarkable poems; and now we meet two poets who point opposite ways and who foreshadow future divisions and controversies—the classicalist James Russell Lowell (1819-91), who was also a brilliant essayist and critic, to whom every serious student of English literature must acknowledge a deep debt of gratitude, with The Vision of Sir Launfal and the satirical Biglow Papers, and Walt Whitman (1819-92), child of the New York metropolis and author of that noble tribute to Lincoln, My Captain, written on the martyred president's assassination, a poet who "dallied with the winds and scorned the sun", who ignored any rules, academic or otherwise, which bound rhyme or rhythm, and was probably as big a humbug and poseur as Joaquin Miller (1841-1913), of a later date, who wrote Songs of the Sierras and wore long hair.

In the South was then living the greatest true poet next to Poe, Sidney Lanier (1842-81), author of The Science of English Poetry, with whose name should be associated those of Paul Hamilton Hyne (1830-86) and that of Henry Timrod (1829-67). Emily Dickinson (1830-86), a genuine daughter of the muses, was dead ere the subtle phrasing and fire of her verse gained due recognition and publication in 1886. Names that spring gratefully to the memory, too, are those of Stephen Foster of negro-lyric fame, (The Old Folks at Home), of Julia Ward with her Battle Hymn, of James Randall (Maryland, My Maryland), of T. B. Read (Sheridan's Ride), and of Finch of The Blue and the Grey—songs topical and historic, perhaps, rather than strikingly poetic.

And here, as closing this preparatory period, one might mention the names of Lindley Murray (1745-1826) of English Grammar fame, and of Noah Webster (1758-1843) the famous lexicographer, whose dictionary still holds the field nearly a century after his death. And, spanning the stream of the older and newer American literature we find the names of Margaret Fuller (1810-50), an off-shoot of the Emersonian "Transcendental" school; of Daniel Webster (1782-1852), the American Burke; of George Ticknor (1791-1871), historian of Spanish literature; of George Bancroft (1800-91),

uthor of that classic of scholarship, History of the United States; of the ssayists Channing, and Parker, and Whipple; of the scholarly William Winter, poet and dramatic critic—nd then salute the undying name of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64), his dream-stories and his impressively beautiful Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables, and his dim-discovered pictures of Puritan New England. Then there is Herman Melville (1819-91), friend and neighbor of Hawthorne, creator of the immortal Moby Dick with its "wild joy of many waters"; and the realistic crudity and undoubted sincerity of Harriet Beecher Stowe's (1811-96) Uncle Tom's Cabin. Preceding and contemporary with the Civil War came the fine historical work of William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859), (Conquest of Peru and Conquest of Mexico) aglow with color, and the classic histories of Francis Parkman (1823-93), such as The Oregon Trail and The Conspiracy of Pontiac.

The flood of writing which followed the Civil War and continued to the turn of the century had one great merit: it specifically concerned America and the Americans. "Local Color" became the cry. The short story, foreshadowed in Everett Hale's (1822-1909) The Man Without a Country, came to fine flower in the dramatically tender tales of Bret Harte (1839-1902)—tales of lawless pioneering in California, idylls of the "gold-rush". New England types appear in the novels of William Dean Howells (1837-1920)—a little flaccid to the modern palate, perhaps—and in the work of such oddly-contrasted writers as Henry James (1843-1916) originally the artist of pictures of simple American types painted against a complex European background, and that aforesaid writer for the populace, Samuel L. Clemens better known as Mark Twain, with his acid antidote to false sentiment and high-falutin'. Henry James's brother William must not be passed over—a philosopher and psychologist whose genius will live in such works as The Will to Believe and Varieties of Religious Experience.

The press had now become a power; and much of the best of American humor, perhaps the most characteristic feature of American literature, sprang from the columns of the newspapers weekly and daily. Artemus Ward is still a household name comparable with Mark Twain; and there followed a numerous trail —Godfrey Leland (Hans Breitmann Ballads), John Hay (Jim Bludso), Chandler Harris (Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit), William S. Porter (O. Henry) with his cameo-like stories of New York life; Mary N. Wilkins, Margaret Deland, Hamlin Garland, and Booth Tarkington, with, for colorful pictures of the South, George W. Cable, James Lane Allen, and Thomas Nelson Page. The field of the historical novel was brilliantly cultivated by Winston Churchill and by Mary Johnston. Marion Crawford, son of a New York sculptor, made Italy the scene of his many successful novels; Louisa May Alcott won fame with her Little Women and Good Wives—still popular—and the Ben Hur of Lew Wallace written in 1880 still endures in popularity and has provided Hollywood with material after its own heart. Robert William Chambers (1865-1933) was accepted as the standard realist of his generation in such novels as The

Fighting Chance and The Business of Life; George Santayana began his remarkable studies in aesthetics, and a brilliant ironical autobiography came from Henry Adams (1838-1918).

In the realm of the novel the turn of the century saw William Dean Howells and Henry James still the leading lights, the former just over, the latter just under, sixty years of age and settled in England. The influence of Howells was waning; as a literary realist his art should be contrasted with Dreiser's Sister Carrie, published in 1900, but he was yet to write The Kentons (1902) and The Leatherwood God (1916). Historically and aesthetically he was a power at the close of the last century, and his appeal is likely to be permanent. Henry James may be said to have made an art of his art; perfect in kind, his novels make but a limited appeal; he is serious, and he is psychological. His cult was continued in milder measure by Edith Wharton (b. 1862) (The House of Mirth, 1905; The Children, 1928) with the same serious regard; and she contributed with distinction to the art of the short story. The Great War colored her later work, notably The Marne (1918) and A Son at the Front (1923).

It was at this point that the force and impress of the American novel was received and echoed in the art of the Old Country. Here the group of new American masters of the novel claims cosmopolitan recognition. Theodore Dreiser (b. 1871) with Sister Carrie above noted, The Financier, or The American Tragedy, and notably his essay Hey, Rub-a-Dub-Dub which reveals his attitude towards humanity, tends, it has been said, "to see human life in terms of animal life"—and perhaps this suggests a limitation. On the other hand there is James Branch Cabell (b. 1879) with his fantastic romances of the Middle Ages and his comedies of present-day Virginia (The Cream of the Jest, and Beyond Life), a sophisticated ironist. Lucid and fresh in style are the novels of Willa Cather, creator of significant character and of pioneer life in the Middle West (My Antonia, Death Comes for the Archbishop); while Sherwood Anderson, both in novel and short story (Poor White and The Triumph of the Egg) links personal experiences with studies of American rural life.

In realism, more or less stark, success came to Jack London (1876-1916) (Call of the Wild, Sea-Wolf, John Barleycorn), and to Frank Norris (1870-1902) with his melodramatic The Octopus and The Pit. Stephen Crane's (1871-1900) The Red Badge of Courage, one of the outstanding successes of the 1890's, must be noted and that startling piece of latter-day realism The Jungle of Upton Sinclair (b. 1878). Women-realists include Dorothy Canfield Fisher (The Brimming Cup) and Margaret Deland, with her long list of distinguished works from John Ward, Preacher (1888), to The Kays, (1926). Booth Tarkington (b. 1869), though achieving popularity with that delightful romance Monsieur Beaucaire showed great versatility; Winston Churchill (b. 1871) in Richard Carvel and The Crisis, Henry Harland (1869-1905) in The Cardinal's Snuff Box, and Owen Wister (b. 1860) in The Virginian, have all added to the richness of American historical romance.

ealism blended with satire is the te of Sinclair Lewis's (b. 1885) ain Street, and Babbitt, massive cturesqueness of Joseph Hergesimer (b. 1880) in Java Head. In different genre Thornton Wilder's . 1897) Bridge of San Luis Rey romised more than has yet been fulled.

It has been said that the writing of ort stories has become an industry America. In its later developents its technique was quickened y the success more than fifty years go of Stockton's The Lady or the iger. Henry James treated it with eticulous art in five volumes—that as during the 'nineties—and of its ter exponents among those who deand consideration for having conntrated on the essentials of unity nd moral climax are: Ambrose ierce (Can Such Things Be?), Stehen Crane, Hamlin Garland, Mary . Wilkins Freeman, Alice Brown, ichard Harding Davis (a brilliant ournalist), Jack London, and above ll "O. Henry", whose work in the rst ten years of the new century, ith his keen, if superficial, etchings f the lower grades of city life, will emain for long the most noteworthy n the evolution of the American hort story. The more restrained art f Edith Wharton and of Katherine Gerould, the narrative style of Sherwood Anderson, the ingenuity of Wilur Daniel Steele, and a newcomer in Ernest Hemingway, suggest that saturation-point may be nearing; but he work of Conrad Aiken—a poet with many volumes to his credit—hould be considered for its beautiful tyle.

Poet-novelists are represented by "H.D." (Hilda Doolittle) with her olished art in Palimpsest, by Stephen Vincent Benet, Elinor Wylie, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts. In the essay form the nature interpretation of John Burroughs and Ernest Thompson Seton, Henry Van Dyke, and Dallas Sharp must be noted; while for the more personal literary expression one can still turn to such charming essayists as Hamilton Wright Mabie and Agnes Repplier.

A notable poetic revival began in the second decade of this century—Amy Lowell's study of Six French Poets (1916) and Tendencies in Modern American Poetry (1917) being significant—and there followed an outburst of controversy—often violent—as to the material and the form of poetry. It was a battle between "free-verse" and the traditional. It is undecided even now, though a sort of armistice has been declared. Among those who demand careful study must be mentioned Edward Arlington Robinson (b. 1869), sombre in outlook, traditional in technique, and claimed by many as the greatest poet America has yet produced. His poems were issued in a collected edition 1921-27. Robert Frost (b. 1875), largely a realist, can also be studied in a collected edition, and whether his superiority to Wordsworth is plain therein, the reader can determine for himself. The Middle West is represented by the virile work of Edgar Lee Masters and Vachel Lindsay; and there is the critical craftsmanship of Carl Sandburg, together with the lyric notes of Sara Teasdale, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Elinor Wylie which may be worthy of consideration.

The "Imagist" movement—the use of common speech with complete freedom in choice of subject—began with Ezra Pound (b. 1885); and

then the conflict raged more fiercely, T. S. Eliot (b. 1888) raising a storm of critical controversy with his strange, shapeless and unharmonious Waste Land (1922), to be followed by E. E. Cummings of The Dial group, which included William C. Williams and Marianne Moore.

In biography a turn has been taken towards the "New Psychology", followed by a closer and more scrutinizing survey of the facts concerning certain national heroes. As long ago as 1895 came Gamaliel Bradford's penetrating Types of American Character. W. E. Woodward applied the scalpel to Washington, and Rupert Hughes did the same more recently; a like service—or disservice—can be studied in Paxton Hibben's Henry Ward Beecher. In the same field came Katharine Anthony's Margaret Fuller, Krutch's Edgar Allan Poe, and Hervey Allen's study of the same writer in Israfel.

Literary criticism of the highest quality has adorned modern American letters in the names of Mencken (Prejudices), Sherman's On Contemporary Literature, and Van Wyck Brooks's America's Coming of Age, in Lewisohn's A Book of Modern Criticism, and in works by Bowman and Drake, by Brownell, Babbitt, and More on the aesthetic side. Huneker and Nathan approach art from the impressionist point of view; and Spingarn's Creative Criticism reflects the principles of the great Italian Benedetto Croce, than whom there have been few more original thinkers in our time.

In concluding this brief and sketchy survey of a subject that yearly increases in dimension and importance I would only add that despite frequent manifestations of a striving after the unusual, of what I may call literary exhibitionism, there has been flourishing in the United States, and at no time more surely than today, a scholarly interest in letters, founded upon the classical and the English tradition and productive of the most beneficent results, at no point seeming to touch or even to be cognisant of any of the numerous 'movements' which the popular literature of the vast body of American readers is witnessing. American scholars have the same love of knowledge for its own sake that characterises the scholars of the great European races and notably the English, and the German, from whom the Americans immediately derive.

Although such incredible trash as Tarzan of the Apes sells by the hundred thousand copies to the multitude, although the film industry has debased imaginative literature to a degree that might make even the half-wits uneasy, there exists in the United States a body of scholarly literature, native produced, but in the English classic tradition, which is worthy to rank with the English, and is English both in language and in the spirit that informs it. In criticism, especially of the Elizabethan period, the scholars of the United States have nothing to learn from the other side of the Atlantic, and it is conceivable that this scholarly literature will continue indefinitely alongside the development of that which is new and racier of the soil, a time coming perhaps when in the United States the English of scholarship and the 'American' of popular literature will differ as widely as, I am told, do the written and the spoken languages of China.

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