

*F. Sefton Delmer*

1910

**English**

**Literature**

**From Beowulf to T. S. Eliot**

For the use of schools, universities and private students.

Edited by

**Lidia Vianu**

CONTEMPORARY  
LITERATURE PRESS



<http://editura.mttlc.ro>

**București  
2013**

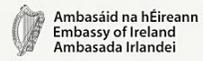


Director:  
LIDIA VIANU

Executive Advisor:  
GEORGE SANDULESCU

# Contemporary Literature Press

Editura pentru Studiul Limbii Engleze prin Literatură



*The only online Literature Publishing House of the University of Bucharest*

**ISBN: 978-606-8366-92-0**

© Universitatea din București

© F. Sefton Delmer

Cover Design, Illustrations, and overall Layout: **Lidia Vianu**

**Typing:** Irina Borțoi, Sorina Grozăvescu, Mihaela Olinescu, Iulia Pîslaru.

**Proofreading:** Vlad Bîrsan, Iulia Gheorghescu, Elena Mihail, Alexandra Munteanu, Monica Necula, Evelina Pavel.

**IT Expertise:** Simona Sămulescu, Cristina Petrescu.

**Publicity:** Violeta Baroană

**Logo:** Manuela Stancu

## Acknowledgements

F. Sefton Delmer: *English Literature*. Weidmann-Greven-Verlag. **Berlin-Köln**. First published in 1910.

Toate Istoriile care contează ca valoare nu sunt niciodată scrise din INTERIOR: ele sunt întodeauna concepute, gândite și redactate din EXTERIOR! Cele mai bune istorii ale literaturii engleze sunt scrise de străini. Cele două pe care le publicăm aici sunt de pildă scrise și publicate din Germania.

Este același lucru cu Gramaticile limbii engleze: remember Otto Jespersen, *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* in seven parts (1909-1949); Etsko Kruisinga, *A Handbook of Present-Day English* (1909-1932); Hendrik Poutsma, *A Grammar of Modern English* in five volumes (1904-1929); Reinard Zandvoort, *A Handbook of English Grammar* (1945); Jan Svartvig, Leon Levițchi...

**F. Sefton Delmer**

# English

# Literature

**From Beowulf to T. S. Eliot**

For the use of schools, universities and private students.

Edited by

**Lidia Vianu**

CONTEMPORARY  
LITERATURE PRESS



<http://editura.mttlc.ro>

**București**  
**2013**

## Preface

This little manual traces in simple and idiomatic English the development of English and American Literature from the earliest times down to the present.

Throughout the book stress has been laid wherever necessary on the social history of England and reference has been made to the influence of German, French and Italian writers on English Literature and to the influence of English Literature on them.

I have to express my deep sense of obligation to Professor Alois Brandl of the University of Berlin, who was kind enough to read the book while it was passing through the press and to give me the benefit of his advice on various points.

**F. Sefton Delmer**

## Table of Contents

F. Sefton Delmer: Preface	p. 1
I: Anglo-Saxon Literature	p. 4
II: The Transition Period	p. 15
III: The Age of Chaucer	p. 20
IV: The Barren Age	p. 34
V: The Tudor Revival	p. 41
VI: The Rise of the English Drama	p. 47
VII: Elizabethan Poetry	p. 51
VIII: The Elizabethan Drama	p. 58
IX: Elizabethan Prose	p. 80
X: Donne and Metaphysical Poetry	p. 83
XI: The Puritan Idealists	p. 88
XII: The Restoration Period	p. 95
XIII: The Augustan Age	p. 105
XIV: The Rise of the Novel	p. 118
XV: Eighteenth-Century Romanticism	p. 128
XVI: The Romantic Revolt	p. 144
XVII: The Victorian Period (1)	p. 167
XVIII: The Victorian Period (2)	p. 184
XIX: The Turn of the Century	p. 200
XX: Notes on American Literature	p. 218
XXI: Recent Literature	p. 225
XXII: English Syllabic Versification	p. 236
Synopses	p. 240
<i>Beowulf</i>	p. 240
<i>The Faerie Queene</i>	p. 242
<i>Dr. Faustus</i>	p. 243



<i>The Plays of Shakespeare</i>	p. 243
<i>Paradise Lost</i>	p. 250
<i>The Rape of the Lock</i>	p. 252
<i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	p. 253
<i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	p. 255
<i>The Vicar of Wakefield</i>	p. 257
<i>Scott's Novels</i>	p. 258
<i>Tam O'Shanter</i>	p. 260
<i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage</i>	p. 261
<i>The Ancient Mariner</i>	p. 263
Conspectus showing the regional development of English literature	p. 265
A Summary of the Chief Events in English History	p. 266
Index	p. 271
List of Abbreviations	p. 280

## I. ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE.

1. English Literature is the oldest of all the modern literatures of Europe. Its beginnings date from as far back as the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Its earliest records are written in a form of English called Anglo-Saxon or Old English, a highly inflected Germanic dialect which is unintelligible to the Englishman of to-day without special study.

English literature, like the English language, has in the course of its development gone through many vicissitudes and come under many different influences. Its later history, however, is largely in its beginning and it is a mistake to regard Anglo-Saxon as wholly detached from subsequent English literature. In both verse and prose, many lines of development are continuous from the earliest times.

2. English literature and the English language may be divided, if it is remembered that changes of such magnitude are gradual and not sudden, into three major periods:

A. THE OLD ENGLISH OR ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD, which extends from the invasion of England by the Angles and Saxons (449 A.D.) down to the last entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 1154, marking the collapse of the Old English schools of annalists and copyists nearly a hundred years after the Norman Conquest in 1066.

B. THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PERIOD, from 1154 to about 1500. In 1533, Henry VIII broke with the Church of Rome and this is perhaps the best date for the end of the Middle Ages in England. Linguistically, the close of the Middle English Period is usually put at about 1450, followed by a transitional period of fifty years or so leading on to the Modern Period.

C. THE MODERN PERIOD which stretches from about 1500 down to the present time.

3. **EARLY BRITAIN; THE ROMAN OCCUPATION.** The Romans discovered and conquered the island of Britain in the first century before Christ. They found a people living there who were akin in language and customs to the pagan Gauls dwelling on the French side of the Channel.

Why Julius Caesar invaded Britain nobody knows. Did he come as a geographical explorer, curious about a new land, or did he come as a mere military strategist, anxious to prevent the Britons from sending further reinforcements to help the Gauls to fight against the Roman legions? Whatever the motive of the invasion, we know that he and the Romans who followed him gradually made Southern Britain into a Latin-Celtic country. Before long, like Roman Gaul, it had its walled towns, watering-places, amphitheatres and temples, its country villas and its long, straight military roads, passing undeviatingly up hill and down dale, with rows of Roman poplars planted on either side just as in Gaul and Italy. Some of these ancient Roman roads, Watling Street and Icknield Way, for instance, are still in use. The word 'street' is the Latin *via strata*, i.e., a levelled way.

For fully four centuries, the Romans occupied this pleasant maritime colony on the extreme edge of the world. When the Roman garrison was withdrawn in 410 A.D., the latinized Britons were left defenceless. Britain was like a derelict ship, and it was not very long before the heathen raiders living across the North Sea discovered this rich prize and began to swarm into the country. In the century of grim wars that followed, almost every trace of Latin-Celtic civilization was swept away. In the names of garrison towns like Chester, Gloucester, Lancaster, and in the stone ramparts found beneath the meadows of the England of to-day, we see traces of the old *castra*, the camps and walls of the Latin conquerors. Rudyard Kipling in his *Puck's Song* makes us feel the mysteriousness of this old Britain hidden under the modern cornfields. '*And see you after rain the trace / Of mound and ditch and wall? / O that was a legion's camping place, / When Caesar came from Gaul.*'

**4. THE ANGLO-SAXONS.** Between 449 and 580, Britain from the Isle of Wight to the River Tyne gradually became a chain of Germanic colonies. Little by little the English invaders successively occupied the fertile basins of the Thames, Severn, Humber and Forth. The old Celtic inhabitants, whom the English raiders called Welsh (i.e., foreigners), were treated without mercy. Many were killed in battle; some fled to the hills; others escaped oversea to join their kindred tribes in Northern France (thenceforth to be called Brittany); others, again, became slaves. Only in the wilds and fastnesses of Cornwall and in the Welsh and Scottish Highlands did the Celtic tongue survive. The modern Welsh, the Irish and the Highland Scots still speak varieties of the Celtic language.

The Saxon victors have little to say about these wars. Among the defeated Celts, on the other hand, stories came in future times to be told of the valiant deeds and heroism

of their King Arthur, how he was mortally wounded and transported to the fairyland of Avalon to be healed of his wounds, and how he would one day return to save his people. These Celtic stories of King Arthur were a long time afterwards revived by a Latin Chronicler named Geoffrey of Monmouth (*cf.* § 15), and later still were collected in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (*cf.* § 39). They form the basis of the **Arthurian Legends** which play such an important part in English literature.

It is important to remember that the Anglo-Saxon conquest did not take place at one time or under one leader. The old English historian Bede tells us that different tribes came over at intervals, one after another, and that each tribe established a different dominion of its own. The Jutes — who probably came from the interior of Germany and not from Jutland — colonised Kent; the Saxons, in different tribes, occupied the basin of the Thames; the Angles settled in the Northern and Eastern counties.

Each of the small states so formed maintained a sturdy spirit of independence against the others. This had a marked influence on the history, language, and development of these colonies, for it long prevented the subordination of any one state or any one dialect of Anglo-Saxon to the others. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century there were no less than four leading dialects, known as Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon and Kentish. Under the Wessex King Alfred, West Saxon gained official and literary pre-eminence, and the West Saxon capital, **Winchester**, became for a time the intellectual centre of England. After the conquest of the country in 1066 by the Normans under William the Conqueror, however, London gradually took the lead in everything; and when the English language revived in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the great writers, especially Chaucer, used the London dialect. Ever since that time London English has been the standard for the English used in literature, or, as we say, London English has been **King's English** or **Standard English**.

**5. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.** Old English belongs to the Low German group of the Indo-Germanic languages. In its consonant system it shows the same sound shiftings as Dutch and Low German, that is to say, the consonants are articulated in the same place as they are in those tongues. In High German they are articulated in a different place. (*cf.* Eng. *tide*, L. G. *tid*, H. G. *Zeit*; *pipe* — *pipe* — *Pfeife*, etc.).

Old English was made up almost altogether of Germanic elements. The *Gunnlaugs Saga* asserts that 'there was only one speech in the North before William' won England. In after centuries, however, English adopted foreign words in great numbers and gradually changed from a *pure* to a *mixed* language, and from an inflected to an uninflected one. The levelling down, or even total loss, of the inflections was hastened 1.



even before the Norman Conquest, by contact with the Danes in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries; 2. by the powerful influence of Norman-French in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the age of Chaucer, this semi-Normanized English was in general use in London. After still further simplifications of the accidence, this London English in the 15<sup>th</sup> century became fixed for good as the literary language of England. Modern English has grown out of it, and is thus an amalgamation of Anglo-Saxon, Norman-French and Scholars' Latin, all three being welded into one speech, a speech more expressive and beautiful than any one of its three component elements.

Although more than half the words in its vocabulary were borrowed from the French, it would be wrong to call English on that account a Romance language. The real basis of the language — the grammar and the homeliest and most often used words — remained Teutonic. When the literary language was first fixed, in the time of Caxton, English words were mostly written as they were spoken. Since then the pronunciation has greatly changed, but the spelling has remained almost the same. Thus we still write *knight* as people did in Early English, but we no longer pronounce it [knixt] but [nait] *i.e.*, two sounds have been dropped.

At the Revival of Learning many words were taken afresh from Latin although they had already come in at an earlier date through French (*e.g.*, *potion*, *poison*; *rational*, *reasonable*). English thus became very rich in synonyms with various shades of meaning. (Cf. *blessing*, *benison*, *benediction*; *almighty*, *all-powerful*, *omnipotent*; *shorten*, *abridge*, *abbreviate*.)

**6. BEOWULF AND OTHER POEMS.** When the Angles and Saxons first came to Britain, they brought with them no written literature at all. They had an alphabet, to be sure, with letters called *runes*, to which they ascribed magic powers and in which they used to carve short sayings, proverbs, magic formulae and the like on their sword blades and on stones and ornaments. But that was probably all.

Their war-songs and sagas were preserved in the memories of gleemen and handed down by **oral transmission** from generation to generation. They were chanted at their pagan festivals by the *scop* or minstrel. Travelling gleemen, too, each with his harp (or gleewood), hawked rhythmic stories from place to place, and sang or recited to the listening people. Of this custom we read in the famous Anglo-Saxon poem called *Beowulf*. *Beowulf* is the oldest surviving Germanic epic. It was probably written in the eighth century, but the story goes back to pagan times and is partly based on historical happenings in Denmark and Sweden in the early sixth century. It is an epic, the story of



the life and death of a hero. The first part might be called 'Beowulf Triumphant' and the second 'Beowulf's Death' (cf. § 259). The theme is pagan; the treatment half pagan and half Christian in an interesting mixture.

This great poem is a priceless record of the language and metre of old A. S. verse, as well as of the spirit and character of the unwritten stories in verse that the German tribes had delighted in before they left their homes on the mainland. It is a work of real poetic genius, and is written with great strictness according to the A. S. rules of the art of verse.

In addition to Beowulf some shorter poems survive which are based on old Germanic and pre-Christian modes of life. The relations between the *scop* and the tribal kings who patronize or neglect him are described in *Widsith*, *Deor*, and *The Wanderer*. The last is a poignant elegy mourning the death of a patron, a poem full of sweetly bitter melancholy. The northern seas through which the wanderer sails are vividly described. The same seas, the cold waves of the 'swan road' surrounding England, are the *leitmotif* of another fine elegiac poem, *The Seafarer*.

We must also mention two poems commemorating the battles of *Brunanburh* and *Maldon* against the Danes in the tenth century. The latter is the English equivalent of the *Chanson de Roland*, showing the same chivalry, and is probably the finest war poem in English literature.

**7. FORM OF A. S. VERSE.** By examining two or three long lines from *Beowulf*, one sees how very different Old English and its versification were from Modern English:

<p>Æfter thæm wórdum  éfte mid élne;  þídan wólde;  hilde-rince.*</p>	<p>Wéder-Géata léod  nalas ándswáre  þrim-wylm onfeng</p>
---	---

1

<sup>1</sup> So after these words the Weder Geat's Chieftain  
With might of heart hasten'd; nor for answer then would he  
Aught tarry; the sea-welter straightway took hold on  
The warrior of men. *Beowulf*, trans. by Morris (cf. § 202).

We see from this example (1) that Old English is highly inflected; (2) that it is fond of making compound expressions or 'kennings' (these were often expanded into short separate poems known as riddles); (3) that each long line is divided into two short lines by a strongly marked pause, or caesura, in the middle of the line; (4) that the basis of the system is heavy stress, which is still characteristic of spoken English, emphasized by alliteration<sup>1</sup>; (5) that in each half line there are two stressed syllables, which may be marked by alliteration, the first stress of the second half line governing the alliteration and the second stress of the second half line being generally unalliterated: it is this combination of stress and alliteration which binds the two half lines together; (6) that there is no rhyme; (7) that there is not a fixed number of unaccented syllables.

This system of alliterative verse remained in use in England until the time of Chaucer, who makes fun of it; Chaucer's great contemporary, Langland, on the other hand, chose it and used it successfully. Indeed, it has never quite died out. It is found in a sixteenth-century poem commemorating the battle of Flodden Field and basically similar versification is used in the brilliant poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins in the nineteenth century and today in work by W. H. Auden. Since the fourteenth century, however, the dominant system of versification in English has been the Chaucerian, in which the lines contain a uniform number of feet each with a uniform number of syllables and in which rhyme is normal.

**8. CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE INTRODUCED.** In A.D. 597 a band of Roman missionaries under the leadership of Augustine landed in Kent and began the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. Forty years afterwards monks from the Irish Church<sup>2</sup> did similar work for Northumbria. England thus came into touch **with Latin Christendom and the culture of Italy, and the Age of Written Literature began.**

It was in Northumbria that religion and learning most flourished. The great monasteries of that kingdom very soon became famous throughout Western Europe as seats of learning.

**Beda or Bede** (673-735). Near Jarrow, at one of these monasteries, lived a Benedictine Monk, who on account of his piety and learning is generally known as the **Venerable Bede**. His fame spread over the whole of Western Europe and pupils came to

---

<sup>1</sup> *Alliteration* means repetition of the same consonant or of a vowel (not necessarily the same vowel) at the beginning of accented syllables. 'I cannot gestē by letter,' says Chaucer (*gestē* = write tales).

<sup>2</sup> The Irish Celts had been converted to Christianity by St. Patrick, who died in 465 A.D.

him from all parts. All his works except one, which is lost, were written in Latin. They form a sort of encyclopedia of the science and philosophy of his time. The most famous of his books is the **Ecclesiastical History of the English People** (*Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*), a work that throws much light upon early English history.

Another very famous Northumbrian is **Alcuin** (730–804) who brought the culture of York to Charlemagne's court. Alcuin wrote poetry and didactic prose in vigorous Latin.

**9. RELIGIOUS POETRY.** At Whitby, another of the northern monasteries, lived a man who is now known as 'the father of A. S. religious poetry.' His name was Cædmon, and Bede says he was a neat-herd, *i.e.*, a man who minds cattle. Bede tells us in his History how Cædmon was inspired to sing in improvised A.-S. verse the glory of the Creation of the world just in the same way as he had heard his companions sing on worldly subjects. When Hild, Abbess of Whitby, heard of the young herdsman's wonderful gift, she induced him to enter the monastery and devote his life to turning the Bible story into Anglo-Saxon verse.

Cædmon thus became the author of verse Paraphrases of many parts of the Scriptures. Especially famous were his descriptions of the Incarnation, the Resurrection and the Last Judgment.

Cædmon found many imitators and was thus the founder of a school of **Christian poetry**. He it was who first showed how Biblical themes might be used for poetry and how poetry might be used to extend the influence of the pulpit.<sup>1</sup> Cædmon's Paraphrase was in fact the beginning of a new *genre* of literature.

One of Cædmon's successors, an epic poet named **Cynewulf** (C = K), did excellent work in his sacred poems *Christ* and *Elene*. The first poem sings of Christ as the Healer of men and the Hero of the New Testament, the other describes how the Empress Helena after many adventures found the True Cross, or, as old writers call it, the Holy Rood. Most surviving A. S. verse is religious. The *genre* started by Cædmon proved highly productive. One of the most beautiful of all A. S. religious poems is *The Dream of the Rood*, in which the Holy Cross tells its story from its origin in the forest to the Crucifixion. In a

---

<sup>1</sup> Canebat autem de creatione mundi et origine humani generis, says Bede (lib. IV cap. 24). . Item de terrore futuri, iudicii et dulcedine regni coelestis *multa carmina faciebat, in quibus cunctis homines ab amore scelerum abstrahere curabat*

different and dramatic manner there is *The Fall of the Angels*, a poem which recalls *Paradise Lost* and which Milton may in fact have known.

**10. THE DANISH RAIDERS.** But the progress of Anglo-Saxon culture was not to continue. About the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century **the Danish terror** began. The great monasteries with their libraries and art collections suddenly perished at the hands of the men of the North. Northumbria and East Anglia – with Croydon and the rich abbeys of the fens, Peterborough and Ely – were swept with fire and sword, and the death-knell of Northumbrian poetry was sounded. In the South, the progress of the pagan invaders was only checked by the heroism of King Alfred. This great King and his brave West Saxons managed to stem the invasion and to drive the Northmen back into the Northern Midlands. To fight the Northmen at sea Alfred did a great thing. He built a fleet. ‘*See you the windy levels spread / About the gates of Rye? / O that was where the Northmen fled / When Alfred’s ships came by.*’ (Kipling.)

In these Danish wars the precious old manuscripts of early Northumbrian literature all perished. All the Northumbrian poetry now known has come down to us transliterated into the later West Saxon dialect. The poems in their original form are unknown.

Practically all the A. S. poetry that has survived is to be found in four manuscripts written about the year 1000 in the West Saxon dialect. There must have been many more, but we must be thankful that at least these have outlived the dissolution of the monasteries at the Reformation and the hazards of time.

**11. WINCHESTER AND ENGLISH PROSE.** No sooner had **Alfred** made his land safe than he set about trying to revive learning and literature in his domains. He established schools and monasteries, and invited learned men from abroad to teach in them. He himself, although over forty, learned Latin and supervised the translation into English of several Latin works that he thought would be likely to have a good educational influence. He was no mere translator, however. His object was to popularize knowledge and he shows real literary skill in the comments and explanations he inserts, as well as in the manner in which he edits and remodels his translations.

It was a new thing for a man who was not a priest and, above all, for a king to do such work. Up to the time of Chaucer King Alfred stands alone as the single layman to

make a name for himself in literature. He is with justice called the father of English prose; under him Winchester became the intellectual capital of England.

Among the books he translated into Anglo-Saxon are: 1. Orosius' *Universal History*; 2. Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*; 3. Gregory's *Pastoral Care*; and (perhaps) 4. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.

From Alfred's time, too, dates the keeping of the **Anglo-Saxon Chronicles**. There are seven of these *Annals* (wrongly called Chronicles) still in existence; they are designated by the letters A. B. C. D. E. F. G., the one marked A being nearest to the original compilation. They contain the annals of the country as registered by the monks from year to year and are the most substantial monument of A. S. prose extant. One version, the Worcester Annals, extends down to the death of Stephen, 1154.

In the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, **Aelfric**, a learned Benedictine abbot, and **Wulfstan**, Archbishop of York, wrote sermons in A. S. prose. Aelfric is polished and elaborate, Wulfstan fiery and forthright.

Prose always develops more slowly than poetry but by the tenth century A. S. prose had become a satisfactory and flexible medium of expression. The native tradition of plain prose controlled by the rhythms of the spoken language which was started by Alfred was kept alive for religious purposes, such as instructing nuns who did not know Latin, during the Middle English period. It is found in the English prose of Sir Thomas More in the early sixteenth century and later can be said to merge into the "plain style" of Dryden and Swift.

**12. AFTER ALFRED'S DEATH** literature flagged as constant wars with the Danes continued to desolate the country and lay many monasteries in ruins. The Vikings' raids took the character of a real invasion and the Danes settled permanently in the country. They gradually became mixed up with and identified with the native English.

In 1066 the Normans, a still more formidable enemy than the Danes, invaded England. On the field of Hastings, the Anglo-Saxon King Harold and the flower of his nobles fell in battle, and A. S. culture and literature were submerged. The Normans became the owners and masters of England and set up a record of their ownership in Domesday Book. *'See you our little mill that clacks / So busy by the brook? / She has ground her corn and paid her tax / Ever since Domesday Book. / See you our stilly woods of oak / And the dread ditch beside? / O that was where the Saxon broke / On the day that Harold died.'*

In all the old monasteries Norman abbots replaced the native English abbots, and in the course of the next hundred years after the Conquest writing in the Anglo-Saxon language gradually ceased.

The Normans wrote no poems about the conquest of England. But on the Tapestry of Bayeux Norman ladies embroidered the story of the Norman triumph, letting it end abruptly with the breaking of the Saxon line at Hastings.

It is partly true to say that like Julius Caesar and St. Augustine, William of Falaise was in reality an ambassador of European culture to England. It is also partly true that he arrested the development of the native civilization for hundreds of years.

\*

### SUMMARY OF THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

English began as a pure Germanic language. In its earliest form it is called Anglo-Saxon. It is closely related to Low German.

Among the different dialects of Early England, that spoken in London and the East Midlands eventually prevailed; it has given us Standard (or King's) English.

English is divided into three great periods: Old, Middle, and Modern English. Old E. is characterized by its full vowel endings (etan, sunu, dagas); M. E. by the levelling of the full vowels into unstressed e (eten, etë; sonnë; dayës). In Mod. E. this ë becomes mute and drops out (eat, sun, day's).

The first historical inhabitants of Britain were the Celts (or Kelts); they were conquered by the Romans at the beginning of the Christian era. (-cester, -chester = castra; -wich = vicus).

When the Romans withdrew, the Anglo-Saxon tribes colonised the country. They were pagans and were not converted to Christianity till the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The monks introduced the art of writing. The first three steps are (1) Latin prose (Bede); (2) A. S. poetry; (3) A. S. prose (Alfred). A. S. literature began as poetry: (1) on secular and Pre-Christian themes; (2) on Biblical themes.

The splendid epic Beowulf is the only largely Pre-Christian saga of the Anglo-Saxons that has survived.

Of their religious poets, Cædmon and Cynewulf are the best known. These poets both lived in the Christianised northern half of England, where literature first began to flourish.

In the Danish wars of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Northumbrian culture utterly perished and all literature henceforth belonged to the South. The North English poems have only survived in Southern transliterations. King Alfred, a layman and yet a scholar, founded a school of English prose. The Winchester prose tradition was continued by Ælfric, a learned Benedictine Abbot of the tenth century.

After the Battle of Hastings, writing in Anglo-Saxon was gradually given up. A. S. literature was submerged.

## II. THE TRANSITION PERIOD.

**13. THE NORMANS** had marched into battle singing the *Chanson de Roland*. In spite of their French songs and French tongue and French ways, however, the invaders were by descent Norsemen, and thus of Germanic stock. They had been latinized in comparatively recent times and in the course of the centuries following the Conquest they gradually became fused with the kindred Germanic inhabitants of the island.

At first the Norman Conquest had a very injurious and retarding effect on the budding literature of England. The Normans did not treat the English language with respect<sup>1</sup>. On the whole, however, the Conquest can probably be said to have proved in the end beneficial to the English language and English literature. English became two-track, a mixed language, with Latin as well as Germanic lineage. The changes brought about by the Conquest may be listed as follows:

1. It introduced into England an immense number of new models and new subjects from French literature.
2. A tone of gaiety was introduced to lighten Anglo-Saxon seriousness.
3. The scheme of versification was greatly changed and the old English system of stress and alliteration gave way to end-rhymes and a prescribed number of syllables in each line. This new system has remained predominant, although the old has never quite died out and has been rehabilitated in modern poetry and taste. English compared with the Romance languages is heavily stressed and much of the best English poetry is based on speech or stress rhythm, for instance that of John Donne and G. M. Hopkins.
4. The English language discarded most of the old flexional endings of A. S. grammar.
5. The language itself was enriched in expressiveness by the addition of a large body of Romance words.

**14. THE THREE LANGUAGES.** During the transition period lying between the Norman conquest and Chaucer, no less than **three languages** were in use in England.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ox, calf, swine* and *sheep* are good Saxon words, but on the table as food these animals were called *beef, veal, pork* and *mutton*. The Saxons fattened them, but Norman cooks prepared and their Norman masters ate them.

**French** was the language of the court and of society, and in it the Norman minstrel or *'diseur'* recited his verse. **Latin** was the language which the clergy, the only learned men of those days, used in writing. But **English** was the tongue of the people, that is, of nine-tenths of the inhabitants of England.

**15.** Among the **Latin writers** by far the most notable is **GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH**. He was the first to put into Latin the legendary stories of the Britons he had heard among the Welsh. His *Historia Bretonum* (or *History of the Britons*) was in circulation by the year 1139. Similar stories to those he collected in it about the mythical hero King Arthur and the enchanter Merlin remained current for many a day in the western parts of England. Even as late as 1422 we hear of a riot in Cornwall because some monks ridiculed the idea that King Arthur was still alive somewhere, and would one day return to deliver his people.

For claiming that he had based his stories on authentic Celtic records, the good Archdeacon Geoffrey has been denounced by historians as a forger. But his book was taken seriously by poets and chroniclers and became one of the fountain heads of English poetry. There is no doubt that Geoffrey did an immense service to literature by saving from oblivion numbers of old legends and masses of priceless folk-lore.

Many of his tales, such as those of *Cymbeline*, *Gorboduc*, *King Lear* and *King Arthur*, were destined to grow into some of the most famous works in English imaginative literature. Most of the great poets, from Chaucer on, refer to these tales, which have made their writer's name immortal.

**16. LAYAMON'S BRUT.**<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth's book fell into the hands of a Norman priest named Wace, who remodelled it. Wace's paraphrase passed into the hands of an English priest named **Layamon**, who understood French. As Layamon read the old stories of the fight of the British against the invaders, he felt as if he were reading of the fight of the English against the Normans; his love for England burned in him, and he translated the book into the language of the common people (1205) in order to popularize it.

---

<sup>1</sup> In Wace, Brut (or Brutus) was the fabulous great-grandson of Aeneas and the ancestor of the Bretons. In Welsh, however, through some misunderstanding the word *brut* came to mean "an old chronicle." In this sense *brut* passed into Middle English.

Layamon employed the Old English method of alliterative verse; but, under the influence of his French original, he also used rhyme in more and more places. In Wace's version, moreover, we find the first mention of the "Table Round" of Arthurian Romance. The poem among other wondrous things relates how Stonehenge, the mysterious ring of stones on Salisbury Plain, was built with gigantic monoliths brought from Ireland with the help of the Archdruid Merlin's magic.

Layamon's poem is important for many reasons. It opened to the English the treasure-house of Celtic stories dealing with the old history of Britain. It showed, moreover, how Norman-French romances and legends could be turned to advantage for the native English literature.

**17. FRENCH LITERATURE IN ENGLAND.** It must not be forgotten that up to 1205 England was only a part of the dominions ruled over by the Norman kings. Northern France was also under their sway. French writers and minstrels thus belonged in a way to both countries.

The great French metrical Romances of Chivalry describing the deeds of such great "conquerours" as Alexander and Arthur were known all over Europe. In England wandering minstrels recited and sang about such heroes in rough English renderings. These rude oral tales or *gestes* had a great influence on the English imagination before and during the age of Chaucer. French allegories and *fabliaux* (*i.e.*, verse tales of common life) were also given in English. *Cursor Mundi* (1320), a long moral and religious poem, which 'runs' over the history of the 'world', bears witness to their popularity. It begins: *Men lyken gestës for to hear, / And romans read in divers manèr, / Of Alexandre the conqueroure. / Of Julius Caesar the emperoure, / Of Greece and Troy the strongë stryf. / There many a man lost his lif. / ... Many songs of divers rhyme / As English, French and Latyne.*

**18. THE FRENCH METRICAL ROMANCES** about the great conquerors may be divided according to their subjects into three great groups or cycles:

a. THE CARLOVINGIAN (OR FRENCH) CYCLE, dealing with the great deeds of Charlemagne and his twelve paladins, including Childe Roland and Childe Oliver;<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> We still say "He gave him a Roland for his Oliver" (= tit for tat). *Childe* = knight. Childe Roland = Sir Roland. Cf. Childe Harold (Cf. § 167, 274).

- b. THE ARTHURIAN (OR BRITISH) CYCLE, dealing with King Arthur, “the flower of kings,” and his Knights of the Round Table. (In course of time it came to include the originally independent legends of Tristram and the ‘sweet’ Iseult);
- c. THE ALEXANDRIAN (OR GRECIAN) CYCLE, dealing with the life of Alexander the Great and the Trojan heroes. ‘*Every wight knows the storie of Alexandre,*’ says Chaucer (*Monkes Tale*, line 3821).

(*Cursor Mundi* divides the themes into ‘matter of Rome,’ including all antiquity; ‘matter of Britain’ and ‘matter of France.’)

Between the Arthurian and the Carolingian cycles we can trace many points of similarity. Each cycle, for instance, presents its king standing in the midst of his fellowship of knights, as the visible head of Christendom. In each the chief knight, Lancelot of England or Orlando of France, passes through a long term of madness. The careers of both kings end in mystery. Further, Arthur’s magic brand *Excalibur* has its counterpart in Charlemagne’s famous sword *Joyeuse*. Lastly both epics are related by the moral systems they present. They both teach lessons of chivalry – reverence for pure womanhood and a manly sense of steadfastness and duty.

**19. FRENCH ALLEGORIES.** The most famous, and perhaps the most representative poem of the Middle Ages was the **Romance of the Rose**. It abounds in personified virtues and vices, such as Dame Idleness, Fair Seeming (hypocrisy), Reason, Slander and others. Its authors were Guillaume de Lorris (about 1256) and Jean de Meung. The former poet wrote the first 4000 of the 22,000 verses of which the poem is composed. He is a gentle troubadour, and sings of love and the rules a lover should observe to win the Rose, *i.e.*, the perfect lady to whose hand he aspires. De Lorris’s colleague, who continued the work, pushes the love theme contemptuously aside, and tells us about things that he holds to be far more important, such as physics, mechanics, natural history, – in short, he versifies the wonders of the natural science of his time.

Jean is above all a satirist. He speaks bitterly of the frailty of women, and gives scathing descriptions of the corruption of the clergy.

*The Romance of the Rose* tries to teach its readers. It is therefore classed among the didactic allegories.

\*

## SUMMARY OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Though at first checked in its development, English literature eventually benefited from its contact with French. Its stock of themes, and of words, was enriched; its tone became gayer; the language itself cast off its load of inflections and learned to trip more lightly.

Of the Latin works of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Britons* is the most important. It gave rise to the Arthurian Cycle of metrical romances. Layamon's *Brut* rendered the tales of Arthur and Merlin in English alliterative verse. It is an amplification of the work of Wace, and, though it cannot be called art, is vigorous and swiftly moving.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries much Norman-French poetry was current in England. Especially popular were rough English renderings of metrical tales about the 'great conquerors'; these paved the way for Chaucer, who superseded them. The long medieval allegory, the *Romance of the Rose*, was also well known to 14<sup>th</sup> century England. It greatly influenced Chaucer.

PRINCIPAL DATES OF THE ANGLO-FRENCH PERIOD		KINGS OF ENGLAND.	
1066	The Conquest. 1086, Domesday Book.	William I	1066
1154	England, Normandy, Anjou and Poitou under one King.	William Rufus	1087
		Henry I	1100
1205	Layamon's <i>Brut</i> . The loss of Normandy.	Stephen	1135
1215	Magna Charta signed.	Henry II	1154
1321	Dante's <i>Divina Commedia</i> published in Italy.	Richard I	1189
1341	Petrarch crowned Poet Laureate of Italy at Rome.	John Lackland	1199
		Henry III	1216



### III. THE AGE OF CHAUCER.

**20. THE BIRTH OF A NATIONAL LANGUAGE.** By the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the long struggle between the English and French language for the mastery was over. English had won the day. It was now restored to its ancient dignity and gradually became the official language of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Strange to say this took place in the reign of the French-speaking King, Edward III. This was the king who at the famous ball at Windsor (when the dancers smiled at his stooping to pick up the Countess of Salisbury's garter, which had fallen on the floor) used the words *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, a motto which was henceforth to stand on the British royal coat of arms.<sup>2</sup>

When England lost Normandy in the year 1205, the loss was looked upon by most English people as a great national disaster. In the long run, however, it turned out to have been a blessing in disguise. For from that moment England was cut off from the continent and isolated. This isolation gradually welded Normans and English into one nation and made them feel as fellow-countrymen and brothers. The new national spirit of the combined peoples was one of the chief inspiring forces of the new age. In its two great men, Wyclif and Chaucer, the new epoch foreshadowed the Reformation and the great sixteenth-century flowering of English literature.

Chaucer himself, though doubtless a good Catholic, broke away from the old monkish way of looking at things. He was neither a monk nor a theologian and was thus free to teach men to see the world with their own eyes and to make the best of it. He is thus the **first realist**, the first modern poet in the sense in which Shakespeare is modern. For he described men just as he saw them with his own eyes, and he interpreted life and

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1350 the English language was introduced into the schools; in 1362 a law was passed that pleadings in the courts should henceforth be in English. The language of English law is still full of all sorts of Norman-French expressions, e.g., *feme sole* (= a single woman); *chattels*; *oyez!* (The town-crier not understanding French, has changed '*Oyez! Oyez!*' into '*Oh, Yes! Oh, Yea!*')

In Chaucer's time French was still widely spoken, especially in conventual schools. But it was a peculiar kind of French, for like the Canadian-French of to-day, it had developed in isolation. Chaucer's remark: *She spoke the French of Stratford-atte-Bowë, For French of Paris was to her unknowë* is not meant satirically.

<sup>2</sup> *Honi soit* = disgraced be he = shame to him (who thinks ill of it), or *Evil be to him who evil thinks*. (*Honnir* = couvrir de honte.)



its wonderfulness just as he felt them to be. Chaucer thus led the way out of the conventions of medievalism into modern realism and individualism.

**21. THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF CHAUCER'S ENGLAND.** In reading the writings of men of this period, we must bear in mind the great differences between the England of those days and the England of to-day.

In 1380 the population of England was only about two and a half millions, or less than that of modern Berlin. The long French Wars which began in 1337, and the frequent pestilences of those years had considerably reduced the number of inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Labour had become dear and scarce and there were many quarrels about rents between the small farmers and the great landlords. By the time of the Great Plague, 1348, most of the villeins had become free tenants, paying a money rent instead of a labour rent for their holdings. The farm labourers henceforth claimed money wages.

London, the capital, had in Chaucer's time only a population of 40,000. Like other English cities of that day it was, in spite of its wealth, dirty and ill-kept, the importance of good drainage and cleanliness not being understood till three hundred years later. William Morris, a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet and disciple of old Dan Chaucer,<sup>2</sup> dreams of *London, small, and white, and clean, — The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green.* In reality, London streets were narrow, ill paved and unlighted in those days, and pigs ran about them at pleasure, acting as scavengers. But the dresses of the burghers made a gay picture, green, scarlet, red, blue and white being worn by the well-to-do, and the gabled Gothic buildings must have looked happy in the smokeless air.

The London of Chaucer's time was Catholic and was a city of clanging bells pealing from a forest of Gothic steeples. The streets were full of friars and priests. Three streams, now built over, — the Fleet (or Holburn), the Tyburn and the Walbrook, — flowed between banks edged with watercress into the Thames. Over the bed where the largest of these buried rivers once flowed now runs the famous Fleet Street.

The public roads that ran from town to town were often mere quagmires, and the woods that bordered them were infested with outlaws and thieves (called "wastours").

---

<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of the population were engaged in farming. The methods of agriculture were primitive, only four or five bushels of corn to the acre being the average yield (to-day 30-40 bush.). In *Piers the Plowman* we see a farmer ploughing with a wooden plough, his wife leading the oxen. Sheep-farming came next in importance to wheat growing; English wool supplied the needs of all Europe (*Piers* is Anglo-Norman for *Peter*.)

<sup>2</sup> Like the German word *Meister*, *Dan* (= dominus) is here a title and not a Christian name. cf. Span. *Don* in *Don Quixote*.

There were, too, many insolent and sturdy beggars abroad on the roads. Travellers, therefore, for safety's sake, went together in companies and, if they could afford it, on horseback, as did Chaucer's pilgrims.

In those days, of course, Englishmen were still good Catholics, and friars, pardoners, and pilgrims were as common on the roads as blackberries. Many of the clergy were corrupt. The mendicant friars, as we see by the many references to them in Langland and Chaucer, were in very ill repute. Some of them were called "limitours" because they had leave to beg only in a limited or prescribed district. The "pardoners" always carried with them a wallet full of pardons. These pardons (or indulgences) they dispensed, often without any authority from Rome, to those in need of such things. Among the pilgrims were some who had made long journeys of penance to "*ferne halwes*" (= far-off saints) in distant lands. Such pilgrims would wear badges to show whence they were returning, — if from Jerusalem, a palm leaf; if from Compostella, in Spain, a cockle-shell; if from Rome, a vernicle, *i.e.*, miniature copy of the face of Christ, supposed to have been left by a miracle on the veil of St. Veronica on her way to Calvary.

As for the professional classes, they were often little better than quacks. The age of science, that is, of exact knowledge about things, had not yet dawned. The doctors of medicine, for example, depended chiefly on charms to heal men.

It is evident that such an age would afford matter in plenty for the social reformer (like Wyclif) as well as for the satirist (like Langland), and the humorist (like Chaucer). It all depended upon the standpoint from which the observer looked at the life around him.

**22. WILLIAM LANGLAND** (1332?-1400?), the humanitarian poet of this age, deeply felt the social evils he saw around him and preached reform with almost fanatical earnestness. His poems give a most sombre picture of the misery of the poorer classes, the iniquity of the rich, and the corruption of the Church. He shows us the nobles and clergy living in luxury while the miserable peasantry are ground down and oppressed by all sorts of exactions. His poem *Piers the Plowman* appealed direct to the people, and became as popular in its day as did the social reform novels of Dickens in a later age. Like them, it deals especially with the social conditions of the London poor. Two enlarged 'editions' of the MS, issued before 1391, bear witness to the popularity of the work.

It dealt with many social questions which Langland's contemporary, Chaucer, left untouched; for Chaucer preferred to view the world only from the standpoint of a humorist and artist.

Of Langland's life we know next to nothing. He seems to have been a native of Shropshire. In London he supported himself and his wife by acting as clerk in a church, and by singing in masses for the dead. In his poem he paints a portrait of himself in those London days — a 'tall, gaunt figure, clothed in the black robes in which he sang for a few pence at the funerals of the rich; hating to take his cap off his shaven head to bow to the fine lords and ladies that rode by him on the Strand.' All his life he remained miserably poor. He is the poet of rustic 14<sup>th</sup> century democracy.

In his poem *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman* (1362), he pretends that he once had a dream in which he saw the world, a "fairë field full of folk." It lay between the Castle of Care on the one side and the Tower of Truth on the other. Under various allegorical figures, such as Lady Meed (Bribery or Mammon), Falsehood, Holy Church, Conscience, Reason etc., he describes the actions and motives of the people he sees. The poet is bitterly in earnest in his denunciations of a society in which Christ's laws are honoured only in name. He shows the shameful fate that awaits the insincere and the purposeless, and the great glory of truth and honest work.

In those days 'the dream' or 'Vision' was a favourite literary device of poets who wished to attack abuses without exposing themselves to too great danger.

Langland's *Vision* is thus a bitterly satiric allegory, full of deep moral purpose, and its author is a 14<sup>th</sup> century Carlyle. He assails monks, friars, hermits, merchants, kings and other types of mankind for their unholy works, and shows what sweeping reforms are necessary in both Church and State if the masses of the people are to be made happy. *Piers the Plowman* himself is an honest, simple peasant who holds fast to the truth while all the world is lost in error. In the second part of the poem called the *Life of Do-well, Do-bet and Do-best*, Piers becomes identified with Christ Himself. The disparity between the two parts has recently led some scholars to put forward a doubtful theory of multiple authorship for the poem.

The language of *Piers the Plowman* is homeliest English with a very small sprinkling — 12 per cent — of Norman-French words. This was natural, for it addressed its appeal to the common people. And in keeping with the native tradition it is written in alliterative verse.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century there was a marked strengthening of the native tradition of verse based on stress. One MS, written in the middle of the century in the dialect of Lancashire, contains four excellent alliterative poems. The two best are *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght*, a subtle and vigorous tale of chivalry, and the exquisite *Pearl*, an allegory showing a child in heaven.



**23. JOHN WYCLIF** (1324-1384) held views which met with violent opposition in the Church, and he wrote many pamphlets to defend them. At first he addressed only his fellow priests and wrote in Latin. But as time went on, he determined to appeal to English laymen and the nation at large to support him in his stand against Papal interference; so he began to write in English. Like Luther a century later in Germany, Wyclif appealed from the authority of the Pope to that of the Bible. This led to his final breach with Rome. The Latin Bible, or Vulgate, was at that time a sealed book to most Englishmen. Wyclif therefore, with the help of several assistants, set about translating it into the native language. It was a dangerous task to undertake against the wish of the Church. His chief helper, Nicholas of Hereford, had to flee from the country, and Wyclif himself was only saved from the anger of the Church by the all-powerful protection of John of Gaunt, the son of Edward III. In 1380, however, Wyclif was at last able to issue **the first complete version of the English Bible**. It contained many defects and was soon afterwards thoroughly revised by **John Purvey**, one of Wyclif's disciples. In this way the Bible found its way into every part of England. But it was still a very costly book. Each Bible cost about £ 30 in our present money, for every word of it had to be copied by hand.

Like Wyclif's sermons, pamphlets and tracts, this great national work was written in forcible, homely English prose and the translation at once took hold of the hearts of the people. Wyclif, by thus appealing to the authority of the Bible, **laid the foundation of the English Reformation**, while by making the appeal to the masses in their mother tongue, he did important service to English prose. He is the first great constructive English Protestant.

Wyclif's last years were spent at Lutterworth in Leicestershire, where he was safe under the protection of John of Gaunt. Here he trained his order of poor priests for their pious work. Each, like the poor vicar described by Chaucer, was

*to preach Christ's word and his apostles twelve—  
But first he was to follow it himselve.*

**24. DEMOCRATIC TALES.** Just in this period, too, the **Tale of Gamelyn** and the related ballad of **Robin Hood** were very popular. They express the same democratic dissatisfaction with the social injustices of the time. Gamelyn is a younger son of a knight and has been cheated out of his property by the deceitful elder brother John. He becomes the leader of a band of outlaws; by their aid he finally punishes his wicked brother John,



in spite of the fact that the latter has become sheriff. Gamelyn then goes and confesses everything to the king, is pardoned and made chief forester.

**Robin Hood**, the kind-hearted, strong-sinewed outlaw of Sherwood Forest, is a similar figure. He robs the rich to give to the poor, and takes an especial delight in making "fat bishops" and "rich abbots" disgorge their ill-gotten wealth. Langland complains that 'the Rhymes of Robin Hood are better known to idle fellows than pious songs.' Sir Walter Scott, centuries later, revived the stories about this popular hero and his band in the historical novel *Ivanhoe*.

Robin Hood though probably not an historical personage is a typical Englishman, with all the Englishman's love of fair play and a readiness to shake hands and be friends after a square fight.

**25. MANDEVILLE.** *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* was a popular prose work of this period. The book is made up of travellers' tales collected from all sorts of sources. It pretends to describe the author's own adventures in the Holy Land, Chaldea and Amazonia, and claims to be a kind of guide to those about to visit Jerusalem, a city which ever since the days of the Crusades had been regarded as "the heart and middle of the world." Biblical, Oriental and romantic names are mixed at random. These fictitious travels fascinated and amused the medieval reader. All sorts of wonders are described, for instance a race of people whose feet are so large that they use them as parasols when resting in the afternoon.

**26. JOHN GOWER** (1325-1408), a country squire, was the most prolific poet of his age. For centuries people coupled his name with Chaucer's, just as we couple Schiller's with Goethe's. But nowadays none but curious students read him.

Gower wrote in the three languages then spoken in England. The *Speculum Meditantis* (Mirror of One Meditating) he wrote in **French**. His *Vox Clamantis* (The Voice of One Crying) was in **Latin**. In the form of a dream, it describes and denounces the Peasants' Revolts under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw in 1381. His third and best work, *Confessio Amantis* or *The Lover's Confession*, he wrote in **English**.

But the great poet of the age was to be a man who had full faith in the English tongue, the tongue of the great masses of the people. This man was a Londoner, and his name was Chaucer.

**27. GEOFFREY CHAUCER** (1340-1400) was neither a moralist like Gower nor a reformer like Langland, but merely a delightful narrative poet. He tells tales for their own sake, out of an artist's sheer love of storytelling, and he is the first great English humorist.

He introduced the kind of verse which is based on the number of syllables in the line and foot and on a regular pattern of stresses and is thus the 'father' of all subsequent English poetry except that based on speech rhythm and semantic rhythm. He points forwards to *e.g.* Spenser, Milton, and Tennyson, but not to Donne, Hopkins, and Eliot.

Hardly a greater contrast can be conceived than that between the gaunt, embittered reformer and idealist, Langland, and this urbane poet-humorist and realist who gives his name to the age of Edward III and Richard II. Langland stands for the theological conception of life and Chaucer for the sensuous or Renaissance conception.

**28. CHAUCER'S LIFE.** Dan Chaucer,<sup>1</sup> as both Spenser and Tennyson affectionately call him, was the son of a well-to-do London vintner (= wine-seller). He thus sprang from the same class as Shakespeare. His mother was a woman of good family. Through friends of hers, perhaps, he became at the age of sixteen a kind of page in Prince Lionel's household. In 1359 he was with the Prince's father, Edward III, in France, and was taken prisoner. After the Treaty of Bretigny the king had the youth ransomed and he at once returned to service at Court. There he became a '*valettus*' or chamberlain in the king's household.

In the Latin records, he is in later days always styled *Galfredus Chaucer, armiger* (= esquire). So of the three degrees of chivalry, — page, esquire, knight, — he never seems to have got further than the second, in spite of the fact that he later on had the patronage of the powerful John of Gaunt. Chaucer keenly felt this disparity between his genius and his rank. Throughout his works, like Burns long afterwards, he set personal merit above mere gentleness of birth.

Between 1370 and 1380 Chaucer was several times sent abroad on diplomatic missions. In 1372 he **visited Italy** for the first time.

Some people have thought that he met Petrarch at Padua. Others have even conjectured that he also visited Boccaccio, who was then delivering lectures on Dante at Florence. Certain it is that this journey to Italy wrought a wonderful change in him and greatly affected English literature. From Chaucer's day down to the present, Dante and

---

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-Norman *chaucier* = *calceareus* = stocking-maker.

other Italians have had a profound and constant influence upon English literature, above all by revealing to the English the importance of artistic form.

Chaucer was again in Italy in 1378, on business. In 1374 he had been appointed Comptroller of the Customs collected on wool, skins and tanned hides, in the Port of London, and this remained his chief employment for many years.

He was always a hard-worked official and man of affairs. Time for study and writing had to be snatched in the intervals of his duties as exciseman among the "shipmen" of the Port of London. In 1384, however, he was granted leave of absence on full pay, and this boon allowed him leisure for poetry.

But before two years were over, a hostile faction at court deprived him of his post. In his latter years, till relieved by Henry IV in 1399, the poet was often in want of money. The humorous poem "*To His Empty Purse*" (1399), which he sent to the king as a broad hint, bears witness both to Chaucer's poverty and to his cheerfulness under adversity.

But his days were numbered, and in 1400, before he had had time to finish the great poem which he had planned, the *Canterbury Tales*, he died. He was buried in the church at Westminster, merely because this happened to be his parish church. Not till many years afterwards did it become the custom to bury the nation's great authors in the part of the Cathedral now known as the Poets' Corner.

Of Chaucer's family life we know little except that he lost his wife Philippa in 1387, and that he had a little son, Lewis, whom he dearly loved and for whom he translated the Latin *Treatise on the Astrolabe*. This book not only bears witness to Chaucer's knowledge of the astronomy of his day, but also shows how bad his prose could be.

**29. CHAUCER'S THREE STAGES.** Chaucer's work as a poet is usually divided into three stages or periods of development. In his First Period, the period of his apprenticeship to literature, he was chiefly under **French influence**; in his Second Period, his reading was extended to the **Italian** poets; his Third or **English** Period is his period of self-reliance and full maturity.

Chaucer began as an imitator of **French** models, — ballads, roundels, allegories. The literary world in which he lived as a young man was dominated by the **conventional school of French love poetry**, especially by Guillaume de Lorris and his *Romance of the Rose* (§ 19). In such poems the story is sure to open on a May morning; the birds sing blithely; the flowers are in blossom; the poet dreams, describes his vision and awakes. Chaucer, too, adopted this charming convention at first. Having to write court poetry at this period, it was of course his first duty as a court poet to make his figures comport

themselves according to the orthodox code of behaviour and sentiment. Chaucer's two poems, the *Compleynt to Pity* and the *Dethe of Blanche or The Booke of the Duchesse* both belong to this conventional allegorical school. The latter is an **allegorical** elegy on the death of the wife of his patron, John of Gaunt. It is a highly skilful piece of work.

To this period, too, his translation of the **Romance of the Rose** perhaps belongs. Throughout Chaucer's whole work, the influence of this poem, especially of the second part — the comic-satiric part — is clearly traceable.

**30. CHAUCER'S ITALIAN PERIOD.** Italy made Chaucer understand the meaning of *form, i.e.*, the higher unity in art.

In Italian poetry and in the "high style", as he calls it, of **Petrarch** and of **Dante**, he found a profounder way of looking at life. He came, too, into direct touch with the Renaissance. He learnt to feel the charm of **Ovid**, henceforth his favourite poet. From **Boccaccio**, to whom in temperament he was near akin, Chaucer got not only the material for two of his most important compositions — **Troilus and Creseide** and the **Knight's Tale** — but also a new and higher conception of the art of story-telling. From him he learnt, above all, the humanistic Renaissance interest in men and women as *individuals* and not as *types* or as vehicles of consciousness and sensibility. Langland, for example, is of poet of types. It is this way of studying men and women as individuals that most distinguishes Chaucer from all who had gone before him, and links him up with this element in the work of the English dramatists and with the English novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The greatest poem of this Italian period is *Troilus and Creseide*<sup>1</sup>, based on Boccaccio's *Filostrato*. The Middle Ages only knew Homer at second hand and were content with their own myths about Troy. In *Troilus* we have a medieval Troy-story turned into a satirical love comedy. It is a poem of great formal beauty and profound psychological understanding. By many it is considered to be Chaucer's masterpiece, superior even to the *Canterbury Tales*. There can certainly be no doubt that *Troilus and Creseide* is the more unified and polished work of art.

Just as Chaucer in *Troilus and Creseide* laughs at Love, so in another poem of this period, the *House of Fame*, he laughs at literary glory. Rather will he enjoy being a contemplative spectator of the life of men than strive for Fame, he says.

---

<sup>1</sup> The stress in *Creseide* falls on the second syllable. In Shakespeare, the stress in *Cressida* falls on the first syllable.

Thus Chaucer gradually ripened into the humorist and the great realistic artist of his Third or English Period.

**31. THE ENGLISH PERIOD.** The *Legend of Good Women* (1384) at the beginning of this period may be looked upon as a preparative experiment for the **Canterbury Tales**, the best known and most original of Chaucer's writings.

**The Prologue** to these Tales tells how twenty-nine pilgrims met together in spring time at the Tabard Inn in Southwark <sup>1</sup>; how they set forth on their pilgrimage to the famous shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury; how they agreed with the host of the Inn, Henry Baily (who accompanied them as their guide) that each pilgrim should tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back, the best story-teller to receive a prize — a supper at the expense of the others — on their return to the inn; and how the host, with all the assurance in the world, promised to be umpire and himself award the prize.

Chaucer planned the *Tales* to be a great 'link and frame' story,<sup>2</sup> in which a series of stories, grave and gay, were to be linked together by the remarks of the host, the poet's own comments and those of the travellers. The journey is the 'frame.'

**The journey from London to Canterbury**, 55 miles, usually took such cavalcades four days, the recognized stopping places for the night being Dartford, Rochester, and Ospringe; this left ten miles for the easy fourth day's stage. The roads were too bad for wheeled vehicles, and the pilgrimage was fatiguing enough even for mounted pilgrims travelling by easy stages.

Chaucer's travellers set out on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at break of day, the Monk's horse's bells jangling in the breeze and the Miller playing a lusty tune on his bagpipes. Lots were drawn to see who should tell the first story, and the lot fell to the Knight. The latter thereupon told the chivalrous tale of *Palamon and Arcite*. It is about two young noble-men who both fell in love with the same lady and, although friends and kinsmen, became deadly foes.<sup>3</sup> This was followed at intervals by other tales, till at last the company came

---

<sup>1</sup> A *tabard*, or herald's coat, was probably the sign of the inn in question. There is still a Tabard Street in Bermondsey, as that part of London is now called. Pilgrims from Catholic lands overseas still visit the shrine in Canterbury Cathedral on the Saint's day.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Frame' is the device used for holding the tales together, in this case a pilgrimage. The best known frame stories are the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, the great collection called the *Arabian Nights*, and in more modern times *The Earthly Paradise* by W. Morris, in avowed imitation of Chaucer.

<sup>3</sup> The Elizabethan drama *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which some have attributed to Shakespeare, deals with the same theme.

in sight of the spire of Canterbury Cathedral. Here the poem breaks off, for Chaucer died before he had time to write the tales told on the return journey.

Of the thirty pilgrims, including Chaucer, who had promised to tell tales only twenty-two keep their promise, telling one tale each. Chaucer himself tells two tales, the story of *Sir Thopas* in verse, and a tale in very tedious prose.

Thus we have only twenty-four tales altogether. But even as they stand, these tales in their fragmentary form take in the whole range of the poetry of the Middle Ages.

**32. THE PILGRIMS** are drawn from all ranks of life, as the following table will show. The Prologue, in fact, gives a picture of 14<sup>th</sup> century society in miniature:

*Gentry:* the **Knight** (a tender-hearted and chivalrous gentleman: “a very perfect gentle knight was he”); the debonair young **Squire**, his son, who rides beside him.

*Ecclesiastics and Nuns:* Madame Eglantyne, a prim, dignified **Prioress**; a **Nun**; a jolly **Monk**, pleasure-loving and fat; a self-important mendicant **Friar**; and three **Priests**.

*Burgesses:* a pompous, self-satisfied **Merchant**; a gentle and book-loving **Scholar of Oxford**, in a threadbare coat and riding a lean horse; a sleek, sly **Lawyer**; a white-bearded **Franklin** (country gentleman), very fond of good living; a close-fisted, unscrupulous **Doctor of Medicine**, grown rich during the pestilence; a middle-aged, somewhat vulgar, much-travelled, gossiping dame from Bath (**‘the wife of Bath’**).

*Working class.* Five men in livery, members of guilds: a haberdasher, a carpenter, an upholsterer, a weaver, and a dyer; an unsavoury-looking cook and a sailor (who was a bad rider).

*Miscellaneous:* a not over-honest **millier**; a spindle-shanked and crafty **reeve** (steward of an estate); a shrewd **manciple** (*i.e.*, a man who has to buy victuals for his monastery); a **poor parson** (a 14<sup>th</sup> century Vicar of Wakefield), and his brother, a god-fearing, honest **ploughman**. A red-faced, squeaky-voiced **sompnour** (*i.e.*, a man who had to serve *summonses*); a money-grubbing and ditty-loving **pardonier** just back from Rome with indulgences and *pardons* to sell; and last, but not least, the jolly **host of the Tabard Inn**.

The description of these various personages in the Prologue is Chaucer’s crowning achievement, and upon it his fame chiefly rests.

The Prologue opens conventionally, with a delightful description of spring. Then one after another, the pilgrims stand forward and are introduced to us in a few vivid and telling words. The portraits are hit off to the life, and are unforgettable.

The Knight, as the most dignified person among the pilgrims, opens the Tales. Thenceforth, however, the persons are chosen not in accordance with their rank but according to the principle of dramatic contrast, so that serious, light, satiric and playful stories may alternate with each other.

**The Tales** themselves were composed at different times, and are very unequal in value; some are tedious and almost worthless, while others, such as the story of **Griselda** and the **Prioress's Tale** about the *little clergeon* (i.e., school-boy), are masterpieces of narrative art and harmonious language.

**Chaucer's good qualities** are manifest. His sly humour; his tolerant, open mind; his unflinching good sense; his keenness of observation; his kindness of heart; his power of realistic drawing and skill in story-telling; all go to make him the great creative humorist that he is.

It has been said that we look in vain in Chaucer for deep ponderings on social or religious problems. His comedy here and there gives glimpses of intense feeling for the tragic issues of life, but on the whole it is true that he lacks both the metaphysical values of Dante and the sociological fervour of Langland. He is a great poet of the surface, and of the ordinary round of daily life; and a great lover of the common people and common things.

In his love of Nature, as in everything else, he is always genuine and sincere; but his delight in Nature is physical rather than spiritual.

He describes Nature not for its own sake but as a setting for human action; nor has he any of the deep mystic feeling for Nature afterwards developed by the poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (§ 153).

**33. GROUNDS OF CHAUCER'S IMPORTANCE.** If we try to sum up the chief reasons why Chaucer takes such an important place in English literature, we find that:

1. He was a layman and, having a free hand, was thus released from ecclesiastical and monastic tradition; towards the end of his life he took poetry from the regions of metaphysics, allegory and dogmatic theology; he greatly simplified it by making it reflect in direct realism the common business of life. The **Canterbury Tales** have the virtues and the shortcomings of English common sense.

2. He was a man of the world — a courtier, soldier, diplomatist, custom-house official, traveller. He was thus released from the two dangers of insularity and bookishness. He loved humanity in spite of its follies.
3. As a writer and as a conscious artist, he freed himself from the literary conventions of his day. With exquisite feeling for words, he chose a diction, style, and metre suitable for his new needs as an individualist and a realist.

\*

### SUMMARY OF THE AGE OF CHAUCER

The Wars of Edward III, undertaken to regain the Plantagenets' lost possessions in France, stimulated a new national spirit and helped to fuse the English and Norman elements into one single nation. Out of the two languages Modern English was born, and Chaucer is its first great exponent.

The Wars, however, gave a chance for the expression of deep-rooted discontent with the many social abuses in Church and State. This democratic indignation found a voice in Langland's *Piers Plowman* and in Wyclif. Wyclif, the first great English reformer, tried to remedy the evil in a practical manner (1) by translating the Bible and (2) by training a sincere band of poor priests to help the people to understand its teaching.

The same conflict between rich and poor, and the same desire for honest governors, is expressed in the *Robin Hood Ballads* and the *Tale of Gamelyn*, as well as in John Gower's

Latin poem *Vox Clamantis*. Gower also wrote long poems in French and English. **Chaucer**, the greatest poet England had before Spenser, boldly chose English alone as the instrument of verse. Chaucer was the son of a London vintner, *i.e.*, he sprang from the same social class as Shakespeare. His life showed him men from all sides and of all classes. He thus became one of the most broad-minded and catholic of poets. He is a humorist, while Langland is a satirist. His work is divided into three stages: his apprenticeship (1) to French, and (2) to Italian literature, and (3) his independent or English period. His two chief works are *Troilus and Creseide* and the *Canterbury Tales*; his fame and influence have chiefly rested on the Prologue to the latter.

Chaucer is sometimes called "the father of the English poetry", but if we use this phrase we must not forget that there were grandfathers and great-grandfathers as well. Chaucer lived six hundred years ago; English poetry started six hundred years before Chaucer.

PRINCIPAL DATES		SOVEREIGNS	
1265—1321	Dante. Petrarch (1304—1374).	The Plantagenets	
1340	Chaucer born.	Edward I	1272
1350	Boccaccio's Decameron printed.	Edward II	1307
1362	English recognised in the law-courts.	Edward III	1327
1362	Langland's <i>Vision of Piers Plowman</i> .	Richard II	1377
1372—1378	Chaucer's journeys to Italy.		
1380	Wyclif's Bible (afterwards revised).		
1385—1389	Most of the <i>Canterbury Tales</i> written.		
1400	Chaucer dies. Langland dies.	Henry IV	1399



## IV. THE BARREN AGE.

**34. FIFTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND.** The fifteenth century was the century of the last magnificent flowering of the ecclesiastical splendour of the middle ages: the century of the fine churches in the late Gothic style called Perpendicular. It was also a century of wars, a time of change and confusion. From the literary point of view it is a poor century. It has no writer of the first rank and few of the second: the chief reason for this is probably the linguistic instability of the change from Middle to Modern English which was now taking place.

The long struggle in England between the rival dynasties of Lancaster and York known as the Wars of the Roses, broke up the power of the baronage. As is pointed out in Bulwer Lytton's novel *The Last of the Barons* (cf § 164), the power now passed into the hands of the king and the middle classes.

On the Continent, meanwhile, the **Art of Printing** had been discovered. We do not today wholly agree with Victor Hugo that it "led the human mind like a ransomed captive out of the dark dungeons of the Middle Ages"; we believe less unreservedly in the human mind and we think more highly of the Middle Ages, but the discovery of printing was undoubtedly a great event with consequences which are still incalculable. In 1477 the English printer **Caxton** published the first English book printed in England — *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* — a translation from the French.

Hitherto rich people alone had been able to buy books. Even a poet like Chaucer could have had but a very small library. But from now on the world was flooded with books, and people in authority soon found it necessary to defend themselves against the outspokenness of the printing press by means of strict licensing laws.

Among the first of the 68 books published by Caxton were the works of Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, and Mandeville. On the whole the character of the books he printed indicates but a humble state of knowledge among the readers of the day. The New Learning did not reach the Universities till the following century.

The outlook of the Middle Ages had been theocentric, not antropocentric. The 'Schoolmen' concerned themselves with fascinating speculations on such matters as the precise relations of the heavenly powers; the supernatural interested them more than the natural. To the thinkers of the new age which began with the Renaissance and the Reformation and the inauguration of the scientific, inductive approach to phenomena,

the medieval schoolmen seemed almost frivolously unworldly. It is probably true that by the fifteenth century their Aristotelian methods had become too stereotyped. The New Learning did away with the old learning, but the process was slower than is sometimes thought. Milton found the medieval system of education in use at Cambridge in the early seventeenth century, and attacked it vehemently.

**35. CHAUCER'S IMITATORS IN ENGLAND.** Chaucer had many followers but no successors. In England **Thomas Occleve** and **John Lydgate** trod in his footsteps. The former, who dearly loved Chaucer, is best known for his lines to the master poet in the poem called the *Gouvernail of Princes*.

**John Lydgate** (d. 1450), 'the poet monk of Bury,' enjoyed popularity far beyond the walls of his monastery. He was the prolific author of some 250 works in indifferent Chaucerian verse. His *Storie of Thebes* was an attempt to continue the work of "my maister Chaucer, chief poete of Britayne" by writing an additional *Canterbury Tale*. Lydgate is supposed to tell the tale himself on the Pilgrims' return journey to London. But of the music, humour and magic of Chaucer there is hardly a trace either in this or any other of Lydgate's works.

In a long-winded poem called *The Falls of Princes*, based upon Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, Lydgate relates 'sad stories of the death of kings' from the time of Adam down to the capture of King John of France at Poitiers (1346).

**36. CHAUCER'S INFLUENCE ON SCOTTISH POETRY.** This poetry contained a rich colour and vocabulary of its own which saved it from becoming a mere lifeless echo of Chaucer. Yet it is in Scottish rather than in English literature that Chaucer's influence is most clearly seen. One of the chief British poets between Chaucer and the Elizabethan Spenser was the Scotsman **William Dunbar**.

In Scotland, where English was spoken as far up the coast as Aberdeen in a dialect known as Scots or Northern English, literature had been very late in blossoming. Scottish literature from the 14<sup>th</sup> century on is marked, too, by a strong national tendency. This arose out of the Scots' resistance to England's efforts to conquer them in the reigns of Edward I and Edward II. From their first poet **Barbour**, who wrote a patriotic epic, or rather a metrical history, called *Bruce* (1377), about Scotland's fight for freedom, down to Burns, this anti-English sentiment in Scottish poetry is clearly marked. Since the settlement of the political quarrel between England and Scotland by the Union in 1707,

this feeling has gradually subsided; there is now cultural autonomy in Scotland within the sensible framework of political union. The Scottish educational system, for instance, has developed differently from the English.

Among all the Scottish disciples of Chaucer, by far the most famous is **King James I** (1394-1437). This prince had been captured when a boy on the way to France, and had for nineteen years been kept a prisoner in Windsor Castle by Henry IV. There, among other books, he read Chaucer. From his prison window he one day caught sight of Lady Jane Beaufort, the niece of Henry IV, and there and then fell in love with her — just as Arcite does with Emilie in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. He thus came to write, in six books, his quaint and tender love-poem called **The King's Quair** [= *kwaɪə*] (i.e., *cahier* or book). It is dedicated to Chaucer and Gower. It contains many reminiscences of Chaucer and is written in the Chaucerian or seven-line stanza, a metre which was henceforth to be called *rhyme royal*, because a king had used it.

Thirteen years after his return to Scotland, King James was assassinated in the tragic manner described in Rossetti's ballad, *The King's Tragedy* (§ 200).

**37. WILLIAM DUNBAR** (1460-1530?) was a humorist. As a poet Dunbar satirized medieval Catholic Scotland just as Chaucer before him had satirized medieval Catholic England. He is the greatest Scottish poet before Burns, and his poetry, like that of Burns, is full of coarse wit, grotesque imagination and homely pictures.

As a begging Franciscan friar, he wandered for 20 years through England and France. When he was forty he gave up his life as a friar and obtained a post as court poet and entertainer to King James IV of Scotland. When King James fell at Flodden Field (1513), the poet again sank into obscurity. His poems show that he had seen a great deal of the world, especially of its squalid and seamy side.

His poems fall into four categories: (1) Reflective Poems (e.g., *The Lament for the Makers*, i.e., the poets Chaucer, Gower, etc.); (2) Satires, *The Three Married Women and the Widow*, imitated from Chaucer's character, the wife of Bath; (3) Panegyrics, such as *The Thistle and the Rose* (a dream allegory celebrating the marriage of James IV and Margaret Tudor); (4) Burlesque, the ribald *Dance in the Queen's Chamber*.

One of his most powerful compositions is *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins through Hell*, a piece full of wild sardonic humour, reckless abandon and touches of horror almost Dantesque.

In two other poems, **Henryson**, who gave a Scottish version of *Æsop's Fables* and re-wrote Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseide* to show the superiority of Scots to the language of

“the Southrons” (= the English); and **Gavin Douglas**, who paraphrased Virgil in a fine Scottish rendering, the influence of the English master is seen side by side with that of the new humanism.

**Sir David Lyndsay** was another Chaucerian. He wrote a very outspoken satire on the *Three Estates*; it is a morality directed against priests and favourites. Lyndsay lived in the time of John Knox, the great Scottish reformer.

It will thus be seen that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was a great deal more poetic freshness and originality north of the Border than south of it. None of the Scottish poets, however, had Chaucer’s urbanity and catholicity. The most striking qualities of their poetry, their rude gay humour and their unconventional and beautiful descriptions of Nature for its own sake, have been ascribed to Celtic influences (see § 143).

**38. BALLAD POETRY.** More important than the English echoes of Chaucer are the anonymous popular ballads of the fifteenth century. In their unaffected, graphic and simple language, in their naïve, strong emotion, and in their deep sense of the wonder, pathos and tragedy of human life, they show real creative power and lyric inspiration. These ballads (dates unknown) fall into five great groups: (1) Ballads about **Love and Jealousy**, — the stealing of brides, elopements, the adventures of faithful lovers, the woes of the forsaken maiden, the cruelty of wicked mothers and mothers-in-law. (2) Ballads about fairies, ghosts, witches and **supernatural powers** that change beautiful maidens into animals. (3) Ballads about **sacred traditions**, the legends of Christ and the saints. (4) **Greenwood Ballads** about outlaws (like Robin Hood). (5) The **Border Ballads** about battles and raids, and about feuds between the English and Scottish families living on either side of the Border.

The best known of the Border Ballads is the Ballad of **Chevy Chase**. In words that ring of battle it describes a fight on the Scottish Borders between the Percies and the Douglases. *I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, says Sir Philip Sidney, that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet.*<sup>1</sup> Another famous ballad, **The Nut-brown Maid**, is in the form of ‘lyrical dialogue.’ It is the story of the unshakeable loyalty of a maiden to an apparently humble lover, an outlaw, who in the end turns out to be a nobleman in disguise. She sticks to him through thick and thin, and finally becomes his wife. Another fine ballad, **Sir Patrick Spens**, tells how Sir Patrick is sent on a dangerous voyage one winter to bring home ‘the king’s daughter of Norway.’ On their return voyage

---

<sup>1</sup> *That I found not* = *without finding*.

the ship is lost in a storm. *Half o'er, half o'er to Aberdour, It's fifty fathoms deep, And there lies good Sir Patrick Spens, With the Scotch lords at his feet.* Another ballad describes the ship in which a maiden goes to seek her 'true love'. *The mast was covered with beaten gold, And it shone across the sea, The sails were of the grass green silk, And the ropes of taffetie.*

These precious ballads, and others such as *The Two Corbies* and *The Gaberlunzie Man* (= beggar), were all collected and published at a later date by Bishop Percy in his famous *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* (§ 140).

No one knows when or by whom these old ballads were first composed.

**39. PROSE LITERATURE.** The fifteenth century produced one splendid and unique work, the great prose romance called **Le Morte d'Arthur**, written by Sir Thomas **Malory**. Of the author we know next to nothing. He tells us once more the old, old stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, of Lancelot and Queen Guinevere, Sir Galahad and the **search for the Holy Grail** (grail = a cup).

**The story of the Grail** (which Milton once thought of taking for an epic) is treated in Books XI-XVII of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. It is one of the most suggestive and fruitful themes in the whole range of literature.

The legend says that when Satan rebelled against God there shone in his helm an enormous ruby. This jewel was struck out by St. Michael's sword and, falling, was lost in one of the oceans of the earth. Re-discovered by Solomon's magic, it was made by him into a cup. This cup was used by Christ at the Last Supper, and afterwards formed the unguent pot from which the Saviour's body was anointed at the tomb. This precious relic was brought to England by St. Joseph of Arimathea; here it vanished. The search for the Holy Grail henceforth became the ideal of many knights. Long, long afterwards it was disclosed to the pure eyes of Sir Galahad, though the sinful gaze of his father, Sir Lancelot, could not see it. Thus Sir Galahad achieved the Holy Grail, and on his death angels took the cup up to heaven, and no man has seen it since. In the beautiful German version by Wolfram von Eschenbach (1200) and in the old French versions, Galahad goes by the name of Parsifal. (*Sir Percival* in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.)

The story of Arthur and his knights comes to an end in Book XXI of Malory's book. The Round Table is broken up by the sins of the unfaithful knights, and in the great battle in the west against the traitors, Arthur is wounded and passes away to a far country, the



vale of Avalon<sup>1</sup>, to be healed; some day he is to return to his people (cf. § 4). His faithless queen dies penitent in a nunnery, and Lancelot himself is buried at Joyous Gard.

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, though only a compilation of old legends, is the greatest imaginative achievement of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This enchanting tale of chivalry was one of the books printed by William Caxton at his printing press at Westminster (1485). It inspired Spenser, Tennyson, Swinburne and Morris to great poems to be mentioned later on. In all these poets' epics we feel, however, one great defect — a defect which is traceable to Malory's story itself — the lack of a really coherent plot in the story of Arthur.

**40. CAXTON** was not only the first English printer and a good business man but also a most meritorious translator. It is impossible to magnify the importance of his work. Coming just at the time he did, Caxton, with his press and his delight in books, diffused over England a curiosity about literature and so helped to pave the way for the period that followed, the early half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, an age of humanistic studies.

But as well as this, Caxton's work led to the consolidation of the conflicting English dialects, and helped to fix the form of the written language and of standard English once for all. Before Caxton, for instance, everyone spelt as he liked: Caxton was the first to try to make English spelling uniform.

**Caxton wrote all his books in Chaucer's Midland English, thus confirming it as the literary language of England.**

Among the books he made accessible to the English people were Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and a medieval *Aeneid* — not Vergil's. 'It should be observed,' says Hallam in his *Literature of Europe*, 'that the Caxton publications are more adapted to the general than the learned reader'. They are certainly medieval. The New Learning came to England a little later.

\*

---

<sup>1</sup> Avalon in Celtic legend is a sort of enchanted island. To some extent it corresponds with the "Islands of the Blest" of Irish legend.

**SUMMARY OF THE BARREN AGE.**

(Mnemonic: Decline of the Baronage).

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, English literature produced no successor to Chaucer. England remained under the influence of the scholastic philosophy. The imitators of Chaucer in England, Occleve and Lydgate, struck out no new line for themselves.

In the Scottish poetry of the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was much more individuality and vigour than in that of England. Barbour, a patriotic poet and a contemporary of Chaucer's, wrote an epic on *Bruce*, the victor in the battle of Bannockburn, the hero of the Scottish fight for liberty. Bishop Gawin Douglas translated Virgil, while James I, Henryson, Lyndsay, Dunbar are the other Scottish writers. They are, especially in their first stage, disciples of Chaucer. King James wrote, in Chaucerian verse, the *King's Quair*, the metre of which was henceforth known as *rhyme royal*. Satire of social and ecclesiastical abuses marks the growing feeling of democracy in most of these poets.

More important than the imitations of Chaucer are 1. the old English ballads of this period; 2. Malory's noble book **Morte d'Arthur**, one of the most important works in English prose before the Reformation.

The end of the fifteenth century saw the emergence of a settled form for written or literary English. This was partly due to the work of Caxton, England's first printer.

PRINCIPAL DATES		SOVEREIGNS	
		<i>Lancastrians</i>	
1400	Chaucer dies. Langland dies.	Henry IV	1399
1425—34	Lydgate's poem <i>The Falls of Princes</i> .	Henry V	1413
1422	James I of Scotland. <i>King's Quair</i> .	Henry VI	1422
1450	Printing invented by Gutenberg.	<i>House of York</i>	
1453	Fall of Constantinople. Greek scholars come to Italy.	Edward IV	1461
		Edward V	1483
1470	Sir Thomas Malory's <i>Morte d'Arthur</i> .	Richard III	1483
1477	Caxton prints <i>The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers</i> , the first book printed in England.	<i>The Tudors</i>	
		Henry VII	1485
		Henry VIII	1509



## V. THE TUDOR REVIVAL.

**41. THE NEW LEARNING.** All through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the revival of Latin culture had spread over southern Europe. By far the most important event in the European world of letters in the fifteenth century was the 'renaissance' or re-birth of Greek literature that followed the fall of Constantinople. Men who admired or fostered this 'new' learning were called 'humanists'. This is the narrower sense in which the word is used. Dante was greatly influenced by Latin culture, though he retained his central metaphysical values and is thus a great medieval as well as a great 'humanist'. Petrarch, Erasmus, and Sir Thomas More are other great representative names of the period.

The new outlook which these changes introduced can best be summed up in the word 'humanism' in its wider sense. The emphasis was now put on man rather than on God; on the natural values rather than the supernatural values; on man's power to stand alone and to interpret the deity by the light of his own reasoning powers rather than on man's ineffectiveness without God. This new *Weltanschauung* led to Renaissance individualism; to seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century rationalism, with materialism as a by-product; to the scientific revolution, which started in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and of which Francis Bacon is the first outstanding exponent; and in literature and art it led to naturalism, the dominant element in both from that time up to the end of the nineteenth century.

When, in 1453, the Turks captured the old Greek city on the Bosphorus, the Greek scholars who had lived there fled. They carried with them into Italy the treasures of ancient Greek literature that had so long been neglected. The writings of Plato, Homer, Sophocles and Theocritus thus became known to the world and were added to those of Cicero, Ovid and Virgil. They came as a revelation and the exciting era of the **New Learning** began. The discovery of the old world of Greece and Homer thrilled men just as the discovery of the New World of America did a few years later. Poets, like Ulrich von Hutten (d. 1523), and learned men, like Reuchlin (d. 1522) and Erasmus, began to make fun of scholasticism and to laugh it out of its strongholds.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In the famous satire *Epistolae Virorum Obscurorum* of this time a monk writes to his teacher asking for his advice in the following dilemma. During Lent he was supping at an inn and had swallowed an egg with a chicken in it. He had, however, concealed the fact from the landlord lest the chicken should be charged for



This freer spirit, however, soon came into conflict with the religious dogmas of the Church; it was a time of much religious persecution. Savonarola, John Huss, Tyndale, Giordano Bruno, all suffered death for the cause of freedom of belief. Martin Luther fought the same battle in Germany for the emancipation of thought from ecclesiastical control. The Diet of Worms (1521) is therefore called by Carlyle 'the greatest scene in European History'. It marked the beginning of modern literature.

In England the influence of the New Learning showed itself in the eager desire to teach and learn Greek, a tongue which now began to be studied at the Universities. **Sir Thomas More** (1478-1535) and the great **Erasmus** (1466-1536) became famous not only as representatives of classical learning in England but also as writers of original works full of the spirit of the New Learning — 'liberalism without violence, criticism without pedantry, grace without weakness.' More's *Utopia*<sup>1</sup> (like Plato's *Republic*) depicts an ideal commonwealth, and gives, under disguise, More's own enlightened opinions on marriage, education, government, military service and the like. It anticipates many modern reforms. It was published in Latin in 1516, and not translated into English till 1551. It was the first of many similar works in English about ideal Commonwealths, e.g., Bacon's didactic novel *New Atlantis* (1627), Butler's *Erewhon* (= inversion of *nowhere*), Well's *A Modern Utopia*. (cf. § 219, 221).

More's *Utopia* was illustrated by Holbein, the great German portrait painter, who was then living in England. He was court painter to Henry VIII.

More's account of *Richard III* is written in English — and in English of great purity, simplicity, and flexibility.

**42. THE REFORMATION.** Other scholars now turned their attention to the translation of the Bible, and began what the German poet Heine in his witty and cynical manner has called 'the Hebrew Renaissance', i.e., the Reformation.

The older Latin learning had been the handmaid of medieval theology; the New Learning was an incentive to Protestantism. Protestantism meant the appeal to the Bible and to Reason instead of to the Vatican as authoritative in matters of religion. By the aid of the New Learning men tried to fix the true meaning of the sacred texts and make them

---

in the bill. His conscience is now torn between two doubts: Should he do penance for cheating the landlord, or for having broken the rule about fasting in Lent?

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia* (-*tou-*) incorrectly formed from *οὐ* + *τόπος* = not + place, i.e., (the Island of) Nowhere, was suggested by the discovery of America. The adjective 'Utopian' now means idealistic or chimerical; cf. Carlyle's "*Weissnichtwo*" in *Sartor Resartus*.

accessible to all by translating them into the common tongue. Of course we see now that one result of this was the division of Christianity into innumerable sects.

**William Tyndale** in 1525 printed at Worms, for he dared not do so in England, his English version of the *New Testament*. This fine translation formed the basis of all subsequent editions. It is written in purest and simplest English and is one of the great landmarks in the history of the language. It was, moreover, one of the chief instruments of the English Reformation. Tyndale carried out his self-imposed task at the peril of his life, and, after many narrow escapes, was at last caught by the Papal emissaries. After the cruel manner of those days he was strangled and burnt at the stake as a heretic in Antwerp in 1536.

**43. THE BIBLE AND ITS TRANSLATION.** It is usually assumed that no other book has had such a deep and lasting influence upon the language, thought, imagination and character of the people of England and upon English literature as the English Bible.

As far back as the 8<sup>th</sup> century, parts of the Bible had been translated into English, and its stories had filled the imagination of the England of the early centuries. These biblical renderings, together with saints' lives and homilies, were indeed the means by which English prose was kept alive even in the period of strongest French influence. The first complete rendering of the whole Bible was made by Wyclif about 1380. In those days, however, there were no printed books, and manuscripts were rare and precious. The Reformation did not come till after the invention of printing. William Tyndale's translations of the New Testament (1525) answered the growing needs of a party that wished to free itself from the authority of Rome. Tyndale popularized the Bible for the first time.

Tyndale's work was continued by his friend and assistant, **Miles Coverdale**, who printed a complete translation of his own at Zürich (1535). The *Great Bible* (1539) and *Cranmer's Bible* (1540) were also edited by him. In exile at Geneva, he helped with the *Genevan Bible*, afterwards largely used by the Puritans and Presbyterians. This Bible taught the Scots standard English as nothing else could have done.

Upon Tyndale's and Coverdale's version was based the splendid new translation made by the Hampton Court Conference (1604-1611). This noble monument of Tudor prose is known as the **Authorised Version**.

In spite of the fact that a Revised Version was issued in 1881-1885, the Authorised Version has remained in use in all English Churches down to the present day.

The Authorised Version has been for England what Luther's Bible has been for Germany, **a national book**. Its influence has permeated the language and literature of England through and through. In Roman Catholic countries, where the Vulgate or Latin Version has prevented any real popularity, the Bible has had no such influence on literature.

In Puritan England the Bible drove out all the old popular stories. People's ignorance of any but biblical stories made Milton, at a later date, reject the plan of writing an epic on the Arthurian Legend and take the story of Adam and Eve instead.

The Bible of 1611 was, as has been said, a collation of all the preceding versions from Tyndale's on, and its excellent prose is one flowering of a long, unbroken tradition of religious writing in plain English which reaches back to Anglo-Saxon times.

**44. ROGER ASCHAM**, another humanist, is England's first writer on education (1515-68). The new humane spirit is seen in one of his books, *The Schoolmaster*, in which he urges that "love is fitter than fear, gentleness better than beating, to bring up a child." In Part I of this book he gives his theory of education, especially demanding that the boy who is to be educated should be 'Euphues' (cf. § 62), by which he means "of good natural gifts both of mind and body." Part II shows how the pupil may learn Latin with ease.

Ascham taught Queen Elizabeth classical languages and says proudly of his pupil that "she read more Greek in a day than a cathedral dean does Latin in a week."

Ascham fully recognises the claim of sport. "*I do not mean by all this my talk that young gentlemen should always be poring over books, he says in Pt. I ... To ride comely; to run fair at the tilt or ring; to handle all weapons; to shoot fair both with the bow and the gun; to leap; to wrestle; to swim; to dance comely; to sing and to play instruments cunningly (= skilfully); to hawk; to hunt; to play tennis and all other pastimes that be (= are) joined with labour, used in open place and in daylight, containing either some fine exercise for war or some pleasant pastime for peace, be (= is) not only comely and decent but also very necessary for a courtly gentleman.*" (to run fair = to run well.)

Ascham is an important figure in the history of English prose. He tried to make the English sentence more like the Latin sentence, with balanced shape and the use of antithesis. From now on there are two main lines in English prose style: the traditional, native style deriving from Anglo-Saxon and passing through Middle English devotional prose to More and the Bible translations and the 'simple style' of Dryden and Swift; and the Latinized, 'augmented' style of the humanists, of Ascham for instance, and later of



Lyly, Sir Thomas Browne (the greatest of all English prose-writers in the elaborate style), Milton, and then the rotund writers of the eighteenth century.

**45. VERSE RHYTHM POETRY.** By the sixteenth century the Chaucerian use of metre based on the number of syllables and regularly repeated accents (verse rhythm poetry) had gained the mastery over the older, native type based on stress, in which syllables need not be exactly counted (speech rhythm poetry). This change was consolidated by the new metrical patterns and new forms of verse introduced from Italy by **Sir Thomas Wyatt** (1503-1542) and the **Earl of Surrey** (1517-1547), both of whom had travelled in that land. Though of minor rank as poets they are remembered as influential innovators in the art of verse. They led the new fashion of writing sonnets, especially sonnets in the form of **sonnet sequences** after the manner of Petrarch. All the sonnets in such a sequence were addressed to the same person. Such sonneteers, after the method of the Italian Amorettists, were in the habit of mingling love-poetry and philosophy. The sonnet sequence became very popular (see § 58) and was brought to perfection in Shakespeare's sonnets. After being neglected in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it was revived by the sonnet writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The work of both Wyatt and Surrey was published in 1557 together with other poems in a book called *Tottel's Miscellany*. It is the first printed book of modern English poetry, and introduces the Elizabethan period of lyric verse.

The **Earl of Surrey** broke new ground, too, in his version of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> books of the *Aeneid*, in which he used **unrhymed decasyllabics**, or **blank verse**, for the first time in English. This metre was at once seized upon by English poets, and within half a century was carried to marvellous perfection as an instrument of poetry. (cf. § 64, 256.)

Another early humanist, though an uninspired one, was **Alexander Barclay**. Besides writing Latin eclogues<sup>1</sup> or bucolics, he explored German literature and translated Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* under the title *The Ship of Fools* (1509).

Speech rhythm poetry, however, did not die out. In this period it is found in the vigorous satirical verse of **John Skelton** (1460?-1529), who attacked Cardinal Wolsey. It is also found in Wyatt himself, though not in Surrey. In spite of using Italian forms, Wyatt often prefers speech rhythm to verse rhythm.

\*

---

<sup>1</sup> For *eclogue* see p. 57. — *Bucolics* = pastoral poems. Gk. boukolos = a herdsman.

## SUMMARY OF THE TUDOR REVIVAL

Under the strong government of Henry VII, the nobles were kept down and the middle classes flourished. The New Learning, *i.e.*, the re-discovered literature of Greece, was eagerly studied in England and had a most stimulating and civilizing influence.

Erasmus, Sir Thomas More and Ascham are three great humanists of the time. Skelton satirized Wolsey. Barclay wrote Latin eclogues in the style of Virgil.

Ovid, Seneca and Virgil were translated and widely read.

Wyatt and Surrey introduced into England the polished metres of Italian poetry. The former introduced the sonnet form and the latter in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* used blank verse (*i.e.* rhymeless iambic pentameters) for the first time in England.

This period also witnessed Henry VIII's breach with Rome and the beginning of the Reformation. Two great translators of the Bible, Tyndale (put to death at Antwerp 1536) and his disciple Miles Coverdale, Bishop of Winchester, paved the way for Protestantism.

PRINCIPAL DATES		SOVEREIGNS	
1453	The Fall of Constantinople.	The Tudors	
1492	The Discovery of America.	Henry VII	1485
1516	More's <i>Utopia</i> (in Latin).	Henry VIII	1509
1525	Tyndale's <i>New Testament</i> .		
1533	Henry VIII quarrels with Rome.		
1543	Copernicus publishes his <i>De Revolutionibus Orbium Caelestium</i> , fixing the sun instead of the earth as the centre of man's universe.	Edward VI	1547
		Mary	1553
		Elizabeth	1558



## VI. THE RISE OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA.

**46. STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAMA.** One of the finest things in the English heritage is the Elizabethan drama. It flowered suddenly in the eighties of the sixteenth century, after the tradition had been enriched by the 'new' learning, by Seneca, Terence and Plautus, and by the introduction of all kinds of secular themes in the spirit of humanism.

If we look back at the earlier history of the English drama, we find that in the Middle Ages it had flourished in the form of **Miracle Plays** and **Mystery Plays**, the latter presenting stories from the Bible and the former episodes from the lives of the saints. We have records of the scripts of these plays dating from the twelfth century. Towards the end of the medieval period, in the fifteenth century, another genre of religious drama developed: **the Morality Plays**. Earlier, in the Miracle and Mystery plays, the conflict between Good and Evil had been vividly illustrated by struggles between angels and devils; in the Morality plays this conflict is played out allegorically between personified virtues and vices.

**47. THE CHURCH PLAYS.** In medieval times Christianity embraced the whole life of man. It was tolerant even to the weaker sides of man's nature. If you look at the carvings and pictures in Gothic churches, you will see that many of the subjects represented are taken from everyday life. Similarly, in the religious plays of the time we find scenes of realistic comedy. In the story of Noah, for instance, Mrs. Noah refuses to budge from her spinning wheel, in spite of all her husband's entreaties, until the rising water has all but submerged the seat she sits on. There was the same robust acceptance of life in all its manifestations, high and low, and the same humour, as in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. And in the mystery plays there was the same familiar handling of the beings of the supernatural world: angels and devils and God Himself were as much at home on the medieval stage as the ordinary characters of common life.

At first these Mystery and Miracle plays were acted by ecclesiastics within the Church building,<sup>1</sup> but as time went on they were performed in the church enclosure, in the streets or on the village green. Guilds and tradesmen were now allowed to take part in them, finally superseding the ecclesiastics altogether.

More and more comic licence was permitted. Thus the Miracle Play step by step lost its purely didactic purpose and became a recognised form of popular amusement. People with a special aptitude for acting began to make a business of it and a class of professional actors gradually arose.

By the 13<sup>th</sup> century we find that the actors had a movable structure called a "pageant" (Late Latin *pagina* = a plank) or scaffold made of boards. It was arranged in two stories to be used as a stage. In the towns there would be a number of these "pageants" which rolled on wheels from street to street, and after a scene had been performed at one such station, the pageant moved on to another and its successor took its place. On these 'pageants' were crude ornaments to represent trees, clouds etc. Two of the favourite characters represented were the Devil (who had always to be thrashed and tormented, to the huge satisfaction of the audience), and the ranting and braggart Herod.<sup>2</sup> Such street plays were in vogue during the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and indeed did not wholly die out till the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the 'Bible in the House' supplanted the 'Bible in the Street.'

Collections of miracle plays performed in large towns like Wakefield, Chester, Coventry and York are still extant.

In recent years the Church has begun to renew its old connection with the stage. Most striking of all is the contribution to religious drama by T. S. Eliot.

**48. THE MORALITIES.** In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Miracle Plays gave way to Moralities. These latter are defined as "plays that teach a moral." In the Moralities, the writers — in keeping with the medieval love of allegory — personify all sorts of Virtues and Vices, and make them take the place of the Biblical and other personages found in the Miracle plays.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hence sometimes, from their connection with Divine service and through confusion with the Greek *μυστήριον* (= a secret rite) called *mysteries*. A mystery (or mistery) play is properly a play acted by craftsmen. ME *mistere* = a trade or craft (= F *métier*) = L *ministerium*.

<sup>2</sup> Thus "to out-herod Herod" means to rant louder than the loudest braggart. There are other phrases in Shakespeare which show Shakespeare's familiarity with the old religious plays, e.g., Hamlet's 'out-doing Termagant', Bottom's 'Cain-coloured beard', Celia's description of Orlando's face as 'something browner than Judas's'.

Allegorical abstractions such as Pride, Gluttony and Sloth come on the stage, and contend with Temperance, Humility and Perseverance.

The Morality Plays extended the scope of the drama by allowing dramatists to invent and develop plots of their own instead of taking them from the Bible and the lives of the saints. They also taught dramatists more and more to regard Life as a moral conflict between Good and Evil. This is very important to remember for it helped to give the English drama its deep, serious tone. One of the best examples of the morality is a play called *Everyman*, which tries to show the vanity of earthly joys. In it Everyman (*i.e.*, a typical man) is shown hesitating whether to follow the counsel of Good Deeds or Bad Deeds. When Everyman is summoned by Death, all his friends — Knowledge, Beauty, Gold, etc., desert him, and Good Deeds alone accompanies him on the dreadful journey. A conspicuous figure in these Moralities was the Vice, or Iniquity, a sort of Harlequin who wore a mask and carried a long wooden sword with which he had to belabour the Devil for the delight of the audience. This Vice was the forerunner of the humorous Clown or “fool” of the plays of Elizabethan times, and suggested to English dramatists the idea of bringing comic relief even into tragedy. As late as Shakespeare the clown is sometimes referred to as the “Vice”.

**49. THE INTERLUDE.** Short independent dialogues called Interludes had been performed since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and were often inserted in Miracle Plays to afford comic relief. In the Interlude some short comic anecdote was dramatised. The Interlude gradually developed a literary form of its own; it contained the germs of future comedy. One of the best known Interludes is the *Four P's*, in which a 'Potecary, (= Apothecary), a Pardoner, and a Palmer try who can tell the biggest lie, while a Pedler is appointed umpire. The Palmer wins by swearing that he has never in his life seen a woman lose patience.

**50. THE BEGINNINGS OF REGULAR DRAMA.** The first real English Comedy is *Ralph Roister Doister*,<sup>1</sup> which was staged by the schoolboys of Eton about the middle of the fifteenth century. Never before had an English comedy presented actual English life and English characters apart from all scriptural and allegorical machinery. It was written by

---

<sup>1</sup> = The *Miles Gloriosus* or 'braggart swashbuckler' of Plautus. The name 'roister doister' is thus onomatopoeic.

Nicholas Udall, Headmaster of Eton, and is modelled on the Latin comedy-writer Plautus. The plot is simplicity itself: Widow Custance is betrothed to Gawin Goodluck. Ralph, a rich, vain, boastful fellow, makes love to her in the absence of Goodluck, but is baffled by Matthew Merrygreek, who pretends to be Ralph's friend only to make a fool of him. On Gawin's return the lovers come to an understanding and Ralph, forgiven, is invited to the wedding.

Another comedy, typically English in its homeliness, was *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1551), the first English play presented at the Universities. Old Gammer<sup>1</sup> Gurton loses her needle while mending her husband's breeches, gets angry, quarrels with all her neighbours, whom she suspects of having stolen it, and at last, when Hodge, her husband, sits on it, finds the needle has been in the breeches all the time.

We must notice that these early comedies were given either in rooms at Court or at the Universities, and were thus bound to classic tradition in their method of staging. In the towns, the Romantic and popular drama that followed disregarded alike the rules of Latin drama and the Latin dramas of contemporary authors and went its own way.

**51. THE FIRST TRAGEDY.** In 1561 Sackville and Norton staged their tragedy *Ferrex and Porrex*, afterwards called *Gorboduc*. The story is taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth's popular History (§ 15), and is modelled on the tragedies of Seneca. It is dull and stiff enough, but it marks the point when English drama turns for its themes from Biblical subjects to the past history of the nation, thus leading the way to romanticism. This earliest tragedy in English is also the first to be written in blank verse (*cf.* § 45).

Not a small number of the plays acted at this time were translations from Italian and Greek. With the Revival of Learning the period of translation had come to England, and versions from Latin and Greek, Italian and Spanish were now made by the score. By the year 1600 it thus became possible for an English reader to get nearly all the important books published in those languages in good English versions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gammer = gran'm'-er = grandmother; *cf.* Gaffer = grandfather.

## VII. ELIZABETHAN POETRY.

**52. THE SPACIOUS TIMES OF GREAT ELIZABETH.** The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 by Sir Francis Drake meant more than the defeat of Spain. It was the victory of English Protestantism over Medieval Catholicism; and of trade over feudalism. It marked the beginning of England's sea power and of the great age of British colonization. In 1583 Sir Humphrey Gilbert — in Newfoundland —, and in 1584 Sir Walter Raleigh — in Virginia —, had made the first attempts to establish English Colonies in the New World. The Elizabethan age was a time of heady excitement in all spheres of life.

The sense of national confidence is reflected in the story of Sir Francis Drake refusing to break off his game of bowls when told that the Spanish Armada was in sight. "Plenty of time to finish the game and beat the Spaniards afterwards", he said. It was also the great age of the English language, when freshness and virility combined into a perfect medium. Marlowe's fiery imagination flows in an intoxicating stream of words. He seems to be intoxicated himself by his own virtuosity and this is typically Elizabethan. Even when the Elizabethan was not a writer, he could not help expressing himself eloquently. "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley," says Latimer at the stake in 1555, "we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be put out." "We are as near God by sea as by land," says an English admiral to cheer his crew when his ship is sinking.

**53. THE HEROIC AGE.** During the Elizabethan period all branches of literature — epic, lyric, drama, and prose — seem to spring from the experimental stage to sudden perfection. It was England's second blossoming season.

The heroic spirit of the new Tudor age found expression at first in **foreign epics** translated in various experimental metres. These experiments served as a guide to Edmund Spenser in evolving a new form of verse — henceforth called the Spenserian stanza — for a great **national epic**. Virgil's *Aeneid*, for instance, had been translated successively by Gawin Douglas into rhymed couplets (1513); by Surrey (1542) into blank verse; and by another poet (1558) into fourteen-syllable lines. Tasso and Ariosto were also much read in England, both in the original Italian and in translations.

**54. MORE EXPERIMENTS.** The first attempts at a national English epic took up historical narrative where Lydgate (§ 34) had left off. *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), one of the earliest of these attempts, was written in part by Sackville. Like Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*, it related the fortunes of various great personages as seen in the "mirror" of history, and ran through many enlarged editions.

The new national sentiment was also seen in the young drama. Bishop **John Bale** (1495–1563) passed from the writing of Scripture plays to dramatizing stories from English history. His *King John*, an anti-papal play, led the way for many such rough stage 'histories.' These 'histories' made a strong appeal to patriotic feeling.

Other writers again, under the influence of Italian and Spanish models, tried in their romantic tales to devise a sort of ornamental prose to take the place of narrative verse. Lyly's *Euphues* (§ 62) and Sidney's *Arcadia* (§ 57) are the best known of these experiments. Both were favourite books at the Queen's court.

All these influences together prepared the way for **Edmund Spenser**, the first great original poet since Chaucer. Not only was Spenser a disciple and lover of Chaucer, and familiar with the *Morte d'Arthur* and the other books of Caxton's press, but he also knew Latin and Italian poetry and Greek philosophy. He thus represents the **union of Renaissance culture with the best traditions of medieval English literature**. He was at the same time inspired by the **new national spirit** of the Elizabethan age.

The chivalrous devotion to the young queen, the "Gloriana" of the courtiers, was an inspiring force not only for her sea-captains like Drake and for her poets like Spenser and Sidney, but for every English gentleman in her realm. She set the example of heroic patriotism and admiration of great deeds. When Drake came from a voyage round the world in 1577, she gave orders that his ship should be for ever preserved as a monument to the glory of English seamen. Such a command sent a thrill through England.

Elizabeth's wise and tolerant policy in religion and her encouragement of literature stand in marked contrast to the state of affairs in Scotland, where intolerant Calvinism nipped epic poetry in the bud.

**55. EDMUND SPENSER** (1552-1599), the greatest allegorical poet of England, was a Londoner by birth. In 1569 he left "merry London," his "most kindly nurse," and entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, as a sizar.<sup>1</sup> After taking his M.A. degree, he lived for a

---

<sup>1</sup> The sizars were exempted from college fees, but had in return to sweep the courts, wait at the tutors' and fellows' tables, etc.

time in Lancashire. In 1578 he came to London, where he enjoyed the friendship of the accomplished and chivalrous Sir Philip Sidney.

For a short time Spenser had been associated with a literary club called the Areopagus,<sup>1</sup> whose hobby was to make English verse conform to the classical metres of Greek and Latin.

In 1579 Spenser published the *Shepherd's Calendar*. Next year he took a post as secretary to the viceroy of Ireland, a land then in a state of constant war, rebellion, and famine.

In 1589, one year after the defeat of the Armada, Spenser went to England and a year later published the first three books of his great epic, the **Faerie Queene**.<sup>2</sup> In his *Colin Clout's Come Home again*, he describes the visit he paid to London and to Cynthia's (i.e., Elizabeth's) court on this occasion, and his return to Ireland. His beautiful marriage ode *Epithalamion* and his love sonnets or *Amoretti* (= little Cupids) were published in 1595, the year after his marriage. In 1596 Spenser wrote a long prose dialogue in the manner of his favourite Plato *On the Present State of Ireland*. In this pamphlet he makes two gentlemen discuss "how this savage (= wild) nation could be reduced to better government."

The Celtic Irish, among whom he now had to live, hated him as an English official, and in Tyrone's rebellion (1598) they set fire to and burned his house. His little son is said to have perished in the flames. Spenser fled to Cork and thence to London, where some time afterwards he died brokenhearted and, according to a doubtful tradition, penniless. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. At his own desire he was laid close by his beloved Master Chaucer, the "gentle shepherd" (i.e., poet) from whom, as he says in his 12<sup>th</sup> Eclogue,<sup>3</sup> he had learned the art of poetry.

**56. SPENSER'S WORKS.** *The Shepherd's Calendar*, by which Spenser first achieved fame, is a series of twelve short Eclogues, one for each month of the year.

Spenser's renown, however, rests on the **Faerie Queene**, a long romantic epic in the form of an allegory. In a form of verse henceforth to be known as the Spenserian stanza, the poem describes the adventures which Prince Arthur and a number of knights go through as a training in chivalry and virtue.

<sup>1</sup> Areopagus = an old Athenian tribunal famous for its impartial justice. Cf. § 95, *Oratio Areopagitica* = a speech worthy of the Areopagus.

<sup>2</sup> OF faerie, F féerie, = land of fays; fay — F fée, LL fata.

<sup>3</sup> Eclogue = a piece selected, i.e., (1) a short poem; (2) a short poem dealing with the picturesque sides of rural or pastoral life. Theocritus, Virgil, Sannazaro and Marot wrote such eclogues.

Of the twelve books he designed it to contain, Spenser lived to complete only six and a few cantos of a seventh. In these twelve books the poet intended to represent twelve Virtues<sup>1</sup> contending under the shape of twelve knights with twelve corresponding Vices and subduing them. The poem was meant to be a great lesson in moral philosophy, and was to teach us what dangers beset the life of man, and the best way to overcome them. It tries, moreover, to present to us, in the person of Prince Arthur, the perfect ideal of a Christian knight and gentleman. It thus illustrates Sir Philip Sidney's doctrine that the '*end and aim of all earthly learning, especially poetry, is virtuous action.*'

**The allegory**, the literary form most characteristic of Middle English literature, had all through the Middle Ages consisted of two great types, (1) the **religious allegory** of the monks, with a didactic purpose, and (2) the **court allegory** of the love poets, which had the aim of amusing men's minds. In his great romantic epic, the greatest allegorical poem in English literature, Spenser may be said to have combined the religious with the love allegory. At the same time he weaves into it all sorts of references to the events of his own day, such as the rivalry between Mary Stuart and Elizabeth, the conquest of Ireland, the Reformation, and so on.

Spenser's minor poems are almost all characterized by their **pastoralism**. The *Faerie Queene*, however, lifts us into a more heroic sphere; it is full of what is called **Arthurianism**, *i.e.*, romantic hero-worship for the mythical King Arthur as the type of the perfect Knight.

Spenser has been called the "poet's poet" and it is true that he has exercised a most important influence in greatly reinforcing the verse rhythm tradition started by Chaucer. Milton learnt from him in this respect and so did Keats and many others. Spenser was a great verse-rhythm craftsman and particularly the Spenserian stanza has been widely used (§ 258).

**57. SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554-1586)** shared his friend Spenser's ideas of romance and chivalry. He summed up the chivalrous ideal in the words: "the love of honour and the honour of love".

When he was twenty-two he was sent as ambassador to the Emperor of Germany, and by the age of thirty he was distinguished, not only as a statesman and soldier, but also as a poet and critic.

---

<sup>1</sup> = Lat. *Virtutes* = 'excellences of manhood;' *vir* = a man. The pagan 'virtutes' are here modified by Christian Chivalry. It has been said that the ancients had 'heroes' but no 'gentlemen'. Spenser's 'virtues' are the excellences of heroes who are also Christian gentlemen.

In poetry, his best work is his sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella*. In these 108 love sonnets, contrary to the practice of many other sonneteers of the time, he kept to the strict and more difficult sonnet form of Petrarch (§ 258).

In prose, he wrote two famous works: 1. the long pastoral romance *Arcadia* and 2. the *Apologie (or Defence) of Poetry*. The latter has been called the first considerable work of literary criticism in English. It was written in answer to a Puritan attack on dramatic poetry by one Stephen Gosson. In it Sidney tried to show that the poet is no mere stringer-together of vicious and amusing falsehoods, as Gosson tried to make out, but a better teacher of truth and virtuous action than even the moral philosopher.

Sidney's *Arcadia*,<sup>1</sup> dedicated to his sister and hence called after her *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, is, with its love plot of *Pamela and Musidorus*, and the tale of *Argalus and Parthenia*, two lovers faithful unto death, a forerunner of the English novel (§ 123). Musidorus, the young prince of Thessaly, is wrecked on the coast of Sparta. He comes to the pleasant land of Arcadia, and in the midst of a forest finds a beautiful princess named Pamela living under the care of a rustic named Damœtas. Having disguised himself as a shepherd, he pretends in order to gain access to Pamela, to make love to Damœtas' ugly and hoydenish daughter Mopsa. Finally he escapes to Thessaly with Pamela.

Sidney's early death, fighting for the Dutch against Spain at the siege of Zutphen, was a sad loss not only to England but to literature. Spenser wrote a tender sonnet *To Astrophel* in memory of his illustrious friend.

**58. OTHER POETS.** Many of the lyrics of these times were published anonymously in so-called 'Miscellanies', *i.e.*, collections of poems by various writers. Much in vogue, too, were the Sonnet and the Patriotic Epic.

a) **The Writers of Sonnets.** Although Chaucer knew the sonnet form of Petrarch, it had not appealed to him for imitation in English. It was first introduced into England by Wyatt and Surrey, particularly by the latter in his sonnet sequence addressed *To Geraldine* (§ 45). Surrey discarded the rhyme scheme and severer structure of the Italian sonnet as unsuited to the English language. He arranged the 14 lines as three successive elegiac

---

<sup>1</sup> In Italy, Sannazaro's pastoral poem *Arcadia* (1504) and in Spain, George de Montemayor's prose-pastoral *Diana* had originated from the linking together of a number of eclogues by means of prose into one story. These works thus form a link between old Greek and Latin poets like Virgil and Theocritus and the Elizabethan poet Sidney.



quatrains closed by a couplet. This was the form afterwards adopted by Shakespeare (§ 258).

Despite its difficulty, the sonnet soon became a fashionable form for all writers of love poems. (Shakespeare's audience, for example, would regard it as perfectly natural that Beatrice and Benedict should be caught writing sonnets to each other).

Samuel Daniel's *Sonnets To Delia* (which greatly influenced Shakespeare), Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Spenser's *Amoretti*, suffice to show the popularity of the new literary fashion of writing **sonnet sequences**. It was left to Shakespeare in his *Sonnets* to outstrip all others in giving depth, passion and metrical subtlety to this form of love poetry. It is not always easy to say whether the subject-matter of such sonnets is fictitious, or whether they are to be taken literally in their references. The sonneteers of those times not seldom follow the Italian fashion of choosing or inventing a person to whom they can address the thoughts and moods that move them. Whether the sonnets of Spenser and of Shakespeare or even, for that matter, of Petrarch, are addressed to fictitious or real personages is still a moot point among critics.

b) **The Poets of the Patriotic Epic.** Another group devoted themselves to writing poetry, chiefly historical, about the glory of England. The most prominent of these patriotic poets are Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton and William Warner, all three born just before Shakespeare. Those were the days of the Spanish wars, when England was beginning to take a high place in European affairs. This patriotic literature culminated in the historical drama of Shakespeare.

**59. JOHN DONNE** (1573-1631) started writing his brilliant speech-rhythm poems during Elizabeth's reign, but as most of his work and the school of poetry which he founded belong to the early seventeenth century he will be treated later (§ 85). We can only say here that in twentieth-century English and American taste Donne is the most pleasing poet of his time after Shakespeare and one of the most pleasing in the language.

\*

## SUMMARY OF ELIZABETHAN POETRY

The age of Elizabeth saw the defeat of the Armada and the rise of England as a great sea-power. It was England's heroic age, the age of discovery and enterprise. In literature,

the heroic and romantic spirit of the age is seen in its epic poetry and its pastoral tales, and, afterwards, in its patriotic drama.

The first heroic epic of Elizabeth's reign was Sackville's *Mirror for Magistrates*, in which Richard III and other historical personages tell the story of their lives. There were, too, many translations of the great epic poets of Italy, Virgil, Tasso, and Ariosto.

Sir Philip Sidney, under Spanish influence, composed a long but formless prose idyll called *Arcadia*.

Lyly, a court playwright, wrote his *Euphues*, also after Spanish models. In it he introduced the peculiar court style called Euphuism with its 'prodigious use of similes and antitheses.'

Epic poetry in Scotland, which had begun with Lyndsay, died away amid the storms of Calvinist controversy; in England, under Elizabeth's prudent policy of toleration, Edmund Spenser was inspired to write the *Faerie Queene*, a splendid romantic allegory, dealing with the adventures of Arthur and of various knights. It is written in the Spenserian stanza (§ 258).

Side by side with Spenser we find — 1. a group of sonnet writers, the chief of whom are Daniel and Shakespeare; 2. a great number of miscellaneous lyric poets; 3. the early poetry of John Donne, who unlike Spenser used speech rhythms and whose poems are found highly pleasing in the present century.



## VIII. THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA.

**60. THE THEATRE.** Up to the year 1576 plays had been given in the courtyards of inns and in private buildings. In 1576, however, the 'servants'<sup>1</sup> of the Earl of Leicester built the first regular public theatre. It was in the suburbs of London, and went by the name of *The Theatre*. The Corporation would not allow any theatre in London itself, thinking such amusements detrimental to public morals.

The public theatres of the time were built on much the same plan as the inn yards except that most of them, like the famous *Globe* where Shakespeare's company acted and which in *Henry V* he calls 'a wooden O', were oval or round instead of rectangular. They were roofless except above the stage. Performances took place in the early afternoon. The stage was a platform projecting half-way into the auditorium and surrounded by the audience, who either stood in the yard or sat in the encircling balconies. Sometimes members of the audience even sat on the stage itself. That they were allowed to do so stresses the most important of the many profound differences between the Elizabethan and the modern theatre. In the latter, audience and actors are in two separate worlds, the actors on a remote box-like stage resembling a room with one wall removed, and the audience in a darkened auditorium divided from the stage by footlights, orchestra pit, and the picture-frame of the proscenium arch. In the Elizabethan theatre, on the other hand, the projection of the stage permitted intimacy between actors and audience. The actors had the audience all round them, almost within touching distance. Instead of peeping through a window into a lighted room, as we do, the audience was actually in the room, in the thick of the action. They came, so to speak, into the play. An actor would often make some quiet remark about another character on the stage, not intended for his ears but only for the audience's. This device, called the 'aside', is rather absurd on the modern stage but was quite natural when an actor could actually stand nearer to the audience than to other actors on a distant part of the large stage. The soliloquy is also difficult in the modern theatre. The remoteness of the stage and the convention that an actor must behave as if the audience did not exist, make it seem unnatural. On the projecting or 'apron' stage of the Elizabethans, however, a soliloquy always marks a

---

<sup>1</sup> The companies of actors sought the patronage of a nobleman and called themselves his 'servants'. Unless they had such a licence they could be treated as rogues and vagabonds. The social status of actors was very low in those times, no matter how great a genius a man was.



heightening of dramatic tension for during it the contact between actors and audience is closest. Hamlet or Macbeth in their soliloquys confide their most secret thoughts to the audience close around them, laying bare the living heart of the action to intimate friends. In the Elizabethan theatre there was no scenery and no front curtains to mark the difference between stage and auditorium. As there was no scenery there was no need to change it and the action was fast and continuous. The scene was only localized when localization was desirable and this was done in the dialogue. It must be realized that the place-headings printed in most editions of Shakespeare are not by Shakespeare: they are the work of his editors from the eighteenth century on and one result of considering his plays in terms of a kind of theatre for which they were not written. Verbal localization provides fine opportunities for poetry and so does the related need to create night or dawn in the afternoon daylight of the unroofed theatres. Indeed, as the scenery was entirely in the words, the scene could be anywhere in the wide world and could change with the speed of thought. Shakespeare's scenery, it is true to say, is everywhere in the imagery of his verse.

At the rear of the projecting main stage in the Elizabethan theatre were two small stages, a small 'back stage' and over it an 'upper stage'. We have only in memory to run through any Elizabethan play to think of scenes where one or both must have been used. In front of the back stage there were curtains called 'the arras'; they were normally drawn together during the action but could be parted to reveal, for instance, Juliet's tomb or Prospero's cell. It is the gradual movement of these curtains from the back to the front of the stage which marks the transformation of the Elizabethan into the modern theatre.

The Elizabethan drama came to an end when the theatres were closed by the Puritans in 1642. When plays were allowed again at the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 the theatres and dramatic conventions were already very different from the old, and the modern theatre, the theatre as we know it today, had been born. It is a striking fact that since 1642 there has been no great English drama; there has been clever comedy, mainly by Irish dramatists, but no great tragedy. The disuse of verse on the stage is of course one very important factor here and it is most encouraging that since the thirties and forties of the present century effective, sensitive dramatic verse is again being written, particularly by T. S. Eliot. But the substitution of the narrower range of the picture-frame stage for the unlimited scope of the apron stage, a substitution not unconnected with that of prose for poetry, is undoubtedly part of the explanation of the relative poorness of the English drama for the last three hundred years.



**61. THE DRAMA OF THE 'UNIVERSITY WITS'.** In Shakespeare's younger days the chief writers of plays were not actor-playwrights like himself, but young men, mostly Bohemians, who had received a University education. Most of them led wild lives, and died prematurely and in indigence. Some of them had a great contempt for the non-academic Shakespeare, this 'upstart crow', as they called him. They go by the name of the 'University Wits',<sup>1</sup> or solar dramatists. The chief of them were Kit<sup>2</sup> Marlowe, Kyd, Greene and Lyly.

In the hands of these gifted writers, **the play of human passion and action** is expressed for the first time with true dramatic effect. They paved the way for Shakespeare, the great genius who was to carry this new art to perfection and to outstrip and outshine them all.

**62. JOHN LYLY** (1554-1606), who represents court drama in opposition to popular drama, holds a place in literature for three reasons: 1. He set the example of writing romantic prose comedies on classical themes; 2. in his prose romance *Euphues* (1579) he was the first English writer to try to write a 'novel' of actual life; 3. he was the first creative author to compose English prose on a system. His famous didactic romance, **Euphues**, was in fact an attempt to treat prose as an art. The story itself was meant to show how young men should be educated (see § 44), and especially to be a warning against the seductions of Italy and the dangers of Italian irreligion. Part I deals with the adventures of the hero, a young Athenian gentleman called *Euphues*, on a visit to Naples. In Part II, Euphues and his friend Philautus visit England, all of whose institutions are — with satirical intention — praised to the skies.

Of Lyly's romantic comedies the three best known are *Endymion*, *Sappho and Phaon*, and *Alexander and Campaspe*. They were written not for the public stage but for the entertainment of the court. They gave many useful hints to Elizabethan playwrights and even to Shakespeare (1) by showing how effectively songs and music could be introduced into a play; (2) by their bright and witty prose style in decorous conversations; (3) by the romantic masques and side-shows they introduced; (4) by making girl characters dress up as boys.

There were no actresses in the Elizabethan theatre and all female parts were taken by well-trained boys. It is wrong to assume that this must have been a handicap: if it had

---

<sup>1</sup> A 'wit' in those days did not mean as now a man noted for saying witty things, but a man of intelligence and learning.

<sup>2</sup> *Kit* is an affectionate, shortened form of Christopher.

been, Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists would not have written so many exacting women's parts. The boys who played these parts in the public theatres were recruited from the companies composed entirely of children who performed at court and in private halls. Lyly wrote all his plays for child companies.

All Lyly's works are written in a style since known as **Euphuism**, — a style abounding in alliteration, assonance, and antithesis.<sup>1</sup> In *Euphues* itself an exaggerated use is made of these rhetorical devices, but in the plays the faults of the style are much less in evidence. In its dramatic version, Lyly's Euphuistic prose gives the right kind of delicate stylization to deliberately sophisticated and artificial comedies. Lyly is specially fond of taking material for his far-fetched metaphors and similes from medieval fables of natural history. Surprising associations of ideas of this kind as used by the Euphuists are called 'conceits'.

The affectations of Euphuism were caricatured by Shakespeare, by Ben Jonson (in *Every Man out of his Humour*) and by Walter Scott (in *The Monastery*).

In Germany, Euphuism appeared in the *Psalmenparaphrasen* by Weckherlin, a German poet who lived for many years in England and was for some time 'assistant-secretary for foreign tongues' to Milton.

**63. THOMAS KYD** (1558-1594) is important as the author of the immensely popular, well-constructed, bloodthirsty *Spanish Tragedy* (circa 1587). This melodrama was the first successful adaptation of Senecan tragedy to the English stage and it launched the genre of the revenge play of which *Hamlet* is the most famous example.

**64. CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE** (1564-1593) was the greatest English dramatist before Shakespeare. He was the son of a shoemaker. After leaving Cambridge he led the life of a thorough Bohemian. He was barely twenty-nine when he was killed in a tavern brawl in London, but perhaps he had already burnt himself out. He lived and wrote with extraordinary intensity. It is easy to recognize a line by Marlowe: in all there is the characteristic Marlowesque rhythm, fluid and rapid and repetitive. His verse glows with

---

<sup>1</sup> An example to illustrate this: The foul toad hath a fine stone in its head; the fine gold is found in the filthy earth; the sweet kernel in the hard shell; virtue is harboured in the heart of him that most men esteem misshapen. (All this merely to say 'You must not judge a book by its cover'.)

When Shakespeare makes Falstaff say 'for though the camomile, the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, yet youth the more it is wasted the sooner it wears,' he is using Lyly's style.

a kind of heady intoxication, rising at times to frenzy (Tamburlaine cries: *Come, let us march against the powers of heaven, / And set black streamers in the firmament, / To signify the slaughter of the gods*) or becoming luxuriously sensual as in the descriptions in *Tamburlaine* of Zenocrate, 'the loveliest maid alive'. There is enchantment even in Marlowe's proper names.

Marlowe was fascinated by the humanistic idea of the nobility of man *per se* which at the Renaissance so largely superseded medieval humility before God. The individual, if he wants and wills it enough, if he develops 'a gigantic passion on a gigantic scale', can defy his neighbours, God, and Fate, and achieve a short, resounding greatness. In *Tamburlaine* Marlowe presents gigantic passion for political power; in the *Jew of Malta*, gigantic passion for wealth; in *Dr. Faustus* (1587), gigantic passion for the power that is brought by knowledge; in *Edward II*, on the other hand, he shows a king who is ruined by *lack* of will. Either way, the tragic hero must fall in the end. It should be noted that three of Marlowe's four heroes are of humble origin; in this he departs from the tradition of tragedy and stresses the innate Machiavellian *virtu* or capacity of man.

Marlowe was the first to show the splendid powers that lay dormant in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameters). The blank verse of *Gorboduc* (§ 51) reads like unrhymed epic poetry. Marlowe discovered the secret of making blank verse dramatic, and it became the unquestioned metre of the great dramatic period that was just starting. Shakespeare in particular improved it for dramatic purposes, giving it what it lacked in Marlowe, variety and the richness of speech rhythm.

All the same, it was Marlowe who first demonstrated its suitability to drama<sup>1</sup>. To Marlowe and the University Wits the drama owes a great debt. Shakespeare and his contemporaries learnt a great deal from them, both directly and by healthy reaction.

Goethe's *Faust* is in direct line of descent from Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. English strolling players had in the 17<sup>th</sup> century brought Marlowe's play to Germany. It was translated for the German stage and degenerated into a puppet play. In this form it was found by Goethe and became the inspiration for his *Faust*.

**65. SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616).** The English drama is the crowning achievement of the Elizabethan age, and Shakespeare is its proudest name. He is the greatest dramatic genius not only of England, but of all countries and of all times, and the great representative poet of Europe.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, two hundred years later (1779), was the first German classic to be written in this metre.

**William Shakespeare** was baptized at Stratford-on-Avon, April 26, 1564. The day of his birth was not registered. His father, a respectable Warwickshire yeoman, was a glover and a farmer. His mother, whose maiden name was Mary Arden, came of a good county family.

Up to the year 1578 his father was fairly well-to-do, and had even become an alderman of the town. But through bad speculations his fortunes now began to sink; he had to mortgage his property and at last to declare himself bankrupt.

Up to this crisis in his father's fortunes the boy had attended the Free Latin Grammar School of his native town, where he must have learned the '*small Latin and less Greek*' with which his learned friend Ben Jonson long afterwards, in an eloquent poem to his memory, half reproaches him.

Shakespeare never attended a University; his school was nature and the world. As for books, we know that he read the good translations of the Latin and Greek classics that abounded in England at that time, for he made free use of these books when he came to write. He also picked up sufficient knowledge of foreign tongues to read French and Italian works in the original.

In 1582, Shakespeare, when still a mere youth, **married**. His wife, Anne Hathaway of the neighbouring village of Shottery, was some eight years older than himself, and, if we can judge from some allusions in his plays, the marriage does not seem to have turned out very happily. *When there's a Will, Ann Hath a way*, writes James Joyce in *Ulysses*. About 1586 he went to London, leaving his wife and children in Stratford. Gossip ascribes what it calls his 'flight to London' to a poaching affair in which he had got mixed up, and Landor takes this legend as the theme for one of his *Imaginary Conversations*.

To judge by Shakespeare's first important poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, the poet's early ambition seems to have been to be the English Ovid. It was not long, however, before he joined a company of actors. He acted himself but soon his main activity became the touching up and rewriting of old plays and then the writing of new plays of his own for the company. His works are full of passages showing his practical acquaintance with the stage, as well as with acting and elocution. Hamlet's advice to the players is the best example. He seems by his early works to have aroused the jealousy of the University wits. One of them, Robert Greene, is probably alluding to him when, in his *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), he speaks of an 'upstart crow beautified with our feathers.' Greene did not mean by this that Shakespeare was a plagiarist, but that he had dared, although a mere outsider, to write blank verse after the manner of the University wits. **Shakespeare's reputation as a dramatist** grew rapidly; in 1598 a critic, Francis Meres, gives him a place among English writers equal to that held in tragedy and comedy among



the ancients by Seneca and Plautus, — the highest praise a critic of those days could think of. He obtained royal patronage; he was in favour at court; and before long he became a principal shareholder in the Globe Theatre. He bought property at Stratford, and re-established his old father in comfort, even getting him a coat-of-arms as a “gentleman”. In short, when Shakespeare retired to Stratford about 1611, he was a highly respected and well-to-do citizen.

He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried in the parish Church at Stratford. Many people feel disappointed that he has told us nothing about himself and his personal opinions and that we do not know more of such a great man. Some have even gone so far as to deny his authorship of the plays, and to ascribe them to other writers. The so-called *Bacon theory*, the most notorious of these odd conjectures, contends that Sir Francis Bacon was the real author.

As a matter of fact we have more documentary evidence about Shakespeare’s life than about that of almost any other of the 200 or so dramatists of the time. And in any case it is the plays that matter.

It is important to remember that Shakespeare’s plays are plays. They are not disguised autobiography, not indeed are they essentially *reading* matter at all. Shakespeare was a dramatist. The poet or novelist speaks to his readers directly with the printed word; with the dramatist it is different, his intention is not fully realized until actors, stage, and audience in collaboration have embodied it in the form of a play. What he writes is meant, like the musician’s score, to be performed. Shakespeare himself did not even trouble to publish his score, the text of his plays. He wrote for the theatre, not for the reader.

He wrote, however, for the Elizabethan theatre, not for the theatre as it has been since 1660. Much misunderstanding has been caused by the attempts of nearly 300 years to force Shakespeare’s plays to fit a type of theatre for which they were not designed, and by ignorance until comparatively recently of the very different type of theatre for which they were written. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, intelligent people like Samuel Johnson and Charles Lamb were accordingly deceived into thinking that “many of his plays are the worse for being acted”; and even today we often find that, for example, more interest is taken in Hamlet the character than in *Hamlet* the play. There has been a widespread and wholly mistaken tendency to treat Shakespeare as a writer who only became and remained a dramatist by force of circumstance. The truth is: 1) that the Elizabethan stage was an excellent dramatic instrument, and 2) the most important fact about Shakespeare is that he was the great master of that instrument.



**66. THE TEXT OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS.** All Shakespeare's works were probably written between 1591 and 1611. Only two of them, the narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, were published with his express permission. At his death, in 1616, there also existed in print some 16 Quartos of his dramas, the text for some of which had been pirated from stage copies.

**No complete edition** was attempted till 1623, when the **First Folio**, containing 36 plays in all, was printed by Shakespeare's fellow-actors, Heminge and Condell. On the title-page was the so-called Droeshout portrait of the poet.

*The Folio* was for the most part printed from stage manuscripts of the company to which Shakespeare had belonged. Where a Quarto edition of a play exists it frequently offers a different version of a word or sentence to that of the Folio, and this, together with a good number of apparent misprints in the Folio which call for correction, has led Shakespearean scholars to produce texts of their own. What we read in our usual editions of Shakespeare is not exclusively what Shakespeare wrote but to some extent what his editors have written as well. This is a natural process. Shakespeare changes as he is seen with the changing taste of the succeeding generations. He has such vitality that he can always be treated as a contemporary.

**67. OTHER EDITIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS.** The first modern edition of Shakespeare's plays was published in 1709 by **Nicholas Rowe**. Where the text was unintelligible to him, he emended it to suit his notions of what Shakespeare should have written. He assumed that Shakespeare had written in 18<sup>th</sup> century English, forgetting that many words which were good current English in 1600 had been entirely forgotten by 1700, while many others had quite altered in meaning.

Shakespeare's next editor was the poet **Pope** (1725). Pope put the doubtful passages down to Shakespeare's ignorance of good style and accordingly altered him without a twinge of conscience.

**Theobald** [ˈtibald] the next editor (1753), acted on quite a different principle; he determined not to alter anything where the author's meaning was by any means discoverable.

**He was the first to base his work on a critical comparison of the Quartos and the Folios.** He was always conscientious and sometimes inspired. Many of his emendations were most brilliant. In describing Falstaff's death, for instance, the old editions had "His

*nose was as sharp as a pen and a table of greenfields.*" Theobald made sense of this by altering *a table* into *'a babbled* ('a = a dialect form of 'he').

Many 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century emendations are unnecessary and due to a belief that all words have precise dictionary meanings. This indeed was how words were used by nearly all the writers of those centuries but it was not how Shakespeare used them. His language is not denotative but connotative. Sometimes a single word in Shakespeare, like a chord in music, will contain various associated meanings. In this he is similar to *e.g.* Donne, Hopkins, and Joyce, in all of whom words can have this third-dimensional quality. But this was not understood by *e.g.* Coleridge, who wanted to emend, as a misprint, the phrase, 'the blanket of the dark' in *Macbeth*, with its effective evocation by connotation of something hairy and stifling, to the flat and merely denotative words, 'the blank height of the dark'.

**The new critical method** of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to apply to the interpretation of the dramas the fullest possible knowledge of the use of words as seen in the other authors of Shakespeare's time. This method was first used in the edition of Delius (1854). The Cambridge Edition (1866, revised 1887) carried this method a long step forward. In 1871 the publication of the *New Variorum Edition* was begun by Dr. Furness. All these, except the last, have modernised the spelling.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the main tendency in Shakespeare studies has been the reinstatement of the Elizabethan stage and of Shakespeare as a practical dramatist. The plays are edited from this angle in, for instance, the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* of Quiller Couch and Dover Wilson which has been appearing for some years and is now nearing completion.

**68. THE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER** and the dates of the plays have to be fixed by circumstantial evidence; that is to say, in order to discover the date of a play, we have to piece together the various facts that we happen to know about it.

The evidence used in determining the date of a play is of two kinds:

1. *External*; 2. *Internal*.

**External evidence:**

- (a) The date of publication;<sup>1</sup>
- (b) Direct references to the plays in contemporary works, *e.g.*, the mention by name of 6 comedies and 6 tragedies of Shakespeare by Francis Meres in his book, *Wit's Treasury*, 1598.
- (c) Indirect references: *e.g.*, Weever, in a book printed in 1601, speaks of 'the multitude' as 'being drawn by Brutus' speech that Caesar is ambitious.' This gives a *terminus ad quem*.
- (d) By quotations that Shakespeare himself has taken from contemporary books and introduced into his plays. For instance, a quotation in *The Tempest* from Florio's translation of Montaigne, published 1603, shows that Shakespeare could hardly have written the passage before that date.
- (e) References in Shakespeare's works to contemporary events.

**Internal evidence** deals mostly with various marks of style considered as signs of progress in the technical mastery of verse and dramatic construction.

- a. Rhymed lines are found to occur with decreasing frequency as Shakespeare's art matures.
- b. In his earlier plays the lines are more metrically regular and there is a pause at the end of each line. These *end-stopped* lines – which tend to break the sense – grow less and less frequent in the later plays.
- c. Verse rhythm gives way increasingly to speech rhythm. In the maturer plays lines are frequently of irregular length, and weak syllables (such as *if, on, and, to*) occur at the end of a line in run-on lines and in feminine endings (see § 258).
- d. Prose passages become more frequent in the later dramas. One of their objects is by contrasting prose and verse to throw the poetry into relief.
- e. Greater dramatic sweep, complexity of plot, depth of thought and imaginativeness of language, mark the progress of the dramatist in his art. In the very early plays each drama is either pure comedy or pure tragedy; later on comedy and tragedy are blended in the same play, and humour is used to relieve and deepen tragedy.

**69. SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMA IS NOT CLASSICAL.** The first English tragedies and comedies written after the Revival of Learning took classical writers for their models.

---

<sup>1</sup> This gives what is called in technical language a *terminus ad quem*, *i.e.*, the extreme *limit up to which* the work may have been composed; the *terminus a quo*, or backward limit, fixes the earliest date at which a work could have been composed.

They accepted amongst other things the doctrine of the three 'Unities' – the Unity (or Continuity) of Time, the Unity of Place, and the Unity (or Continuity) of Action. According to these canons, a drama had to represent one continuous action proceeding to a single catastrophe without change of place and without breaks in the time.<sup>1</sup>

English popular dramatists, with their fondness for dramatizing English history, ignored the so-called classical canons. Had they not done so, it would have been almost impossible for them to have presented any history at all on the stage.

Shakespeare followed the popular taste, and rejected the 'classical' conventions. This looseness of construction he sometimes carries to extremes as in *The Winter's Tale*, and especially in the Chronicle Plays (or 'Histories').

Learned dramatists like Ben Jonson thought that this was a great pity. In his prologue to *Every Man in his Humour*, for instance, Jonson laments that one scene of a play (as in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*) should be laid in England and that the next should skip over to France. He is indignant, too, that dramatists with the help of "three rusty swords" should, in defiance of the *Unity of Time*, undertake to represent on the stage even the long course of the Wars between York and Lancaster.

In making these remarks Ben Jonson is failing to appreciate the scope and speed of the Elizabethan stage (§ 60), which was not bound by the laws of extra-theatrical time and space but could range through both with even greater freedom than the cinema today.

**70. THE DOCTRINE OF THE UNITIES** was chiefly based on the example of Seneca, a Roman dramatist (61 B.C.-30 A.D.) who had great authority over Europe at the time. The French drama, for example, accepted the theory of the unities, and, in opposition to the 'barbarous' popular drama of England, became 'classical'. The respect for the unities has been immensely increased because Aristotle, the great Greek writer, laid down the principles for them in his *Poetics*. For two centuries after Shakespeare's death, Englishmen were always a little ashamed of him as a 'wild' and 'irregular,' that is, unclassical genius. But the German critic Lessing and his English disciple Coleridge taught them that

---

<sup>1</sup> Classical tradition also forbade, 'mixed characters', *i. e.*, characters in which the heroic and the unheroic, weakness and strength, vice and virtue were seen blended in *one person*. It was also against mixing verse and prose, comedy and tragedy. It condemned 'mixing kings and clowns' in the same piece, as Sidney says. This principle is sometimes called *Unity of Tone*.

The canon that *tragedy deals with princes* and *comedy with the vulgar many* seems to have been due to a misunderstanding of Aristotle's *σπουδαῖος*, a word which means a person of *high moral character*, but which the French dramatic critics took to mean a person of *high rank* (the many = die Menge = *οἱ πολλοί*.)



Shakespeare's plays had a unity of their own in no way inferior to the classical unities of Seneca and the French (§ 156).

**71. DRAMATIC CONSTRUCTION.** In a tragedy there are three well-marked stages: 1. The **exposition**; 2. the **conflict**; 3. the **catastrophe**.

Thus, in *Julius Caesar*, the **exposition** introduces us, with the aid of cleverly disguised *narrative*, to Caesar and the contending political parties in the Roman state and tells us previous events out of which the dramatic conflict is to be developed.<sup>1</sup> Then comes the introduction of the *conflict motive* or *initial incident*. In the **conflict** itself we see the attitude of the contending parties more and more clearly defined by their actions. We watch the danger of collision gradually growing. Brutus, full of noble but false idealism, is won over to join the conspiracy. Caesar's popularity with the people is insidiously undermined. The conspirators secretly sentence Caesar to death. Caesar refuses to heed either warnings or omens and goes to the festival. With Act III, about the middle of the play, the **crisis** or turning point (*Moment des höchsten Spannung*) is reached. Caesar is assassinated. From this point the fortunes of the conspirators begin to sink, till at last in Act V the **catastrophe** begins; the rebels are defeated, and Brutus and Cassius finally perish on their own swords. The conqueror speaks dignified words of reconciliation over the dead body of Brutus.

In the same way a comedy will consist of three parts: 1. The **situation**; 2. The **complication** or entanglement; 3. The **dénouement** (or gradual solution) and happy ending.

**72. SHAKESPEARE'S FOUR STAGES:**<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare's creative work may be divided into four periods; in these four stages we may trace his rapid progress in the art of blank verse and dramatic composition. We see also his deepening insight into the mystery of human life and the springs of human action.

1. SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST PERIOD (1591-1596), during which he uses but gradually discards rhyme, is a **period of experiments**, a period of apprenticeship to his art. Some

<sup>1</sup> In some plays of the old classic type where 'unity of action' is insisted on, as in *Oedipus the King*, and in Ibsen's dramas, the exposition is interwoven with the play from beginning to end.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix § 262-265 for a list of the plays, arranged in periods.

of the plays of this stage are marked by delicate artificial grouping of characters in pairs, and by the artificial symmetry of groups with highly stylized characterization.

His progress is chiefly seen: (1) In the increasing naturalness of his blank verse, so that it sounded more and more like sensitive conversation;<sup>1</sup> (2) In the art of making the plot develop independently of outward circumstances; (3) In the deepening understanding he shows for men and motives; and (4) In his advance from farce to romantic comedy and humour, – from *The Comedy of Errors* to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594).

2. THE SECOND PERIOD (1596-1601) is the **period of the great comedies**. It is marked by characters of greater complexity, by finer contrast of characters and by closely interwoven plots.

Towards the end of this period a note of sadness and of graver humour steals into Shakespeare's comedy (*Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*).

3. THE THIRD PERIOD (1601-1608) is the **period of the great tragedies**, the splendid masterpieces of his dramatic and imaginative power (*Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*).

4. THE FOURTH PERIOD (1608-1613) is the period of **Shakespeare's return to romantic themes**. It marks the quiet close of Shakespeare's life and his return to the enjoyment of country scenes (*A Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*).

**73. SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES.** In the free-handed way characteristic of genius, Shakespeare took the materials for his plots from the most miscellaneous sources. Some plots he borrowed from the English pastoral romances (§ 82), some from Italian *novelle*, – short prose tales which were current both in translations and in other dramas; some he took from North's translation of *Plutarch's Lives*; some from Holinshed's *Chronicles of English History*. All these were popular works, and their popularity had served to prepare audiences for the dramatised versions of the stories.

The important thing for us to remember is the metamorphosis that Shakespeare made in the stories he took from other writers. If we compare his plays with their sources,

---

<sup>1</sup> He laughs at perfectly regular verse, finding it like the plodding steps of "butter-women going to market."

we see in every case how wonderfully he transmuted the original material. Every motive and character is given a deeper meaning and a universal value in his hands.

**74. FATE V. FREE WILL.** Tragedies may be divided into Fate tragedies and Free Will tragedies.

In Fate tragedies, Free Will is denied, the conflict being depicted as a hopeless struggle of the hero against Destiny or blind chance. This Fate motive, though not strongly emphasized, characterizes only Shakespeare's earlier stage (e.g., *Romeo and Juliet*).

As Shakespeare's mind matured, his dramatic philosophy changed. Free Will gradually assumes a more and more important place in his tragedies, and the hero himself becomes responsible *through some fault of his own will* for the catastrophe that overwhelms him.

This fault of will shows itself (a) as weakness of will (*Richard II, Hamlet*); (b) as strong will misled by passion (*Coriolanus*); (c) misplaced or mistaken idealism of will (*Julius Caesar, Brutus, Lear, Othello*); (d) evil conscience, i.e., the hero's will fatally weakened by the consciousness that he is in conflict with the moral law (*Richard III, Macbeth*).

The subordinate characters, however, often suffer innocently in Shakespeare (e.g. Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia), and, as in the old Fate drama, are involved through no fault of their own in the catastrophe which overtakes the hero.

The Fate motive is a pagan motive; the Free Will motive is a Christian motive. In the latter, moral responsibility becomes the pivot of character. The old idea of Predestination nevertheless plays its part in Christian literature, as we shall see, for instance, when we come to Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

**75. SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGION.** In 1563, the year before Shakespeare was born, the 39 Articles of the Anglican creed were first issued. In them Queen Elizabeth defied the Pope, and made herself the head of the national church of England. In those days subjects were expected to be of the same religion as their sovereign.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the well-known Latin maxim of the time *Cujus regio, ejus religio*; and the 18<sup>th</sup> century ballad *The Vicar of Bray* in which the vicar, to retain his living (= Pfründe), changes his creed with each change of dynasty.

Under Queen Mary, Shakespeare's parents, like the great majority of their fellow-countrymen, had been Roman Catholics. The parish register of Stratford shows that the couple had been married by a Catholic priest.

But under Elizabeth, British subjects, even if still Catholic at heart, could hardly risk absenting themselves from the Established Church without being accused of disloyalty to the Queen. Whatever may have been the motive, Shakespeare was baptized, was married, had his children baptized, and was himself buried in the Protestant Church of England.

It would seem, however, that Shakespeare, while opposed to the political interference of Rome (that is why he takes sides against Mary Stuart), had a certain fondness for the old faith and its beautiful symbols and ritual. That he was perfectly familiar with all the detail of that ritual is manifest; for his plays are full of imagery and details drawn from the usages of the Catholic Church. It is noticeable, too, that while he represents some friars (*e.g.*, in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado*) as sage and benevolent men, his two Elizabethan vicars or chaplains, Sir John Evans and Sir Oliver Martext, are far from being shining lights either of piety or intelligence. In the famous eulogy of Elizabeth's reign, however, in the last scene of *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare makes Cranmer say that under Elizabeth "God shall be truly known", *i.e.*, the right religion, or Protestantism, shall prevail.

All such evidence is unconvincing. Three things are clear, however: first, that Shakespeare was no religious brawler or bigot; second, that he was a deeply religious man; third, that he fortunately came at a time when it was still possible for a poet to feel the values of the old religion and to put them into his work before they vanished for ever.

**76. SHAKESPEARE'S REALISM.** Shakespeare is a realist. He gives the world as it is, not as he thinks it ought to be. This is reflected in his diction, which admits the ordinary words of everyday life. No classic or neo-classic dramatist would have dared to introduce such colloquialisms into tragedy as Shakespeare did. Lear's famous "Pray you, undo this button" is a case in point. To Voltaire and the French such phrases seem unheroic and barbarous when used in high tragedy.

Nor does Shakespeare heed *poetic justice*. Although pitifully innocent, Cordelia and Desdemona must die.

And yet his dramas, though they have no ethical tendency, leave a profound ethical impression; they leave us in no doubt about the comparative values of vice and virtue.

How does Shakespeare's dramatic art compare with that of Schiller and Goethe in these respects? Schiller only tolerates characters that are capable of being the mouthpieces of his own lofty idealism. People like Juliet's nurse or Falstaff, the degenerate old infantry officer and soldier of fortune, have no place in Schiller's drama of **romantic idealism**. Goethe differs from Shakespeare in quite another way. Goethe's poetry is all *Gelegenheitsdichtung*, i.e., poetry based on his own personal experiences. In Shakespeare, on the contrary, everything is based on imaginative experience, i.e., the experience of people other than himself, made real to the poet by imagination. But this imaginative experience is in constant touch with real life. Shakespeare, therefore, is the great example of **imaginative realism**.

His tragedies perform what Aristotle under the name *Katharsis* (= purification) described as the highest function of dramatic art. Through fear and pity they cleanse and purify us of 'the foul stuff that wars against the soul'. They show the 'grandiose spectacle of humanity stronger than its chains,' and make us free by taking us outside the life of the senses into the spheres of imaginative reality and religion.

**77. SHAKESPEARE'S QUALITIES.** Let us try to sum up in a few words the qualities that distinguished this great dramatist's work. We note:

1. His perfect mastery of the English language. In his hands it becomes an incomparable medium for the exactly accurate expression of all human experience. His vocabulary ranges from the sonority of Latinized English to the blunt simplicity of common speech. His immense creative power with this medium; his effortless metaphorical manner with the metaphors never merely decorative but always enriching the sense.
2. His perfect mastery of the great resources of the Elizabethan stage. His technical dramatic skill. Among the world's writers of tragedy, Shakespeare stands pre-eminent as the master of good beginnings, of complex and swiftly developing plots, of catastrophe growing inevitably out of the action, and of splendid chords of reconciliation at the close.
3. His excellent handling of blank verse and of verse and speech rhythm. His realization of the greater fundamental importance of the latter: he used it increasingly from year to year.

4. His toleration; his knowledge and impartial rendering of all the characters of human life, from the noblest to the basest.<sup>1</sup> He is profoundly moral, but never didactic; full of deep feeling, but never sentimental; full of conviction, but never dogmatic.

5. His wit and genial humour.

**78. THE SHAKESPEARE RENAISSANCE IN GERMANY.** Although Hamlet, King Lear and other plays of Shakespeare were now and again acted at Nuremberg, Brunswick and other German cities in rude prose versions by the various bands of English strolling players who under the name of *Englische Komödianten* toured Germany throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century from 1626 on, it was not till the time of Lessing that Shakespeare's influence was really deeply and indelibly felt in Germany. The first Shakespeare play to be published in German, *Der Tod von Julius Caesar* (1739), was in Alexandrines, and had been translated by Caspar von Borck, who had been ambassador in London. The praise bestowed on it by Schlegel caused the dictator Gottsched (1700-1766) to follow Voltaire's example in denouncing Shakespeare as a rude barbarian. Shakespeare, these critics said, had neglected the rules of dramatic unity laid down by Aristotle (cf. § 69). The great critic Lessing, full of impatience with the French School, at once entered the lists. In the *Litteraturbriefe* as well as in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, he brilliantly championed the English dramatist against the claims of Racine and Corneille. In Letter no. 17 (1759) Lessing urged that Shakespeare's work was akin to (*stammverwandt mit*) the German 'Volksdrama'. On the ground of this kinship he hoped that Germany by imitating Shakespeare might be helped to create a national drama of her own. In the *Hamb. Dramaturgie*, too, he tried to show that Shakespeare, although outwardly failing to observe the rules of classic drama, was in spirit and feeling related to the Greeks. His arguments, though in some points fallacious, not only put an end to the dogmatic theory of 'classical authority', but also made Germany for the first time recognize Shakespeare as a sublime dramatist and interpreter of human life. Through Coleridge, at a later date, Lessing greatly influenced England (§ 156).

With the succeeding Romantic School, Shakespeare became a religion in Germany. Goethe's disciple, Schlegel, with the help of Dorothy Tieck, translated him so admirably that he became a national poet. On the poets Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, and through

---

<sup>1</sup> It has been said that he can never be parodied; for in his desire to show both sides of the picture he often parodies himself. Lord Percy, for instance, praises honour; Falstaff, in the same play, laughs at it. *Romeo and Juliet* glorifies love; *Pyramus and Thisbe* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ridicules it.



them on the German people, Shakespeare's influence was enormous. From Shakespeare Lessing borrowed the metre of blank verse. The young Goethe took over the free and almost lawless structure of the Histories and enriched his plays with various dramatic details borrowed from the great Elizabethan. In *Faust*, for example, the appearance of the Erdgeist was suggested by that of Julius Caesar's ghost in Brutus's tent; Faust's meeting with the brawling students was suggested by the scene where Prince Hal is seen consorting with the boon companions of Falstaff; Margaret's foil, the low-minded Frau Schwerdlein, was suggested by the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*; the fatal duel between Valentine and Faust by that between Romeo and Tybalt. How much Goethe's fellow dramatist Schiller learned from Shakespeare is best seen by comparing the two sons in the *Räuber* with the sons of Gloucester in *King Lear* or the conspiracy in *Wilhelm Tell* with that in *Julius Caesar*. In short, the drama of Goethe and Schiller is a plant grown from seed provided by Shakespeare. Kleist in *Die Familie Schroffenstein* and in his *Prinz von Homburg*; Grillparzer in *König Ottokar*; Hebbel and Grabbe in various plays, all came under the spell of Shakespeare. The prose-poet Nietzsche, too, got the germinal idea of his "Superman" from the Titanic characters in Shakespeare's plays.

In short Shakespeare meant a real renaissance for Germany, both in dramatic art and in culture in general.

**79. BEN JONSON (1573-1637)** was the most eminent among Shakespeare's fellow dramatists. From 1601-1637 he was a central figure in English literature. His monument in Westminster Abbey is engraved with the famous words:

*O Rare Ben Jonson.*

He attended Westminster School and was then for a time apprenticed to the bricklayer who was his stepfather. Soon he ran off, became a soldier and fought the Spaniards in Flanders, and then took to the stage as an actor and dramatist. In 1598 he killed a fellow actor in a duel and was tried for murder. At about the same time he became a Roman Catholic.

After James I's accession, Ben Jonson also wrote Masques (§ 94).

He now lorded it in the Taverns and especially at the Mermaid, where a band of young poets and wits paid him court. In 1613 he became Poet Laureate, only to die at last in poverty.

Jonson was the most classical of the Elizabethan dramatists. Shakespeare conformed to the dramatic usages of his time, Jonson kicked against them. He is perhaps the least typical of the great Elizabethans. But a striking fact about the Elizabethan drama

is its great variety: the stage of the time was capacious enough to hold both Shakespeare and Jonson. Jonson said that he loved Shakespeare the man but regretted that he “wanted art”. Jonson’s own plays have the virtues of classical art: form and evenness of tone. His characters are “flat”, they live only in their context, as parts serving the total effect of the whole play; whereas Shakespeare’s characters are often “round”<sup>1</sup>, they seem to have an individual life of their own even apart from the context of the play. Further, Jonson’s plays are either comedies or tragedies, never a mixture of the two. Jonson, in short, sought concentration of purpose; Shakespeare often preferred to achieve comprehensiveness.

Jonson’s plays are also classical in a sixteenth-century humanistic way. He was a great believer in learning and was himself a very learned man. His plays, both his comedies and his Roman tragedies, are extremely well documented. His tragedies, *Sejanus* and *Cataline*, are indeed so weighted down with exact knowledge that they do not come alive. The full documentation in his comedies of Elizabethan life, however, is an enrichment and also makes them useful to us historically.

As a writer of realistic comedy Jonson was very successful. His best comedies are not the early *Every Man in his Humour* (1598) and *Every Man out of his Humour*, in which he advances in theory and practice his famous, but too rigid, theory of ‘humours’, i.e. the treatment of each character as the personification of some special eccentricity or ruling passion, which he called a ‘humour’. Much better are three later comedies: *Volpone or The Fox* (1606), in which an old rascal pretends to be dying in order to obtain presents from ‘friends’ who want to be remembered in his will; *Epicoene or The Silent Woman* (1609) and *The Alchemist* (1610). These plays have great humorous and satirical vigour and excellent theatrical technique.

**80. John Webster** (1575?-1624?). We know practically nothing about Webster’s life, not even with certainty the dates of his birth and death. He wrote plays for the stage from about 1602. The best of these are *The White Devil* (1611) and the *Duchess of Malfi*. They are macabre tragedies so full of horror that Bernard Shaw has called him ‘Tussaud laureate’.<sup>2</sup> In them there is passion, murder by ingenious Italianate means, and evil in the highest places. The world is corrupt, but in spite of corruption there is greatness of soul in some people, and even corruption can be turned into poetry.

---

<sup>1</sup> This distinction between flat and round characters is made by E. M. Forster in his excellent *Aspects of the Novel* (1927).

<sup>2</sup> Shaw refers to the Chamber of Horrors in Madame Tussaud’s famous waxworks in London.

Webster's language, like e.g. Shakespeare's and Donne's, is three dimensional. T. S. Eliot, referring to these three in his essay on the very different Jonson, writes that "their words have often a network of tentacular roots reaching down to the deepest terrors and desires". This is poetry which draws on the unconscious mind, like the later work of Hölderlin and Rilke. It is often the commonplace word that is charged with connotative significance, in fact the fusion of deep feeling with an everyday image is characteristic of early 17<sup>th</sup> century verse. In Webster a villain meets his death with the words, *I have caught an everlasting cold, I have lost my voice most irrecoverably*. Here the simple word *cold* is terrifying.

**81. OTHER DRAMATISTS.** The Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is rich in other great names. **George Chapman** (1560?-1634) "spoke out loud and bold" in his turbulent tragedies as in his translation of Homer. **Thomas Dekker** (1570?-1632?) and **Thomas Heywood** (1575?-1650) wrote popular plays of bourgeois domestic life. **Cyril Tourneur** (1575?-1626) and **John Ford** (1586-1639?) wrote horror and revenge plays in excellent blank verse. **Thomas Middleton** (1580-1627) wrote comedies of London life. **Philip Massinger** (1584-1640), **John Fletcher** (1579-1625), and **Francis Beaumont** (1584-1616) were three playwrights who frequently collaborated; all three had marked verbal and theatrical skill and ease, but their work shows a falling off in tension, force, and sensitive precision.

In 1642 the Puritans closed the theatres and the great period of the English drama came to an end.

\*

## SUMMARY OF THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

The first London Theatre was built in 1576, only some 15 years or so before Shakespeare's first play.

A large number of young University men devoted themselves to the new drama. The chief of these "University wits", as they were called, was the short-lived **Christopher Marlowe**. It was principally from Marlowe's baroque 'tragedies of gigantic passion' that Shakespeare learned the art of blank verse.

Marlowe's masterpieces are *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II*. Another predecessor of Shakespeare's was the court dramatist, **Lyly**. His dramas as well as his

novel *Euphuies* are written in a sort of ornamental prose which became very fashionable under the name of Euphuism. He adopted the device of the school dramatists in introducing songs and music into his prose comedies. This pretty and romantic innovation found an imitator in Shakespeare.

**William Shakespeare** (1564-1616), greatest poet of the Germanic races, was born at the little town of Stratford-on-Avon. There, too, he died. As a young man he went up to London to seek his fortune and in a few years had obtained a leading place among the playwrights of the age, winning esteem both as a poet and as a citizen.

When he died his intimate friend and fellow-dramatist, Ben Jonson, wrote a warm eulogy in his memory.

Not till seven years after his death was **The Folio**, the first attempt at an authentic edition of his works, published. This Folio of 1623 is, without doubt, the most important book in English literature.

Shakespeare's dramatic career is divided into four periods:

1. The period of experiments (1591-1596), proceeding from farcical comedy such as *The Comedy of Errors* to romantic comedy such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
2. The period of his great comedies (1596-1601), e.g., *Much Ado about Nothing* and the Falstaff histories.
3. The period of his great tragedies of passion (1601-1608), *Othello* (jealousy), *Macbeth* (ambition), *Lear* (ingratitude), *Antony and Cleopatra* (voluptuousness), *Coriolanus* (haughty pride), *Hamlet* (doubt).
4. The period of his last romantic dramas, full of serenity and reconciliation with the world (1608-1613), *A Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare stands unmatched in romantic drama as the great revealer of the springs of human character. No writer has ever had a dramatic imagination of such vividness – and such instantaneous power to identify himself with the complex experiences and emotions of mankind. For two hundred years after his death his works were nevertheless looked upon by the admirers of classical tradition as barbarous art. Coleridge in his *Lectures on Shakespeare* was the first to show how pedantic this opinion was. He proved that Shakespeare's works were built up on a plan and had a unity of their own perfectly adequate to their new aims in romantic art.

The most notable among Shakespeare's contemporaries was the very bookish playwright **Ben Jonson** (1537-1637). He followed classical models and depicted *humours*

(*i.e.*, leading passions), rather than real characters. His best plays are comedies, such as *Volpone or the Fox*, *Epicoene or the Silent Woman*, and *The Alchemist*.

In 1642 the Puritans closed the theatres and the great period of the English drama came to an end.

## IX. ELIZABETHAN PROSE.

### NOVEL WRITING AND PHILOSOPHY.

**82. THE ELIZABETHAN 'NOVEL'.** In the Elizabethan age, prose was recognised as an art and used for artistic expression. In some of the prose stories of Elizabethan times, we may trace the beginnings of the modern novel, *i.e.*, *the change from the epic in verse to the epic in prose.*

Three types of Elizabethan stories have contributed to the development of the novel:

1. THE PASTORAL ROMANCE, a sort of prose epic (*e.g.*, Sidney's *Arcadia*). In the pastoral romance ladies and gentlemen live as shepherds and shepherdesses with music and madrigals in a lovely and romantic world of constant love and undying friendship.<sup>1</sup>

2. THE DIDACTIC ROMANCE of actual life (*e.g.*, Lyly's *Euphues*).

3. THE REALISTIC ROGUE STORY (*e.g.*, Nash's *Jack Wilton*), written for the people, while *Euphues* and *Arcadia* were for the court. These *rogue stories* (often called *picaresque* stories, from the Spanish *picaro* = a rogue) generally took as their hero a highwayman or robber, and gave a detailed account of his adventures in the form of an autobiography. The *rogue story* was thus the progenitor of the novel of adventure of the next century.

An early example of the rogue story is found in *Till Eulenspiegel* by Thomas Murner of Strasburg (d. 1536). Translated into English it became very popular under the title: *The Merry Jests of Till Owllyglass*.

**83. FRANCIS BACON, LORD VERULAM** (1561-1626), marks the entrance of the scientific spirit into literature. "More knowledge" was his watchword.

---

<sup>1</sup> Two of these pastoral romances, Greene's *Pandosto* and Lodge's *Rosalynd*, supplied Shakespeare with the plots and pastoral atmosphere of two of his most charming romantic comedies, *A Winter's Tale* and *As You Like It*. The Gloucester tale in *Lear* is from the *Arcadia*.



Born in London in 1561, Bacon studied at Cambridge and travelled in the train of a diplomatist on the Continent, returning to England in 1579. He soon became the leading lawyer of his time, and under James I rose to be Lord High Chancellor of England (1619). Two years later he fell into disgrace; he was fined for taking bribes, and had to retire from public life. The rest of his life was devoted to science. A century later Pope refers to him as *'The brightest, wisest, meanest of mankind.'*

In literature he has the credit of writing the first *Essays* in the English language (1597). These 'essays' – a term suggested to Bacon by the *Essais* of his favourite Montaigne – are mere collections of shrewd and pithily expressed observations on morals and life. They are not essays in the modern sense, *i.e.*, reasoned and polished disquisitions on a given subject, with a beginning, a middle and a conclusion, and are thus quite different from the essays of Macaulay or Addison. Many of the compact sayings contained in them now have the currency of proverbs, *e.g.* *"Revenge is a kind of wild justice."* *"He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to Fortune."* *"Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark."*

Bacon's great fame, however, rests chiefly on three philosophical works. His **Advancement of Learning**, the first important philosophical work written in English, discusses (1) the value of knowledge; (2) the backwardness of knowledge; (3) the need of right methods of acquiring knowledge. Only through knowledge and science, says Bacon, can man obtain the mastery over Nature. His Latin work **Novum Organum** (= *new instrument* for arriving at knowledge) continues the discussion of the right methods of prosecuting study and research; his **New Atlantis**<sup>1</sup> puts the same ideas in the form of a story. In this book he imagines a kind of ideal land of Utopia where a society of men is occupied in the scientific pursuit of knowledge.

His whole work is a protest against the principle of authority and the methods of the scholastic philosophy. Bacon and Descartes (1596-1650) were the first to formulate the principles of the Scientific Era which succeeded the medieval Age of Faith.

He shows that it is only by the use of patient observation and experiment that we can verify the knowledge we already possess and learn the secrets of the earth we live upon, of the air we breathe, and of the stars in the sky overhead. He called this method of testing everything by experiments and first-hand study the *physical method*, in opposition to the *metaphysical* method of the Schoolmen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Plato in his *Timaeus* mentions an island empire, since known in literature as the Lost Atlantis, that is said to have sunk beneath the sea outside the Pillars of Hercules (now called the Straits of Gibraltar).

**84. RICHARD HOOKER** (1554-1600) was another of Shakespeare's contemporaries. His writings give us a hint of the strife between the Protestant parties in Elizabeth's reign, quarrels that were soon to rend England with civil war. His famous book, the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, is an eloquent defence of the ritual and ceremonies of the Anglican Church against the arguments of the Puritans. It is a classical authority on the difficult question of the relations between Church and State. The book was a storm-signal of the great Nonconformist rebellion that was coming.

Just as Hooker upheld the monarchical principle in Church Government, so another great writer, **Thomas Hobbes** of Malmesbury (1588-1679), upheld the same principle in Government of the State. He wrote his book *The Leviathan* to curb the new democratic spirit and to prove by philosophy that despotic government is the best. He is thus the opponent of his contemporary, the great republican poet Milton.

\*

### SUMMARY OF ELIZABETHAN PROSE

Elizabethan prose is represented by the **court novel** (such as Sidney's pastoral romance *Arcadia* and Lyly's didactic romance *Euphues*) and by the **popular rogue novels**. These *picaresque* or *rogue novels*, in which the hero is a rogue of some sort, came originally from Spain, and paved the way for Defoe's *novel of adventure*; the court novels were steps toward the *novel of character*.

**Francis Bacon** (1561-1626), one of the greatest men of the age, was a philosopher and a humanist. In his popular book *The Advancement of Learning* and in the more learned *Novum Organum* he advocates the investigation of nature by observation and constant experiment. His great aim was that scientific knowledge should be increased so that man might master Nature. His best-known work, the *Essays* (1597), is a book full of pithily expressed advice on the conduct of life.

Among the host of other thinkers, we mention here **Hooker** and, at a somewhat later period, **Hobbes**. The former defended the government of the church by absolute archbishops, the latter the government of the state by absolute kings.

## X. DONNE AND METAPHYSICAL POETRY.

**85. JOHN DONNE** (1573-1631) is a poet who was ignored or disliked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but who in the present century has been reinstated as a major English poet. He suits twentieth-century taste; indeed it is true to say that his verse and that of his followers, particularly Andrew Marvell, gives more pleasure today than that of any other period in English literature.

Donne was born and brought up in London as a Roman Catholic. He spent some time at Oxford and Cambridge and travelled in Italy and Spain. In 1592, he entered the Inns of Court to study law and lived a gay London life. A secret marriage had a bad effect on his career. In the early years of the new century he was converted to Anglicanism and in 1615 he took orders, becoming Dean of St. Paul's in 1621 and preaching magnificent sermons. As a clergyman, Donne stands as a great Anglo-Catholic.

He wrote love poetry, satires, and religious poetry. His love poems are unconventional. He broke completely with the imitative, idolizing, stereotyped sonnetting of the Petrarchian Elizabethans (Spenser, Sidney, Daniel etc.).

He also rejected classical mythology: the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome are absent from his poetry. Instead he drew his images from everyday life, from the fascinating speculations of medieval learning, from the new natural science, or from the new world discovered by the explorers. Whatever Donne sees, he sees freshly; he never uses a cliché or an image used by anyone else; he makes every word in a poem exactly fit the particular unique vision of that particular poem and thus he is necessarily original. In one poem he compares two separated lovers to the two arms of drawing compasses moving in unison. This is an example of the kind of image which was called a 'conceit'; it discovers resemblance in thing apparently unlike. In the context of the poem this image of the compasses is precisely right, although in isolation from the poem it may seem unjustifiably bizarre.

A thought is as important as a feeling in Donne's poetry. In a well-known passage in his essay on Massinger, T. S. Eliot writes that "with the end of Chapman, Middleton, Webster, Tourneur, Donne, we end a period when the intellect was at the tips of the senses. Sensation became word and word sensation. The next period is the period of Milton (though still with a Marvell in it)". In Donne mind and feeling are fused, emotion and thought become one in the process of poetic creation. "A thought to Donne was an



experience, it modified his sensibility”, says Eliot elsewhere, and Donne “first made it possible to think in lyric verse” – *i.e.* he did in lyric verse what Shakespeare and Webster and the other dramatists did in blank verse.

The thought is given free expression by semantic stressing and the use of speech rhythm. Donne was unconventional in form as well as content. Ben Jonson, one of Donne’s as well as Shakespeare’s friends, had only qualified approval for either of them. He considered Donne the best poet in the world for some things, but thought that for “not keeping of accent” he “deserved hanging”. In Donne’s speech-rhythm verse, semantic stress mattered more than the preservation of regularity in the number of syllables in the foot and line. He did not “keep accent” as Chaucer and Spenser had done, though he makes good use of verse rhythms and much of the pleasure he gives comes from the delicate balance between the speech and verse patterns.

*I wonder by my troth, what thou, and I  
Did, till we lov’d? were we not wean’d till then?  
But suck’d on country pleasures, childishly?  
Or snorted we in the seven sleeper’s den?*

Donne’s religious verse has the same qualities as his secular love poetry; it is vigorous, intellectual, passionate, subtle.

**86. GEORGE HERBERT** (1593-1633) was an Anglican poet of noble birth. He was carefully brought up by an intelligent mother who was a friend of Donne’s. He studied at Cambridge and stayed on to teach there. He was ordained in 1626. While at Cambridge he used often to visit the Anglican religious community started by his friend Nicholas Ferrar at Little Gidding; and it was Ferrar who insisted that his English poetry had to be published. It appeared in 1634 in a volume entitled *The Temple*.

Herbert’s verse has much in common with that of his master, Donne. It is colloquial, alert, rich in concrete images, but Herbert is quieter and makes less use of his learning.

**87. RICHARD CRASHAW** (1612-1649) came of a Puritan Yorkshire family. He became a supporter of the Anglican church as it was under Archbishop Laud and held a fellowship at Peterhouse, the most ‘Laudian’ of the Cambridge colleges, until he was expelled by the Puritans in 1643. In 1645 he entered the Church of Rome.



Crashaw is the most continental of the English metaphysical poets, linking up quite closely with the Baroque sensibility and the art of the Counter Reformation. His images flower into petals and further petals like Baroque architectural decoration. He had a luxuriant imagination and is the most vividly coloured of the poets of his time.

**88. HENRY VAUGHAN** (1621-1695) was a Welshman who matriculated at Jesus College, Oxford, and who practised as a country doctor. He was greatly influenced by Herbert but his distinguishing characteristic is a gift for mystic vision of a very personal kind. Life, to Vaughan, was *A quickness, which my God hath kissed*.

He was a lover of natural beauty and of childhood and shows a close affinity with Wordsworth, particularly in a poem called *The Retreat*.

**89. ANDREW MARVELL** (1621-1678) was easily the most talented of the school of Donne. The son of a clergyman, he became a member of Trinity College, Cambridge. Almost all the poets of the time were Royalist in sympathy with the exception of Milton and Marvell. Marvell was a civil servant under the Commonwealth and protected his colleague Milton at the Restoration. He wrote a warm ode to Cromwell. Where Milton was politically fanatical, however, Marvell was reasonable and moderate; he could see the values of the Royalist point of view and by temperament he was himself much more a cultured Royalist than a Puritan.

In his best poetry Marvell achieves a miraculous poise: verse and speech rhythm become one. This is true of his most famous poem *To His Coy Mistress*, which is usually considered the finest love poem in the language. The accents are in their right places, the rimes are bold and clear, and yet at the same time there is no departure from the directness of the speaking voice.

*Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, Lady, were no crime...  
But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near:  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.*

Like Vaughan, but with polished instead of naive grace, Marvell had a mystic love of nature. Among the sensuous delights of *The Garden*, his mind 'withdraws into its happiness,



*Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.*

**90. ABRAHAM COWLEY** (1618-1667) was very highly regarded in his own time and in the next century he was taken as the representative metaphysical poet. This was unfair on the others because, though Cowley has great technical competence, he is a superficial writer. His images or 'conceits' are not accurate symbols of a delicately precise meaning, as they are in Donne or Marvell, but often merely fanciful. He cared more for the scientific 'new philosophy' and for the Royal Society which was founded to promote it than for the poetic values which these Baconian developments were threatening. In his enthusiastic *Ode to the Royal Society* he declares against his own calling by maintaining the superiority of 'things' and scientific facts over 'words' and poetic fictions, of the rationalizing over the imaginative faculty. In this Cowley reflects the new spirit in his century and points forwards to the next.

Cowley is known also as the poet who made the so-called 'Pindaric' Ode fashionable. This was a name given, through a misunderstanding of the Greek poet Pindar's methods, to any poem built up out of lines of irregular length. Up to the end of the eighteenth century such odes were often written when a poet wanted a change from the heroic couplet.

**91.** Donne's influence, mixed with that of Ben Jonson, was also felt by the **CAVALIER POETS**. The ablest of these was **Thomas Carew**; the most typical was **Sir John Suckling**, who wrote gay, light-hearted, facile lyrics; while another, **Richard Lovelace**, wrote the two charming songs *To Lucasta, on going to the wars* and *To Althea from Prison*. Although influenced by Donne these poets can hardly be called 'metaphysical'. They are not very much concerned with values and speculations 'beyond the physical'. The label 'metaphysical' was first applied to Donne and his school by Dryden.

**Robert Herrick** (1591-1674), a follower of Ben Jonson, was a Devonshire clergyman who wrote elegant little lyrics about country girls and flowers. He is airy and tender, a lesser master. He called the most important volume of his poetry *Hesperides* because it was written in the West of England (Gr. hesperis = western).

\*

## SUMMARY OF DONNE AND METAPHYSICAL POETRY

The metaphysical poetry of the early seventeenth century was neglected for two hundred years but in the twentieth century it probably gives more pleasure than that of any other period in English literature.

The founder of the school was **John Donne** (1573-1631), who wrote unconventional love poems in his earlier years and unconventional religious poems after taking orders in the Anglican Church in 1615. He was also a great pulpit orator. In Donne's poetry the mind and the emotions are fused in concrete images which may seem bizarre but which exactly convey what is meant. He is colloquial. He uses speech rhythm in preference to verse rhythm.

Of Donne's followers the most talented was **Andrew Marvell** (1621-1695), who wrote some of the loveliest lyrics in the language.

## XI. THE PURITAN IDEALISTS.

### MILTON AND BUNYAN.

**92. PURITAN V. CAVALIER.** The misgovernment of the Stuarts revealed to England how unbearable the Tudor theory of absolute government might become. The nation demanded Parliamentary Government. Charles promised to grant these demands but as he could not be got to keep his promises, it was determined to depose him. The great Civil War that followed threw the power into the hands of the extremists, and finally King Charles was led to the block and beheaded.

The Puritan General, Cromwell, now became Lord Protector of the new English Commonwealth, and John Milton was his Latin Secretary. But the **experiment** of a **Puritan Republic** was a failure, and on Cromwell's death the English, deaf to Secretary Milton's final *Plea for a Free Commonwealth*, recalled Charles II, and in 1660 restored the monarchy. (The answer to this, Milton's last tract, was a pamphlet with the cruel title *No Blind Guides*.)

During these long years of civil conflict, England was unwillingly divided into two great factions – Royalists (or Cavaliers) and Republicans (or Puritans). These factions are as marked in the literature as they are in the politics and theology of the time. Only very few writers managed to avoid taking sides. The most famous of these is **Sir Thomas Browne** (1605-1682), a country doctor who wrote books in magnificent Baroque prose. The best known are *Religio Medici* (1643) and *Urn Burial* (1658). He is the great master of the elaborate, balanced style in English prose, with intricately varied rhythms and a richly Latinized vocabulary. Just as Browne did not take sides politically, so he also occupies a Janus-like position in the history of ideas. He looked back to the age of religion and faith and forwards to the age of science and analysis, and he understood and accepted both.

In literature, the Puritans, – full of visions and pious plans for establishing a New Jerusalem here on earth, – are represented by two great writers, Milton and Bunyan. The greatest work of both men, though written after the Restoration, belongs in inspiration to the Republican or pre-Restoration period.



**93. JOHN MILTON** (1608-1674), the poet of Puritan idealism, wrote *Paradise Lost*, the best epic poem in English. His literary career falls into three distinctly marked periods:

1. THE EARLY POETIC PERIOD, ending with the return from his Italian journey (1639).
2. THE PROSE (OR CONTROVERSIAL) PERIOD, lasting from 1639 to the Restoration (1660).
3. THE LATER POETIC PERIOD, when Milton – old, blind and “fallen on evil days” – wrote his great epics.

Though apparently disconnected, the work of all three periods is found on closer examination to be bound together by a lofty unity of aim and of personality. No one, indeed, will fully understand the great poems of his third period who does not know something of the political and theological tracts and pamphlets of his middle or political period.

**Milton's Earlier Poems.** Milton, the poet of ‘cherubim and seraphim’, was born in London only eight years before the death of Shakespeare, the poet of ‘men and women.’ As a boy he may have seen Shakespeare in the streets of London.

He was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he was known not only for his Latin verses, but also for his good looks, his pure life, and refined manners. Among the undergraduates, he went by the nickname of the ‘Lady of Christ's’. Even thus early he dedicated his life to the idea of becoming a great poet, and set about preparing himself for the lofty task by the diligent study of Latin and Greek.

While still at Cambridge he wrote the famous Ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629), and the noble lines *On Shakespeare* (prefixed to the Second Folio). In the first of these poems he celebrates the coming of Christ and the overthrow of the false gods, – a theme that strongly reminds us of the subject of his great epic of after years. On leaving Cambridge, he lived in retirement and patient study for six years with his father at the village of Horton, near Windsor. Here he can listen *While the ploughman near at hand / Whistles o'r the furrowed land / And the milkmaid singeth blithe / And the mower whets his scythe*. To this peaceful and almost Arcadian period belongs his best lyric poetry, consisting of four famous pieces: (1) *L'Allegro* and (2) *Il Penseroso*, two companion poems expressing two different moods, – the one describing the pleasures of lighthearted cheerfulness, the other those of reflective philosophic mind; (3) **Lycidas** (1637), a beautiful pastoral elegy on the death of a college friend who was drowned in the Irish Sea, and (4) the no less beautiful pastoral masque **Comus** (1634).



**94. THE MASQUE.** Masques were dramatic pieces of simple construction, containing a simple allegory and made for amateurs to act, the players being masked. Masques were generally composed for some festive occasion, such as the birthday or the coming of age of a young nobleman. Music, singing and dancing could be introduced into them, and they were set off by magnificent scenery, being generally played in the country-houses of the nobles. The neo-classical architect Inigo Jones designed scenery for masques. The music in them was very important: the masque in fact is opera in embryo. Masques had a great vogue under James I and Charles I.

Milton's masque **Comus**, "presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634", is in the form of a pastoral. Words were only one element in the masque and *Comus* is perhaps too literary to be a good one. It also differs from other masques in its didactic tendency. It tries to teach a serious lesson, *viz.*, – the duty of self-restraint amid temptations to a sensual and pagan treatment of life. Milton perhaps meant it to be a reproof to the licentious playwrights of Charles the First's court.

The story tells how two brothers, the sons of a nobleman, lose first their sister and then themselves in a wood. The sister has fallen into the hands of the enchanter Comus. After trying in vain to convert her to pagan ideas of pleasure, Comus by Circean magic turns her to stone. But at last the brothers, with the help of old Thyrsis and of the nymph Sabrina, succeed in breaking the charm and set their sister free.

In these and in all his later poems Milton combines classical smoothness of style with a marked Puritan tendency of thought. Despite his deep study of Greek humanism, he all his life remained a thorough Puritan. **In other words, the Renaissance influenced his ideas of form but not his way of looking at life.**

In 1638 he went to Italy, where he visited the aged Galileo and other eminent Italians. But at Naples, while he was staying with Count Manso, the patron of the Concettist poet Marini, alarming reports reached him of the storm brewing in England. This news made him cut his tour short and hasten home.

While abroad he had conceived the plan of a great epic poem on Arthur and the Holy Grail (§ 39). But he finally went back to a still earlier plan, and determined to tell the story of how our first parents were driven out of Paradise.

For the present, however, there was other work for him to do, and for twenty years after his return to England he wrote, as he said, only "with his left hand." Politics and prose claimed all his powers.

**95. MILTON'S PROSE PERIOD.** As Latin secretary to Cromwell, Milton from 1639 to 1660 wrote chiefly as a pamphleteer in the Puritan cause, bitterly attacking both the episcopal system of church government and the monarchical system. In his pamphlets he often mistakes violent personal abuse of his opponents for argument.

Only in one of his controversial prose works, the *Areopagitica* (§ 55 note), which is an eloquent plea for the freedom of the press, does Milton rise to real majesty of style.

Two other tracts are famous, that *On Education* and that *On the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. His domestic life was unfortunate. His first wife ran away from him. This led him to the frank examination of the whole marriage question in the tract just referred to. His second wife died shortly after marriage. In his old age his daughters quarrelled with him about his austere patriarchal views of women's duties.

In 1649 he published *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, in which he grimly maintained that it was lawful to put a wicked king to death. The tract led to his appointment as Secretary of the Commonwealth, and henceforth his pen had no rest till Cromwell's death. His *Eikonoclastes* (i.e., Imagebreaker) was an exposure of the *Eikon Basilike* (i.e., Royal Image), a book which for years was believed to be the 'Martyr King's' diary of his sufferings. In 1651 he published, in Latin, *A Defence of the English People*, in reply to the great Leyden scholar Salmasius. This work, with its republican audacity and fierce satire, made all "Europe ring from side to side," as Milton boasts in one of his sonnets. The arduous work of these terrible years ruined Milton's sight, and for the last eight years before the Restoration he was stone-blind. One of the noblest of the fourteen *Sonnets* he wrote in his second period is that *On his Blindness*.

**96. MILTON'S LATE PERIOD.** After the Restoration he was for a time in prison and in danger of his life, but he escaped being beheaded with the other regicides. Blind, poor, and alone, he was allowed to withdraw to one of the back streets of London to live. But this period of his greatest adversity is the period of his greatest glory. His faith in Providence and in the ultimate victory of his cause remained unshaken. In this mood he returned to the writing of that great epic poem **Paradise Lost**, which had been the dream of his early manhood. In 1667, the year after the Great Fire, he published it, and in 1671 a sequel, **Paradise Regained** (describing Christ's Temptation by Satan). Three years later, "in calm of mind, all passion spent," he died.

*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* hinge on the conflict between Reason, represented by Christ, and Passion, represented by Satan. Passion succeeds in bringing about the Fall of man but through Christ and Reason he nevertheless has a chance of



salvation. It is interesting to remember that in the seventeenth century the scientific revolution was raising reason to a position of great dignity.

But once more before he died, the fire of Milton's prophetic passion had blazed up. In **Samson Agonistes**, the grandiose tragedy describing the triumphant death of the old hero Samson (*agonistes* = the champion) Milton told the story of Puritanism, defeated but triumphant. Blind, helpless among the Philistines, and mocked at for their sport, Samson summons all his strength for one last supreme effort of revenge. He pulls down the pillars of the assembly hall, and dies victorious, involving his foes in his destruction. In this great dramatic work, Milton observed the strict form and unities of Greek tragedy. As a work of art it is the most perfect of all his writings; but it is weak in dramatic causation, Milton being hampered by his unwillingness to introduce motives not recorded in the Scriptures and by the fact that he had no experience of the living stage. *Samson Agonistes* is also interesting because in it Milton uses some speech rhythm. *Paradise Lost* is all in verse rhythm.

Milton is England's one first-rate master of the grand rhetorical style. His glory is that he 'built up the sonority of the blank verse paragraph' in English. This he achieved, however, only by doing violence to English syntax and idiom by excessive latinizing and by ignoring the connotative richness of words. *Paradise Lost* is built not with living words, like a Shakespeare play or a poem by Donne, but with untransmuted abstract ideas and rhetorical sound.

To his own century he was but little known. In the following century Addison was the first publicly to proclaim his merits, and from the days of Thomson down to the late nineteenth century Milton has been a tremendous force in the poetry of England. It is felt today that on the whole his influence has been bad. This view was sometimes held earlier, e.g. by Keats, who reacted against Milton towards the end of his life (§ 172).

In Germany Milton found several enthusiastic translators, among whom the Swiss Calvinist Bodmer is the best known. *Paradise Lost* also inspired Klopstock's *Messias*.

**97. JOHN BUNYAN**, the inspired tinker (1628-1680), expressed the Puritan spirit in prose just as Milton had expressed it in poetry.

Born at a little village near Bedford, Bunyan grew up without receiving any schooling. Until he was seventeen he worked in his father's shop mending pots and pans. He was then drafted into the Parliamentarian Army and served as a Roundhead soldier till the army was disbanded in 1649.

On his return home from the war, he began to preach in the villages round Bedford, holding his hearers spellbound with his graphic discourses.

At the Restoration (1660), when the old laws against the Nonconformists were revived, Bunyan was arrested for preaching without a licence. He was thrown into Bedford Gaol and not released till 1672.

During a second term of imprisonment, he wrote the first part of his famous book *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to Come*. Its beginning reminds us of *Piers Plowman: As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den and laid me down to sleep*. It describes the adventures and perils of a pilgrim called Christian on his journey from the City of Destruction to the Heavenly City. Leaving wife and children and home and undaunted by the dangers of giants and dragons that threaten travellers on this perilous route, Christian goes undismayed through the Slough of Despond, climbs the Hill of Difficulty, fights and slays the demon Apollyon, and passes through the terrible Valley of the Shadow of Death. He shuns the temptations of the town of Vanity Fair, where he is beaten and cast into prison. After many misfortunes, he at last reaches the Delectable Mountains, and sees the Heavenly City.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is the work of a born story-teller. Written in a style made perfect by its author's deep sincerity and simplicity, the book fascinates even children, who have no suspicion of the deep spiritual meaning underlying this Puritan allegory. For in the experiences of Christian, Bunyan relates not merely the story of his own life and his own salvation, but the story of the Puritan cause. Christian stands for Puritanism, aspiring, struggling, fighting, defeated, despairing and in agony, but triumphant at last.

\*

## SUMMARY OF THE PURITAN IDEALISTS

The misrule of the Stuarts led to the Civil War and to the establishment of a Puritan Republic under Cromwell. At Cromwell's death the Republic broke down.

**John Milton** (1608-1674), the great Puritan poet, studied at Cambridge till 1632. The dream of his youth was to train himself by nobility of life and by study of Greek and Latin models to be a perfect poet. He therefore studied six years longer at home at Horton, and then travelled in Italy, but returned in haste to London on the eve of the Civil War. This marks the end of his first period, his period of preparation. During this period he wrote his five lyrical masterpieces: (1) The pastoral ode *On Christ's Nativity*; (2) *L'Allegro*;

(3) *Il Penseroso*; (4) The pastoral drama (or masque) *Comus* (1634); (5) The pastoral elegy *Lycidas*.

During his second period, from 1639 till 1660, with the exception of his sonnets he wrote nothing but controversial prose. His most famous prose writings are: (1) *Areopagitica*, in which he advocates the freedom of the press; (2) *Eikonoclastes*; (3) *A Defence of the People of England*. Both the latter tried to justify the execution of the king.

At the Restoration he escaped with his life. In the years of adversity that followed he wrote (1) *Paradise Lost*, the epic that has made his name immortal; (2) *Paradise Regained*, a sequel to it; (3) a classical tragedy, *Samson Agonistes*. These poems describe the fight of Evil against Good, and, in spite of temporary defeat, the final triumph of Good, *i.e.*, the cause of Freedom and Puritanism.

**John Bunyan** (1628-1688), a tinker by trade, then a Roundhead soldier, and finally a Baptist preacher, was after the Restoration several times imprisoned for preaching without a licence. In prison he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the greatest prose allegory there is in English literature. It tells the story of the agony of a human soul in search of salvation.

#### DATES OF THE STUART PERIOD

(Chapters X to XII)

#### SOVEREIGNS

*The Stuarts*

1616	Shakespeare dies. Cervantes dies.	James I	1603
1629	Milton's <i>Nativity Ode</i> .		
1642	The Puritans close the theatres.	Charles I	1625
1649	Charles I executed.	(Cromwell)	1649-1658
1660	Charles II restored to the throne.	Charles II	1660
1666	The Fire of London.		
1667	Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> .		
1681	Dryden's <i>Absalom and Achitophel</i> .	James II	1685
		(William III)	1689
1689	James II flees from England.	Anne	1702



## XII. THE RESTORATION PERIOD. 1660-1700.

**98. THE ROYALIST REACTION.** In 1660 the English, weary to death of the Puritan republic, restored the monarchy. Charles II, the “merry Monarch,” came back from his exile in France.

He brought his gallicized courtiers and friends with him to his capital. London, during the Commonwealth one of the gravest towns in Europe, soon became one of the gayest. Court ladies went about masked. Duchesses dressed up as flower sellers to pay clandestine visits in the early morning. Even the king and queen disguised themselves to attend masked balls, where they danced with wild abandon. Poisoning and assassination, though not as common as in France at this period, also came into vogue in England. English literature, especially poetry, for the next hundred years was stamped with the mark of London. This literature is written for the most part by men who lived in ‘town’, and it deals with the sights and life of the town; the country, and natural beauty, was more and more neglected. The Restoration, in short, marks a real epoch in English literature. This new epoch witnessed (1) **the beginning of the court influence and of the ascendancy of the French “classic” influence;** (2) **the reaction against the Puritan severity of manners.**

This reaction made itself particularly manifest in literature (a) in satirical attacks on the Puritan’s sobriety of manners (§ 99) and (b) in the excesses of the new comic drama (§ 104).

**99. SAMUEL BUTLER (1612-1680).** Among the Royalists who had been impatiently waiting for the tide to turn was Samuel Butler. During the Commonwealth he had been a clerk to Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwell’s officers. When the Restoration set his pen free, he poured forth his long pent up contempt for the Puritans and the religious fanatics of the time in his famous comic satire **Hudibras** (1663) [= ‘*hjudibra’s*’]. Charles II is said to have carried this book about with him in his pocket. But he let its author die in neglect and poverty.

*Hudibras* is a clever but rather vulgar burlesque of Puritanism. It describes in rhyme the adventures of a Presbyterian Justice of the Peace, named Sir Hudibras, and his



clerk, Squire Ralpho. They both go forth – like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza – to redress superstition, correct abuses and abolish amusements. Sir Hudibras is armed and ready for the fray:

*“His puissant sword unto his side  
Near his undaunted heart was tied.”*

On meeting a group of bear-baiters, he and Ralpho valiantly charge and at first disperse them, but after a while, alas, the Knight and his Squire are themselves overpowered and are put in the stocks. From this plight they are delivered by a rich widow to whom Sir Hudibras is paying his addresses. But her servants, viewing his suit with displeasure, disguise themselves as devils, and on his next visit give the poor wooer such a sound drubbing that he vows to take vengeance – in the law courts!

This mock heroic epic is written in doggerel verse of eight syllables. It abounds in the most grotesque and unexpected rhymes, and is full of wit and ingenuity. As a satire, it perfectly succeeded in its aim of making a laughing-stock of the Puritans.

**100. CHARACTER WRITINGS.**<sup>1</sup> Butler also wrote a book of so-called *Characters*, a form of literature which developed in the seventeenth century and which helped in the evolution of the novel.

The *Character* was a miniature sketch, about 400 words in length, descriptive not of an *individual* but of a *type* or *class*. Thus Butler describes *A Wooer*, *A Juggler*, *A Squire of Dames*, *A Modern Critic*, *A Timeserver*, and so on. The most famous of the numerous character-writers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is John **Earle**, whose collection of “characters” goes by the name of the *Microcosmography*.

**101. RESTORATION COMEDY.** The French influence introduced into England by Charles II and his sophisticated court is most clearly seen in the comedies of the day. They are elegant, polished, cynical, and reflect a light-hearted lack of morals in the society of the time. The freshness and wide range of the Elizabethan stage has gone. These new plays are acted in roofed theatres by artificial light, with painted scenery. Actresses now take women’s parts. Conditions had changed so much that Shakespeare had to be *re-written* before he could be acted.

---

<sup>1</sup> Such “Ethic Characters” were first written by Theophrastus, a disciple of Plato.

The chief writers of these clever, urbane, and amusing plays were **Congreve**, **Dryden**, **Wycherley**, and **Vanbrugh** (1664-1726).

**102. WILLIAM WYCHERLEY** (1640-1715) had been brought up in exile in France. In England he lived the life of a wit and was at one time tutor to one of Charles II's children. He was often in great straits for money and more than once had to lie in the Fleet prison for debt. His two best known comedies are *The Country Wife* (1675) and *The Plain Dealer* (1677), the one a travesty of Molière's *Ecole des Femmes*, the other a travesty of the same dramatist's *Misanthrope*. Such critics as Dryden and Voltaire praised Wycherley's work, though they considered that its licentiousness was a drawback. In literary history Wycherley is known as the founder of the **Comedy of Manners** (as distinguished from the **Comedy of Human Life** of Shakespeare).

**103. WILLIAM CONGREVE** (1670-1729) is the most brilliant and most successful of all the writers of artificial comedy.

Like Wycherley he is an imitator of Molière. His best comedy is *The Way of the World*. In this play, the splendid but heartless coquette Millamant<sup>1</sup> has been thought to be almost as good as Célimène in the *Misanthrope*.

Congreve's dialogue has the great French qualities of wit, precision and volubility. As English prose it is excellent. Comedy sees us as worse than we are: Congreve's men are all rascals, and his women, though witty, are no better than they should be.

**104. JEREMY COLLIER'S PROTEST.** The looseness of manners on the Restoration stage at length made people uneasy. When a clergyman named Jeremy Collier attacked the playwrights for their immorality, the good sense of England, and particularly the good sense of the rising middle class who were often laughed at in the plays, was on his side. His famous pamphlet was entitled *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698). It attacked Shakespeare as well as the Restoration dramatists.

---

<sup>1</sup> What movement there is in the description of her entrance: *Here she comes, faith, full sail, with her fan spread and her streamers out and a shoal of fools for tenders*. The mockery is increased because the words recall Milton's famous description of the entrance of Delilah in *Samson Agonistes*.

Congreve, Wycherley and others wrote angry replies. Dryden admitted that there was justice in the attack.

Sir John Vanbrugh, too, accepted Jeremy Collier's dictum that it was "the business of plays to recommend virtue and discountenance vice," but stated his acceptance in terms so sophisticated that his 'conversion' could hardly have been satisfactory to the moralist. "The business of comedy," said Vanbrugh, "is to show people what they should do by representing them on the stage as doing what they should not."

The whole subject of the functions of comedy was afterwards discussed in a far more philosophical manner by the **Earl of Shaftesbury** (1671-1713), a contemporary of Addison's. Shaftesbury's works received much more attention on the Continent than in England, being carefully studied by such great writers as Diderot, Lessing, Mendelssohn, Wieland and Leibniz. Shaftesbury contends that it is the function of comedy to "recommend wisdom and virtue by means of pleasantry and mirth". He thinks that "the stage may be as effective an instructor as the pulpit." Lessing, following in the footsteps of this English moralist, also affirms that 'comedy, though it may be unable to cure a miser by exhibiting the effects of avarice or a gambler by holding up to ridicule his love of cards, may nevertheless by pleasant raillery of these vices confirm those who have never given way to them in their resolution to resist any inclination to give way to them.' Lessing's theory that the purpose of comedy is to arouse 'thoughtful laughter' is undoubtedly traceable to Shaftesbury views on the corrective virtues of comedy. This important theory was destined to receive eloquent championship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the novels of George Meredith, a writer who was educated in Germany. (§ 210).

In the controversy aroused by Jeremy Collier's pamphlet, the Restoration Comedy received its deathblow, and was succeeded by the **Sentimental Comedy** of men like Cibber and Steele, which, though dull, shallow and insincere, was at least not indecent. The Comedy of Manners was not revived till about 1890 (see § 218).

**105. JOHN LOCKE** (1632-1704) was the greatest philosopher of the Restoration Period. He afterwards became the apologist of democratic revolution.

His writings had an immense influence on politics, on philosophy, and on literature, both in his own age and in the age that followed him.

His political writings convinced England first of the necessity, and secondly of the justice, of the great Revolution of 1689. Locke's three best known works are: (1) His *Letters*



on *Toleration*, pleading for all religious sects except Catholics, “for,” says Locke, “Catholics are enemies to the state”; (2) *An Essay on Civil Government* (1690), justifying the Revolution and vindicating the right of the people to depose a bad King; (3) The famous *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). This epoch-making book tries to show how the human mind works, and how it gathers the materials of reason and knowledge. Locke tries to prove that all we know and all that we believe comes from experience, *i.e.*, sensation and reflection. In the next century the philosopher **Hume** (1711-1776) developed Locke’s theory into materialism, *i.e.*, the doctrine that there is in the universe nothing but matter. **Bishop Berkeley**, the idealist philosopher (1685-1753), on the other hand, reconciled Locke’s ideas with religion.

Locke traced all knowledge back to experience. In this way he was helping to formulate the principles of the ‘new philosophy’, the scientific humanism which was reshaping men’s minds in the seventeenth century. It was the German thinker Kant who first analysed the contents of reason that underlie all experience. Kant thus completed the work begun by Locke.

Not less famous is the essay *Thoughts concerning Education*. It paved the way for much-needed reforms in teaching.

Locke’s style is bare and monotonous but clear and devoid of technical terms. He owes his fame to the revolutionary nature of his speculations.

**106. THE HEROIC ROMANCE.** In the seventeenth and in the eighteenth century, up to the time of Richardson, people read a kind of fiction called the *Heroic Romance* or the *Romance of Chivalry*. Such romances were translated or imitated from the French in great numbers. A good example of them is Mlle. Scudéry’s *The Grand Cyrus* (1650), a book of 6679 pages. Such works, long and tedious as they are, are important in the history of literature for several reasons:

1. They are the forerunners of the real historical romance.
2. They greatly influenced the Gothic novel (§ 138).
3. Though not witty themselves they were the cause of wit in other men, and they were made fun of by English critics from Addison to Sir Walter Scott; best of all, they prompted Don Miguel de Cervantes to parody them and to write his great anti-



romantic satire *Don Quixote* (1605). Cervantes thought these romances had helped to pervert Spanish life and character.

4. They encouraged John Dryden and others to dramatize their contents in the form of **heroic tragedies**.

**107. JOHN DRYDEN** (1631-1700) is the most eminent writer of the Restoration Period, which is often called the Age of Dryden. He wrote prose criticism, satire, tragedy and comedy<sup>1</sup>.

During the fifty years of his life as an author Dryden lived in London. A man of his time, he loved the town with its clubs and coffee-houses and had no eye for country things.

In politics, like many other men of his day, Dryden trimmed his sails according to the wind. On Cromwell's death he, as became a good Puritan, wrote his magnificent eulogy of the great Republican leader – *Heroic Stanzas on the Death of the Protector*. No sooner, however, did Charles II return to his throne than the poet celebrated the event in a panegyric poem *Astræa Redux*<sup>2</sup>: *a Poem on the Happy Restoration and Return of His Most Sacred Majesty Charles the Second*.

**Dryden's literary life** falls into three distinct periods: The first (1657-1681) deals chiefly with the drama; the second (1681-1689) is the period of his masterpieces, – the satires and the poems on religion; the third from 1689 to his death is that of his "fables," translations and miscellaneous work.

In order to make money, Dryden early in his career turned to the stage. The theatres were crowded with playgoers, and in the space of twenty years or so, he wrote no fewer than twenty-seven plays.

In 1681 he began to write political satires and thus did good service to the Tories. The Tories were at this time quarrelling with the Whigs as to who was to be the next King, – the King's brother, James, who was a Catholic, or the King's illegitimate son, Monmouth, who was a Protestant. When James II became King (1685), Dryden thought it advisable to go over to Catholicism. But in 1689 the Revolution took place, and under the new King, who was a Protestant, Dryden lost both the laureateship and the pension with which Charles II had in 1670 rewarded him for his poem in praise of the Restoration.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Marriage à la Mode* is his best comedy. Like other Restoration comedies it is always successful when revived on the English stage today.

<sup>2</sup> *Astræa Redux* = the returning star, *i. e.*, the special star which heralded Charles's birth. It is described in lines 288-292.

He had to retire into private life and in his old age often lived in dire poverty. In spite of his changed fortunes, however, his genius and his supreme authority as a man of letters continued to be recognized, and when he died 'Glorious John' was buried in Westminster Abbey.

His poem *Annus Mirabilis* belongs to the first period. It was written in 1667 to describe the terrible events of the Year of Wonders, 1666. It describes the two great calamities of that year: (1) the Dutch War, when Van Tromp sailed up the Thames with a broom at his masthead to show that he had swept the English from the seas; and (2) the Great Fire, which reduced the City of London to ashes.

**108. DRYDEN'S TRAGEDIES.** In the history of the English Drama, Dryden's name will always be remembered for his attempt to introduce the rhyming tragedy of the French into England by uniting it with the English romantic drama and the *heroic romance*<sup>1</sup>. These plays are full of 'kings and kaisers', whose only heroism is to prate and rant about love. *The Indian Emperor* (1665) was the first regular example of this *heroic tragedy*, as Dryden called it. *Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen*, and *The Conquest of Granada* are others.

These "heroic tragedies" are all spectacular and sensational plays; although well constructed, they are without much truth to human nature or much skill in character drawing. Nor was it long before they were parodied. A witty burlesque of them, *The Rehearsal* (1671), was put on the stage and set everybody laughing at Dryden and his rhyming tragedies.<sup>2</sup>

Dryden therefore changed his manner, and from 1678 on gave up rhyme and used only blank verse in his plays.

**Dryden's Criticism.** Dryden's prefaces are more valuable, both for style and contents, than the plays themselves, and entitle their writer to be called the founder of modern literary criticism and one of the greatest writers of English prose.

Dryden ranks with Johnson, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, and T. S. Eliot as one of the five major critics in English literature. Each period has its own sensibility and its own problems and Dryden has expressed those of his time with more accuracy and insight than anyone else. He also did useful work as a literary classifier by examining the world's

<sup>1</sup> For Dryden's defence of the use of rhyme instead of blank verse, see his *Essay on Dramatic Poesie* (written during the great Plague in the form of a Platonic Dialogue).

<sup>2</sup> In *The Rehearsal* Dryden is called Bayes, - in satiric reference to the "bays" (= laurels) of his laureateship.

great masterpieces and attempting to define the character and functions of the different literary forms.

As a prose writer he is perhaps the best master of the plain style (§ 11), which aims at clarity and precise meanings and avoids both rhetorical overtones and the connotative associations of individual words. Scientific Humanism was now established and Reason had triumphed over the more unified sensibility of earlier times before mind and feelings were as dissociated as they became in the seventeenth century and have remained ever since. A hundred years later in the Romantic Movement the pendulum was to swing over to the feelings, but meanwhile Reason was on top and both prose and poetry were simplified into instruments designed to express little more than the reasoning processes of man and the sense of mathematical order. These functions, however, were admirably performed.

**109. DRYDEN'S SATIRES.** In 1681 Dryden turned to political satire. **Absalom and Achitophel**, a poem in heroic couplets, is generally regarded as the best of all his works and as the most effective political satire ever written. The persons and places in this satire go by Biblical names, London, for instance, being called Jerusalem, the English the Jews, and England Israel.

It is a savage Tory attack on the Whig Earl of Shaftesbury (Achitophel), then lying in the Tower and awaiting his trial for supporting the claims of the Duke of Monmouth (Absalom) to be the successor of Charles II (David). The sale and success of the poem was enormous. But Shaftesbury was nevertheless acquitted and a medal struck in his honour. Dryden's next two important poems are long arguments in verse, dealing with the question of creeds, then a burning political topic in England. James II was trying to force England into becoming a Roman Catholic country. In the *Religio Laici* (*i.e.*, the Layman's Faith), 1682, Dryden defends the Church of England against the Dissenters. Five years later, after he had gone over to Catholicism, he wrote *The Hind and the Panther*, an allegory in which "the immortal hind, unspotted and unchanged," is the Church of Rome, and the Panther, the "spotted creature," is the Church of England. The Presbyterian church is called a "wolf with haggard eyes."

Dr. Samuel Johnson said of Dryden, that he "showed that argument could be joined with poetry". He also praised Dryden for inventing the poetic diction 'refined from the grossness of domestic use' which remained standard all through the next century; as



a matter of fact it was Milton rather than Dryden who performed this doubtful service for English poetry.

**110. DRYDEN'S THIRD PERIOD.** To this period, the period of his political eclipse, belong, besides translations of the *Æneid*, Juvenal, and Chaucer, his two famous Odes: (1) *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day* and (2) *Alexander's Feast, or The Power of Music*. These are perhaps the most successful irregular or 'Pindaric' odes in the language.<sup>1</sup> The latter describes how a lyre-player who was present at Alexander the Great's wedding, was able with his music to transport the king from mood to mood at will. The poem was afterwards set to music by Handel, the famous German musician who had settled in London early in the Hanoverian period.

It is, however, to his masterly handling of the heroic couplet that Dryden chiefly owes his fame as a poet. The couplet is the characteristic metre of the classical period in English literature; it symbolizes the narrowed range and high polish of that period.

Sir Walter Scott, who edited his works in 1808, excuses Dryden's failure as an imaginative poet by saying that he would have been a great epic poet if he had lived in a more heroic age than that of Charles II; to quote Scott's own words:

*"Dryden in immortal strain  
Had raised the Table Round again  
But that a ribald king and court  
Bade him toil on, to make them sport."*

**111. SAMUEL PEPYS** (1632-1704) lived a busy London life and recorded every detail in his fascinating and invaluable *Diary*. The *Diary* of **John Evelyn** (1620-1706) is also highly informative.

\*

---

<sup>1</sup> Both are odes to St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music.

## SUMMARY OF XII. THE RESTORATION PERIOD

In the reaction that followed the Restoration, Cromwell's body was dug up and gibbeted on the walls of London. The Puritans were held up to ridicule and their conceptions of life caricatured. In literature, too, this contempt is conspicuous.

**Samuel Butler** wrote a famous comic epic in which a certain hypocritical Puritan Knight, called *Hudibras*, is mocked at.

**French influence** became everywhere visible in dramatic as well as in other verse.

**The drama of the Restoration** was in part an imitation of the French comedy of manners. Under the patronage of the free and easy Court of Charles II, this comedy flourished. **Wycherley**, **Congreve** and **Dryden** were its chief representatives.

Soon after the Revolution of 1689, a Protestant clergyman named Collier denounced the licentiousness of the Restoration stage. Middle class opinion backed him up. The respectable but rather dull **Sentimental Comedy** now came in.

**Dryden** (1631-1700) is the only really eminent man of letters of the Restoration period. In his numerous rhymed tragedies and in his brilliant critical essays he championed the French classicistic style of drama. Although he wrote no fewer than 27 plays he had no natural inclination for drama. He wrote plays, and wrote them well, only to please the fashion.

His fame chiefly rests (1) on the political satires on his second period, the best known of which is *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1681, a poem in which Absalom stands for the Protestant Duke of Monmouth; (2) on the poems about the conflicting religions of his day, such as *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*; and (3) on his excellence as a critic and prose-writer.

In his third period, besides translations, he wrote his two famous *Odes: Alexander's Feast* and *St. Cecilia's Day*.

**The age of Dryden** also saw the great Whig philosopher Locke. Locke's writings gave a philosophical justification to Revolution and Democracy, and had an immense influence on public opinion.

## XIII. THE AUGUSTAN AGE.

### THE AGE OF RULES AND REASON.

**112. JOURNALISM BEGINS.** Under Charles II it was laid down by the King's servile judges that "to print or publish any newsbooks or pamphlets of any news whatever is illegal." But this prohibition proved far too stringent, so a Licensing Act was passed. By this it was arranged that all newspapers would have to pass the censor.

After the Revolution of 1689, however, all was changed. In 1695 the old Licensing Act expired, and, thanks to John Locke's arguments against it, Parliament refused to renew it. The hope expressed by Milton in his *Areopagitica* was thus at last fulfilled, and the press was given liberty to print what it pleased.

In 1695, therefore, the Age of Journalism began. Newspapers now sprang up like mushrooms. The new middle-class reading public greedily consumed all sorts of news and scandal,<sup>1</sup> showing a "voracious appetite but no taste," says Addison (*Spectator*, Aug. 8, 1712). In order to teach these people better taste and better morals, two great essayists, Steele and Addison, now began to write.

**113. WHIGS AND TORIES.** In 1689 the Stuarts, who had tried to govern absolutely, *i.e.*, without a parliament, were driven out of the country, and the Protestant William of Orange became King.

Up to the year 1695, the government of the day had been able to crush or control all printed criticism of its actions by means of the censorship. With the Revolution, however, the party system of government was introduced, and the press was unmuzzled. Ministers now hit upon the new idea of controlling literary men by means of discreet bribery or, as the great Minister Walpole cynically put it, by the 'System of Rewards and Punishments'.

---

<sup>1</sup> From the poor street in London where some of them lived, the hack writers of the day who wrote for this public were henceforth known collectively as *Grub Street*, this quarter being the literary slums of London, 'a quarter much inhabited,' says Dr. Johnson in his famous Dictionary, smiling at himself, 'by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems' (temporary = ephemeral).



In other words, if a clever writer supported the party, either before or after it took office, the party guaranteed him a good fat appointment; if he opposed them, they did their best to starve and ruin him. This system of party government had a momentous effect on literature throughout the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. All men of letters had to attach themselves to one party or the other, and to write either for the Whigs or the Tories. Defoe was the first great man of letters to feel the painfulness of this dilemma. Swift, a few years later, fared little better. In early days a writer had to depend on some aristocratic patron (*cf.* the dedications of Shakespeare's poems); in the eighteenth century the aristocrat was usually a member of one of the two political parties. The writer did not become an independent professional man until the later eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson sounded the death-knell of the old system of patronage in a letter written to Lord Chesterfield in 1755 rejecting an offer of assistance.

**The main difference between Whigs and Tories** lay in their attitude towards: (1) The idea of Monarchy; (2) The idea of a State Church.

The Whigs were the party that made the Revolution. They vehemently denied what the Pope called '*the Right Divine of Kings to govern wrong.*' They looked upon the King as little more than a State official, amenable like anybody else to the law and bound to act through Ministers appointed by Parliament. They were either Nonconformists, or, if members of the Church of England, tolerant towards Nonconformists. They did not believe in absolute power either in Church or State. The Whigs were strongest in the towns and included nobles as well as commoners in their ranks.

The Tories were strongest in the country. Thus arose the '*town versus country*' cry of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Tories believed in a State Church of England and were intolerant towards Dissenters. They laid great stress on the hereditary rights of the Sovereign and the duty of non-resistance to him, no matter what he did. Their constitutional theory of the Divine Right of Kings as expressed in Filmer's *Patriarcha* (published 1679) was answered and denied by the Whig philosopher Locke (§ 105).

**114. DANIEL DEFOE** (1659-1731) was the first notable writer under this new system. This remarkable man spent his life agitating for the new ideas introduced by the Revolution: democracy, toleration, political and social enlightenment. He did very useful work as a pioneer of reform at a time when wealth was spreading faster than culture could keep up with it.



Defoe was a Londoner, the son of a butcher named Foe. His zeal for reform and his talent for what we should now call journalism, turned him into one of the ablest pamphleteers of his day, but often got him into hot water.

For publishing a tract called *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*, ironically advising the Government to crush Dissenters by hanging or banishing them, he had to stand in the pillory, besides being fined and sentenced to seven years imprisonment. Pope refers to this cruel experience in the line 'Earless on high stands unabashed Defoe.' This is the only time Pope deigns to mention the humble hack who wrote *Robinson Crusoe*.

In 1704 while still in gaol Defoe started *The Review*, the first regular periodical of its kind in England. One part of it, called *Advice from the Scandalous Club*, anticipated the work of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Defoe also advocated Free Trade and the Union of Scotland and England. He was in fact a pioneer of reform in all directions.

The great work by which his name has become a household word throughout the whole world is, however, a story of adventure: *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York* (1719). There are hundreds of translations of this book as well as all sorts of imitations, called *Robinsonades*.

**Robinson Crusoe** was written when its author was 59. In a way it is the story of Defoe's own life; he, too, had been shipwrecked and ruined (by party hate), and saved only by his own indomitable courage and resourcefulness. He, too, like his hero, had had to begin life afresh single-handed after a period of solitude (imprisonment and social boycott). *Robinson Crusoe* has been called the romance of solitude (see § 270).

Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* and his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* are also works of fiction. Like *Robinson Crusoe* they are written so realistically that they were for a long time regarded by innocent readers as authentic historical accounts.

Defoe has been called the world's best liar, because he makes his inventions sound so convincing, his 'fiction' sound like 'fact'. Half the secret lies in the transparent simplicity and naturalness of his prose.

Among Defoe's other prose stories, *Captain Singleton* and *Moll Flanders* are important forerunners of the real novel of character. The latter is a picaresque novel, *i.e.*, a rogue novel or a novel of low life (cf. § 82).

Defoe wrote or rather preached voluminously on all sorts of subjects. He is even simpler than Swift, the great writer who followed him, but he is inferior to Swift in concentration of aim and energy.

Defoe's self-imposed work as a public educator was continued by the essayists Steele and Addison.

**115. THE ESSAYISTS** carried on the work started by Defoe for the social education of the new England. **Richard Steele** (1672-1729), following the hint given in Defoe's *Review*, founded and edited a periodical called *The Tatler* (1709). In No. 18, **Joseph Addison** (1672-1719), Steele's bosom friend, joined the paper, and gradually politics dropped out.

In Jan. 1711, *The Tatler*, which had been a tri-weekly, came to an end, only to be revived as a daily under the name of *The Spectator*. This paper lasted from March 1, 1711 till Dec. 6, 1712. The year's issue has since then been reprinted hundreds of times, and is now an English classic. In these two papers, Steele and Addison have made their names immortal, not only as the founders of the critical essay, but as humorists and as moral and social reformers. "*The general purpose of this paper,*" said Steele, introducing the *Tatler*, "*is to expose the false arts of life, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behaviour.*" "*The great and only end of these my speculations,*" says Addison in the *Spectator*, "*is to banish vice and ignorance out of Great Britain.*"

*The Spectator's* influence in England was considerable. It set the new didactic tone for 18<sup>th</sup> century literature, and, what is more, its genial character-sketches led directly to the English novel of character, as developed by Richardson.

But Addison and Steele knew better than to try to convert people by moralising or by storming at vice. They adopted other tactics. They held vice up to ridicule and laughed it out of countenance with good-humoured banter. They made people see the **beauty of virtue and good manners** by holding up good types of gentlemanly, if sometimes rather eccentric, Englishmen, e.g., such a fine old specimen of a country gentleman as Sir Roger de Coverley. This gentle 'spectator' of English life introduces a famous gallery of 'characters': Captain Sentry, the old soldier; Sir Andrew Freeport, the merchant; Will Honeycomb, the elderly man of fashion; the Templar,<sup>1</sup> with his good taste and erudition. The 'character' had been launched by such writers as Earle (§ 100) and was soon to find a home in the novel.

---

<sup>1</sup> A Templar is a lawyer with chambers in the "Temple," the Inns of Court built in the heart of London on the site of the residence of the old Knights Templars. The latter was a religious militant order formed to protect pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land.

**116. WHAT THE SPECTATOR DID.** *The Spectator* was directly effective in teaching decorous behaviour to the *nouveau riche* middle class and the country squires who had hitherto had little experience of the refinements of urban life. It aims more subtly at what Defoe tried to do by direct precept in such a handbook of gentility as his *Complete Gentleman*. It taught restraint and manners by such means as the tolerance with which the individual oddness of its characters is accepted.

With Addison's *Spectator* **literary criticism** begins to be a force in England. Addison undertook to teach the English the meaning and value of their own classics – Milton, the Bible, Shakespeare and the old Ballads – and tried to guide their taste by appealing to the great writers of antiquity. The weakness of his critical method was that he adopted the works of the ancients as fixed standards by which modern works might be judged. It was perhaps feasible to judge Milton by Aristotle's 'rules of epic poetry', but it was indeed absurd to judge the old ballads by an appeal to Horace. Addison's ideal, was, however, a very noble one. He wanted to popularize learning and *to bring it out of the seclusion of Universities to Clubs, tea-tables and coffee-houses*.

He appealed to the middle classes of the nation and won their hearts by his humour, his geniality, his good taste and perfect good manners. Style he taught by his own example. Addison showed his readers that it was possible 'to be decent without being dull, to be pious without being a sour ascetic, to be chivalrous without being sentimental.' This is still the English notion of what a 'gentleman' is.

**117. ADDISON IN EUROPE.** *The Spectator* was immediately imitated all over Europe, and the good Sir Roger de Coverley helped to civilize the world. In Germany alone, between 1714 and 1800, more than 500 such didactic journals (called in German *moralische Zeitschriften*) were founded, some of them giving literal translations of Steele and Addison. These two English essayists first came into Germany *via* Paris in a French dress. In Frederick the Great's library at Sans Souci the tourist is now shown the French translations of Addison which the Great King discussed with Voltaire. Later on (1739 to 1743) Frau Gottsched supplied readers with a full translation of the *Spectator*. From Zürich to Hamburg, Addison's name was as well known as Gottsched's or Bodmer's. His writings came as a revelation to Germany where people were sick and tired of mere formal literature. Addison's influence is also seen in the fables of Hagedorn and of Gellert

and in the satires of Rabener. In Germany, as in England, the periodical essay paved the way for the novel of manners.

**118. ALEXANDER POPE**, the poet of polish and correctness,<sup>1</sup> (1688-1744), succeeded Dryden as the leader of literary fashion. Pope carried the heroic couplet to perfection, and in the most satirical age there has ever been, became the acknowledged master of satirical verse. The couplet was a dreaded weapon in his hands, and not even his intimate friends were safe from the darts and javelins of his wit.

Pope was the son of a retired linen-merchant. His youth was spent at his father's house near Windsor. Being a Catholic and living before the days of Catholic emancipation, he was excluded from the great public schools and the Universities. From a child he was weakly and deformed, and his education desultory. But he was a most precocious lad and began to write verses when very young. When twelve years old, he was taken to Will's coffee-house to a literary gathering presided over by the gray-haired Dryden, the master whom he even then adored.

After his father's death Pope took a house at Twickenham on the Thames. Here in the heyday of his fame this sickly little man with the great piercing eyes held his court, and received visits and homage from ministers of state, men of letters, wits, poets and the beauties of the day.

Pope wrote 1. Translations; 2. Argumentative Verse; 3. Satires.

1. He began as an imitator of the poet Virgil. As a youth of sixteen he wrote *Pastorals* and translated *Statius his Thebais*<sup>2</sup>. Later on, although never a good Greek scholar, he translated *Homer's Iliad* into rhyming couplets. 'Homer in a periwig,' a modern critic calls it. To Dr. Johnson and the critics of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it seemed a very fine performance; and so it was in its way, for it did what it tried to do: it made Homer a contemporary poet, it assimilated him into the eighteenth century and so enriched that century. It brought Pope both fame and wealth.

2. Pope excelled in what in those days was held to be the chief function of poetry, the art of reasoning in verse. His two didactic poems, *The Essay on Criticism*, composed when he

<sup>1</sup> In his *Epistle to Augustus* he acknowledges that he had sat at the feet of the French to learn these virtues.

<sup>2</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> c. writers took the **genitive 's** to be a short form of 'his'.

was only twenty, and *The Essay on Man* (1733) are good examples of this kind of poetry. The former states the rules a poet must observe in his art, and especially recommends the French as models. Though it contains hardly an original thought, it fascinates with its ease and flow and the brilliance of its epigrams. The same is true of **The Essay on Man**, a poem which was for a long time taken seriously as versified philosophy. But, as Lessing pointed out to Pope's admirers at the court of Frederick the Great, Pope is a superficial thinker and a mere dabbler in philosophy. In four parts or "Epistles," *The Essay on Man* discusses the old question whether the existence of evil in the world can be reconciled with the belief in a loving Creator. It reaffirms the humanistic belief, so characteristic of the centuries since the Renaissance and Reformation, in man's powers – in spite of the satire. *Know then thyself, presume not God to scan, / The proper study of mankind is man.*

3. Pope's most celebrated satire is *The Dunciad*<sup>1</sup>. The author pretends that the Throne of Dullness is vacant and proposes one after another of his literary enemies for the honour of occupying it. Theobald (§ 67), whose sole offence was that he had published a better edition of Shakespeare than that issued by Pope himself, was attacked in this poem and his reputation ruined for a century and a half. In *The Dunciad* and in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope shows what a master he is of all the resources of ridicule and invective. No one could be so polite and at the same time so contemptuous and unjust as he. His *Imitations of Horace*, bitter attacks on two of his former friends, show, too, how ungenerous he can be.

**The Rape of the Lock** is a charming and perfect piece of eighteenth-century craftsmanship. It is Pope's most pleasing poem (*cf.* § 268).

**119. POPE'S REPUTATION.** Dr. Johnson once exclaimed: "If Pope is not a poet, where is poetry to be found?" On the other hand the romantic poets of the nineteenth century on the whole disliked his work and reacted strongly from it. There were good reasons for their reaction: 1. the pendulum had swung from reason to the emotions; 2. the language of poetry needed renovation, as it always does from time to time, and to the Romantics Pope and his 'poetic diction' were out of date; 3. the couplet had outlived its usefulness.

---

<sup>1</sup>*Cf.* *Iliad* = *Ilias poiesis*, the poem of Troy; hence, by analogy, *Dunciad* = the poem of the dunces or blockheads.

In the twentieth century Pope has been to some extent reinstated. 1. We feel that the intellect as well as the emotions has a place in poetry, and though we prefer the kind of poetry in which both are present, as it is in Donne, we do not hold that the absence of feeling in Pope is worse than the absence of thought in some of the Romantics. 2. It is true that we do not like Pope's denotative use of words: to him they are mathematical symbols which always have one clear meaning and one only. This is a loss in poetry, which has the right to use words connotatively. The Romantics did not improve on Pope in this respect. 3. We can again appreciate Pope's brilliant handling of the couplet. He demonstrates his perfect mastery of this form in these lines from *An Essay on Criticism*:

*"True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,  
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.  
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,  
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.  
Soft is the strain when zephyr gently blows,  
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;  
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,  
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar."*

In Germany, as in England, Pope's polished epigrammatic style won him many admirers. Hagedorn is the best known of them. After Hagedorn the heroic couplet became a recognized form of German verse. Just as Pope excelled in satiric verse, so his friend Dean Swift excelled in satiric prose.

**120. JONATHAN SWIFT** (1667-1745) stands head and shoulders above all the other prose writers of the Augustan Age both in intellectual power and in his command of English prose style – "the use of the right words in the right place."

Although born and educated in Dublin, Swift was of English descent. As a young man, fresh from the University, he became private secretary to Sir William Temple, a retired statesman and a friend of William III. For eleven years he served Temple in hopes of a pre-ferment that never came. It was during this period that he wrote the two prose satires that first revealed his power as a writer and made him so feared and famous: **The Battle of the Books** and **The Tale of a Tub**.

*The Battle of the Books* describes, in rococo prose, a mock Homeric battle. The classical and the modern books in a library descend from their shelves and fight a pitched



battle for the possession of the top of Parnassus. Swift, to please his patron, let the moderns get the worst of it. Homer "slays Sam Wesley with a kick from his horse's heel." Virgil overcomes Dryden, and Pindar with his sword cleaves "that dog Cowley" in twain at a blow.

*The Tale of a Tub* is a much fiercer satire. It tells how three brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack (*i.e.*, the Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist forms of Christianity, 'Jack' standing for both John Calvin and John Knox) quarrel with each other about the interpretation of their Father's will (*i.e.*, the Bible).

In the eyes of many people this satire seemed to hold *all* religion and all churches up to ridicule.

On Temple's death, Swift nevertheless entered the Anglican Church. To his chagrin he was appointed vicar to a dull village in the depths of Ireland.

He was, however, far too ambitious a man to bury his genius in an Irish bog, so he spent a great deal of his time in London, having determined to make use of the party system of Government to push his way. He first wrote on the side of the Whigs; but as the Whigs neglected him, he changed sides. The Tories, after a while, made him Dean of Dublin Cathedral. It was a paltry reward, Swift thought; for he had hoped for a bishopric. This was the period of his great power as a pamphleteer. It lasted till the accession of George I (1714). In that year the Tories fell and Swift's hope of advancement were once for all dashed to the ground.

He retired to Ireland for good, and took up the cause of the Irish. In his *Letters of M. B., Drapier* (= draper), known as *Drapier's Letters*, he voiced the grievances of Ireland against the English government, and almost fanned the popular discontent into rebellion. The one great work by which Swift lives in literature is **Gulliver's Travels** (§ 269). It was written during his last, or Irish, period. This book is a fierce satire on English life and the 'unreasonableness' of the 'Age of Reason'. Yet many read it with delight as a mere story of strange voyages in imaginary lands, sharing the curiosity which good Captain Lemuel Gulliver felt when he first landed in Brobdingnag and saw corn as high as the oaks of the New Forest, women wearing thimbles as large as buckets and wrens hopping about that were as large as turkeys! When the Queen of the country bade Gulliver goodbye she took from her little finger a golden ring which she slipped over his head for him to wear as a collar! On another journey, this time to the Land of the Houyhnhnms ['hwinimz], Gulliver found a race of philosophic horses possessing a much profounder reverence for reason and justice than he had met with among human beings.

Published Oct. 28, 1726, the book scored an immediate success. Although written “not to divert the world but rather to vex it,” Swift’s satire on the civilization of his day, in spite of its savageness and coarseness, did much good, for it made England re-examine the foundations of its religious and social institutions.

Swift was never married; his friendship for Esther Johnson prompted him to write his *Journal to Stella*. In these letters, written in what he called his “little language”, we see the tender side of this fierce despiser of mankind.

In his later days Swift’s mind completely gave way. He had foreseen the madness in which he was to end his days.

**121. SAMUEL JOHNSON** (1709-1784). Dr. Johnson owes his present fame rather to what he said than to what he wrote. His table-talk inspired the best biography there is in English literature – **James Boswell’s** (1740-1795) *Life of Johnson* (1791). In his own day he was called the ‘Dictator’ and Carlyle gives him a place among the *Heroes* or Representative Men of Europe.

Among the members of the Club over which he presided were Gibbon (the historian), Garrick (the actor), Goldsmith, Sheridan, Sir Joshua Reynolds (the great artist who painted the famous picture of Johnson now in the National Gallery in London), and Hogarth.

Johnson was the son of a Lichfield bookseller. After leaving Oxford he tried being a schoolmaster but soon went to London (1737) accompanied by David Garrick, the future actor, to try his fortune at literature.

His early life in London as a Grub Street hack was full of privations. In his famous *Letter to Lord Chesterfield* he bitterly refers to those days of poverty, hunger and humiliation. Two satires that he wrote at that time “in imitation of Juvenal”, reflect his gloominess of spirit. In the one, *London*, he complains of the neglect of letters there; in the other, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, he tries to prove from the lives of such men as Wolsey, Galileo, Laud and others that earthly ambition is a mere empty dream.

In prose he expressed similar ideas in a “philosophic tale” called *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. The prince, after travelling through the world, returns to the seclusion of his Abyssinian valley, convinced of the vanity of earthly pleasures and determined to renounce them all.



Johnson founded two periodicals, *The Rambler* and *The Idler*. In these papers he often wrote in a much less ponderous style than he had done in *Rasselas*. This heavy Latin style of his, with its long words and its carefully balanced sentences, is as different as possible from the racy, forcible English which his fervent admirer Boswell makes him use in the *Life*. How different the two styles were, is best shown by a specimen. He once said of a play: "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet." But in writing the sentence down he quite spoilt it by changing it into: "It has not sufficient vitality to preserve it from putrefaction."

His last work, **The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets**, is a classic in English literary criticism, in spite of the political prejudice which at times colours its judgments: he belittles Milton's work, for instance, partly because Milton was a republican. Normally he combines respect for the neo-classical rules with sound common sense. He shows highly accurate perception in his terse descriptions of different kinds of poetry. Of the metaphysical poets he says aptly: "their wit is a discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike". He compares Dryden and Pope thus: "Pope never fails expectation, Dryden often surpasses it." Sometimes he sets aside the neo-classical rules: in his Preface to his edition of Shakespeare he shows great common sense in supporting Shakespeare's disregard of the unities.

For a hundred years after his death, however, the British public knew Johnson chiefly as the compiler of the great *Dictionary*. He was known as 'the great lexicographer' (cf. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*).

In manner Johnson was gruff and dictatorial. Even his devoted Scottish admirer Boswell sometimes came in for his abuse. "That fellow Boswell," Johnson grunted, "missed his only chance of immortality by not being alive when the *Dunciad* was written." The Doctor's huge face, scarred with small-pox, his big grey wig, his dirty hands, his rolling gait and puffing way of talking made the poet Gray call him "Ursa Major", the Great Bear. But, as Goldsmith pointed out, there was nothing of the bear about Johnson but his skin. He had a profound, sane and powerful mind, a good and generous heart and a genius for conversation. These qualities and his fine scholarship made him the leading man of letters of his age.

**122. ENGLISH DICTIONARIES.** A dictionary is a book explaining the words and phrases (L. *dictiones*) of a language.



In the age of Anne, when the English language had reached maturity, people dreamed of having a standard dictionary which should fix for ever – as if that were possible! – the correct usage of words. It fell to Dr. Johnson, ‘the Great Lexicographer’, to attempt this immense task.

\*

### SUMMARY OF XIII. THE AUGUSTAN AGE

In 1695 the Licensing Act expired and Journalism began.

**Daniel Defoe** (1659-1731) was the first great journalist. Although the press was nominally “free”, the Tory government found an excuse for putting him in jail for writing against them in favour of religious toleration (1702). He was only released when the Whigs came into office in 1704. A ruined man, he had to start life afresh.

He was nearly sixty when he wrote his first and greatest work of fiction, *Robinson Crusoe*, which is in some respects an allegory of his own life. Part I gives Robinson’s adventures on a lonely island in the Caribbean Sea. This wonderful romance of adventure was soon read with delight by the whole world.

The other stories Defoe wrote form one of the stages by which the Novel of Adventure developed into the Novel of Character.

The great 18<sup>th</sup> century essayists **Addison** and **Steele** carried on the work started by Defoe for the social refinement of England.

Their first paper, the *Tatler*, gave way in 1711 to the *Spectator*. By its admirable essays the *Spectator* taught the middle class how to behave in a gentlemanly way. Addison was imitated all over Europe, and especially in Germany, where between 1714 and 1800 no fewer than 500 such didactic periodicals as the *Spectator* were established. With its *Essays on Manners*, the *Spectator* paved the way for the *Novel of Manners*.

Two famous satirists, **Pope** (1688-1744) and **Swift** (1667-1745), represent this age of criticism and satire, often called the **Augustan Age** on account of its similarity to the time of Augustus Caesar, the classical period of Latin literature.

**Alexander Pope** gave to the heroic couplet the polish of French verse. It was the age of reasoning in verse. From the philosopher’s standpoint, the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Essay on Man* are both superficial poems, but their brilliant epigrammatic and polished style makes them English classics. In his mock heroic poem, *The Rape of the Lock*,



Pope's art reached its highest point. It is the story of a battle between the ladies and gentlemen of Queen Anne's court to regain a curl cut by a gentleman from a court beauty's head, and is told with exquisite wit and fancy. Pope's longest satire is the *Dunciad*, in which he unjustly attacked Theobald, the first great Shakespeare editor. Pope's services to literature consisted in giving to poetry correctness and polish of diction and metre. He did almost no work showing creative imagination.

Pope's Irish friend, **Dean Swift**, was one of the great pamphleteers of his age. He was a clergyman and hoped, as a reward for his political writings, to get a bishopric. But his friends saw that his violent contempt for mankind made him unsuitable for such a post. His grim and terrible humour had no love or laughter in it.

After retiring to Dublin on the accession of George I, he wrote his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). This is a fascinating story of adventure. Underlying it, however, there is deep and fierce satire.

Swift died mad. He was one of the most powerful minds and one of the most unhappy men of his age.

The dogmatic and learned **Dr. Johnson** (1709-1784) was the central man of letters of the time, and the last thirty years of his life are often called the 'Age of Johnson'.

Johnson is more famous for his tabletalk as reported by Boswell in the well-known biography (§ 121) than for the books he wrote. His other monument is his great *Dictionary of the English Language*.



## XIV. THE RISE OF THE NOVEL.

**123. THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY NOVEL.** The greatest literary achievement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the development of the novel.

A novel, in the modern sense, is a fictitious prose story usually modelled after real life. Unlike the plot of the short story (*G. die Novelle*; Italian, *la novella*), which is simple and aims at one single vivid effect, the plot of the novel is complex.

We have already seen some of the preparatory stages in the evolution of the novel – the Arcadian story, the picaresque story, the allegorical story of adventure (*Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver*), the ‘character’ sketch, and Addison’s sketches of manners (*Sir Roger de Coverley*). We now come to the *novel of manners* and the *novel of adventure*.

The first man in European literature to write a novel in the modern sense of the word was **Samuel Richardson**.

**124. RICHARDSON** (1689-1761) was the son of a North Country carpenter. He had but little schooling and when still a lad left his Derbyshire village and went up to London to make his fortune. He worked as a printer, prospered, and finally, like Dick Whittington in the fairy story, married his master’s daughter and set up in business for himself.

This good-natured, fat little printer was over fifty when a publisher, having heard of his hobby of corresponding with young ladies, asked him to compose a book of model letters of affection. Out of this modest suggestion arose *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded: A Series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Young Damsel to Her Parents*. London 1741. Anon.

*Pamela* was the first European Novel of Manners to deal with the life of the middle and lower classes. The heroine of the book, Pamela Andrews, is merely a pretty servant-maid. She resists all temptations to do wrong, and finally marries and reforms the young squire who had tempted her.

In 1748, Richardson published his second book, **Clarissa**, in seven volumes. It, too, was a love-story in the form of a Letter Novel. This is his masterpiece, and ‘upon it,’ as Sir Walter Scott says, ‘Richardson’s fame as an English classic will rest for ever’. *Clarissa* is a sort of companion-piece to *Pamela*, and might be called ‘Virtue Punished.’ Clarissa Harlowe, the heroine, wishes to escape marriage with the odious Mr. Solmes, the choice



of her parents. At last, in desperation, she innocently places herself under the protection of Robert Lovelace,<sup>1</sup> only to be cruelly persecuted and betrayed by him. Misunderstood, slandered and cast off by parents and friends alike, poor Clarissa finally dies of a broken heart in a London lodging-house.

Richardson's third work, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, is a tedious didactic novel in seven volumes. Its pompous hero was meant, in his wooing of Miss Byron, to represent the beau-ideal of a gentleman. Clementina della Porretta is one of the characters in it (§ 125).

In these books Richardson made the great discovery that readers were deeply interested in the minute analysis of their own feelings and emotions. His *novels of sentimental analysis* delighted people by giving not only a picture of life as it is, but at the same time an ideal of life as it should be.

All Europe wept over his novels. Pilgrims even from far-away Germany came to London to kiss the great man's inkhorn, and in England people regarded him as one of the greatest moral teachers of his age.

But Richardson's competence as a moral teacher was questioned even in his own day. He praises virtue, not as something noble in itself, but as a form of prudence, and seems to teach that goodness is desirable because it pays best. His defects and prolixity and sentimentality, but his merits, especially in his one great classic novel *Clarissa*, are undeniable, – insight into character, vivid situations, pitiless analysis of human motives, and logical sequence of minor incident.

**125. RICHARDSON'S INFLUENCE IN EUROPE.** All Richardson's novels are written in the form of a series of Letters, supposed to be exchanged by the principal characters. This form he defends in the preface to *Sir Charles Grandison*. It was adopted from him by the French philosopher-novelist Rousseau, and further perfected by the great German poet Goethe in "*Die Leiden des jungen Werther*" (1774); in Goethe's book, however, to avoid diffuseness, all the letters are written by one and the same person.

The German novelist Wieland, in his early sentimental (or 'seraphic') period, was such an admirer of Richardson that he wrote a tragedy *Clementina von Porretta* on a theme taken straight from *Grandison*. Later on, before writing *Don Sylvio*, Wieland went over to

---

<sup>1</sup> Lovelace is the type developed in literature under the names of 'the rake,' 'the gay Lothario,' 'Don Juan' and 'Don Giovanni.'

the opposite camp, having in the meantime come under the anti-sentimental influence of *Tom Jones*.

Richardson influenced nearly all the writers of the age of Frederick the Great. In Bodmeer, the translator of Milton, he had a fervent admirer. Gellert, the author of Germany's first sentimental Novel of Manners dealing with middle-class life, *Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G.*, translated *Pamela*, and is said to have wept so copiously over *Clarissa* that 'handkerchief, desk and book were saturated with his tears.' The famous poet Klopstock wrote an *Ode to Clarissa* (1751). Even Lessing thought that men could go to no better source than *Pamela* and *Clarissa* to learn human charity. In the verbose dialogue and in the motives of Lessing's *Miss Sarah Sampson*, the first German tragedy of middle-class life, Richardson's influence is evident. Goethe, too, came under the spell and in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* comments on Richardson's useful educative influence on the Germany of his youth.

In France the Abbé Prevost translated Richardson into French and Diderot urged all persons of taste to read this great Englishman's works 'sans cesse'. Richardson thus had a very important influence on the French novel.

**126. THE DOMESTIC TRAGEDY** and the German *bürgerliche Tragödie*. In the later 17<sup>th</sup> century English writers had without demur accepted the French aristocratic convention that declared that the heroes and heroines of tragedy must necessarily be persons of royal or noble birth (§ 69 note).

While excluding the middle and lower classes from tragedy, this convention had, however, permitted persons of humble birth to be used in comedy. The new class consciousness that awoke in England with the democratic revolution was bound sooner or later to sweep away such a narrow view of tragedy. In 1731 there was staged at the Drury Lane Theatre a play called *The London Merchant, or The Tragical History of George Barnwell*, which both in form and content was a new departure. It was a sentimental "domestic drama", written by George Lillo, a stagestruck London jeweller who had taken to writing plays. In *The Tragical History of George Barnwell* Lillo deals with the moral downfall of a person of the lower middle class, a mere city apprentice, who, through getting into bad company, becomes a thief and a murderer and ends his career on the gallows. This 'Newgate tragedy', as scoffers called it, was in prose. In tendency didactic, it was meant to serve as a warning to young men of the middle classes, and for half a

century afterwards it was the custom of London employers to send their apprentices once a year at least to see the play performed. It was, however, not the prose drama, as in Germany, but the novel that was destined to voice the democratic spirit in England, and Lillo's name would long since have been forgotten had not his domestic tragedy prompted Lessing to imitate it and thus inaugurate in Germany an important dramatic movement which in the course of the next hundred years was to produce a long line of similar tragedies. Kotzebue's melodramas (*Rührstücke*), Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* (1772) and Schiller's *Cabale und Liebe* (1783) may be mentioned as examples.

It is interesting, too, to note that Lillo came into Germany by way of Hamburg, this great seaport having been 'the 18<sup>th</sup> century gateway for the entrance of all things English.'

In France, too, Lillo found an ardent champion in the philosopher Diderot, who had been living in exile in London at the time when *The London Merchant* was first performed. This French writer's arguments confirmed Lessing in his desire to use the theatre as a means of stimulating the German middle classes in their struggle against the egoism and narrow particularism of the numerous petty princes who then ruled Germany. It thus came about that the democratic drama of an obscure London jeweller unexpectedly contributed to the development of Lessing's plan for a national German drama, and to the furthering of those ideals of national unity which were ultimately to be voiced by Bismarck.

**127. HENRY FIELDING** (1707-1754). Among the few people who refused to applaud *Pamela* was a young journalist and playwright named Fielding.

He was the son of a general in the army. Having been rather a spendthrift, and having no other alternative, he took to literature and playwriting for a living. Between 1728 and 1737 he produced no fewer than twenty-three comedies, including a translation of Molière, — all work that is now forgotten. But his comedy-writing schooled him in the importance of giving unity to his plots, and was a most useful training for him as a novelist.

Later on he became a stipendiary magistrate (= *Amtsrichter*) and had many opportunities for observing crime and the life in prisons. During this period he wrote his chief novels.

Fielding became a novelist almost by chance, moved only by a wish to ridicule the sham morality of *Pamela*. Such was the origin of his first novel, *The Adventures of Joseph*

*Andrews*, written in the manner of Cervantes. Joseph Andrews was meant to be a parody on Pamela Andrews (§ 124). But Fielding soon forgot his burlesque intention and the novel developed into a humorous and satirical picture of 18<sup>th</sup> century life.

*Joseph Andrews* was followed by *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, a mock heroic account of the life and death of a notorious highwayman. Written before *Joseph Andrews*, this book is a satire on the popularity of criminals; it is one of the best examples there are of sustained irony. In technique it goes back to quite an old-fashioned form of story-writing.

Fielding's greatest work is **Tom Jones** (1749), a masterpiece both in plot-construction and in character-drawing. In his preface he calls it a "comic epic in prose."

In his last novel, *Amelia*, Fielding incidentally draws pictures of the terrible condition of the prisons of his day. But although he uses the novel now and again to criticize public institutions and to suggest reform, his chief aim is to amuse, not to teach. He is the first great humorist and the first great realist among the English novelists. Richardson, on the other hand, is not a humorist but a didactic sentimentalist. He used the novel to teach what he thought was right feeling. Fielding made fun of him.

It is fortunate that the English novel had from the very beginning a man like Fielding as a pattern and a model. His high spirits, his good heart, his wide culture, his knowledge of the world, his sincerity and manliness, are clear in everything he wrote. Though his work contains much coarseness, its morality is nevertheless sound and wholesome.

**128. TOBIAS SMOLLETT** (1721-1771) was, like Fielding, a satirical humorist. As a young man he was surgeon's mate on a British man-of-war, and saw service with the fleet in the West Indies. The nautical experiences gained on this voyage he used with good effect in **Roderick Random** (1748). *Roderick Random* is the first real novel of the sea. Written on the model of Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, it described life at sea so realistically that, while delighting people with its humour, it raised a storm of indignation against the Admiralty and eventually led to sweeping reforms in the navy.

In 1750 Smollett took his degree in medicine, intending to resume practice, but the public showed more taste for his novels than for his physic, and henceforth he lived chiefly by his pen, doing all sorts of literary hack-work to earn a living.



His other novels are *Peregrine Pickle*, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, *Sir Lancelot Greaves*, a travesty of *Don Quixote*, and **Humphrey Clinker**, his masterpiece. Thackeray in his *Eighteenth Century Humorists* says that *Humphrey Clinker* is the most laughable story that has ever been written. The book describes the tour of a comical Welsh family through Great Britain.

Unlike Fielding, Smollett unfortunately paid little heed to plot construction. He had not had Fielding's training in writing for the stage. The incidents in his books are simply a string of adventures happening to the same person. But his humour, his racy style and his kind-heartedness made amends for much.

Like Dickens a century later, Smollett was the creator of many most absurd and eccentric characters. His gallery of eccentrics has furnished novelists ever since with a store of models and suggestions for such figures.

**129. LAURENCE STERNE** (1713-1768) is the third of the group of English novelists who stand under Cervantes' influence. Sterne showed that the novel could be written without plot: in construction **Tristram Shandy** is merely whimsical.

Sterne was born in Clonmel Barracks, in Ireland. He was the son of a poor captain in a marching regiment. After being educated at the expense of his kind uncle, Dr. Sterne, he entered Holy Orders and, in spite of his unclerical disposition, became Prebendary of York Minster. (This partly explains why he afterwards called himself Mr. Yorick, a name that also suggests the court jester mentioned in *Hamlet*.)

Not till late in life did he take up writing. The first two volumes of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* appeared in 1760, and at once became popular.

Sterne then visited Italy and obtained material for what he at first intended to be another long work, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, by Mr. Yorick* (1768). In the year of its publication he died, in poverty and loneliness, in a London lodging-house.

Sterne is one of the greatest of the English humorists. He has the real novelist's talent for creating character and for giving life to his creations. Mr. Shandy, senior, Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim are deservedly among the best-known personages in English fiction.

The true secret of Sterne's power, however, was his way of blending laughter and pathos. He has been accused of trying to make people over-sentimental and of

encouraging tearfulness and Wertherism. The very contrary is the case. By his peculiar humour, by the gentle irony and laughter that is always peeping out amid his tears he did a great deal to free literature from the depressing sentimentalism of Richardson, Rousseau and their school.

In Germany Sterne's influence is clearly traceable in Wieland and Jean Paul and later on in Heine (*Reisebilder*). In Italy Sterne's best known work was translated by Ugo Foscolo, a poet who wrote under the name of Didimo Chierico.<sup>1</sup>

**130. OLIVER GOLDSMITH** (1728-1774) was the son of a poor Irish clergyman. After taking his B.A. at Dublin, the youth managed to get to Edinburgh and to Leyden on the pretext of studying medicine, but really from a restless desire to see the world. From there he started on foot, with only a guinea in his pocket, on the 'Grand Tour.' He passed through France, Switzerland and Lombardy, precariously supporting himself by flute playing. Penniless and in rags, he somehow or other got back to London (1756), and finally drifted into literature, the one calling that suited him.

In 1764 his poem *The Traveller* came out and made him famous. He became a close friend of Dr. Johnson's and helped him to found the celebrated Literary Club.

Goldsmith was always thrifless. To make both ends meet he had to undertake all sorts of literary hack-work. Merely to earn bread he compiled a series of popular histories – Roman, English, Grecian, and Natural History – books full of 'learned ignorance,' as Gibbon said, but written in beautiful English. They were in use for the next seventy years in the girls' schools pretentiously known as Young Ladies' Academies.

This was Goldsmith the *artisan*. Goldsmith the *artist* we see in three classic works which have made him a force not only in English but in European literature: (1) The beautiful didactic tale **The Vicar of Wakefield**, which so impressed Goethe (*cf.* § 271); (2) **The Deserted Village**, 1770; (3) **She Stoops to Conquer**, a Comedy, 1773. *She Stoops to Conquer* is gay and charming. Like the Comedies of Goldsmith's contemporary, Sheridan, it is often seen on the stage today.

**The Deserted Village**, the best of all his poems, describes the tender memories and grief of the man who, after long years of absence, returns to his native village only to find that its inhabitants have been evicted and driven to emigrate. The poet denounces

---

<sup>1</sup> *Chierico* (= cleric = clerk in holy orders) is evidently an echo of *Yorick* just as *Didimo* is of *Tristram*.

the selfishness of luxury, and prophesies the downfall of a country that reckons its wealth in gold instead of in men.

In its warmth of feeling and in its sympathy with the labouring classes this poem belongs rather to the 19<sup>th</sup> than to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Though written in the fashionable couplet of Pope, the poem is far removed from Pope both in spirit and rhythm. It begins 'not with a theory, but with a sigh.'<sup>1</sup>

As an essay writer, too, Goldsmith is eminent. In the charming essays on English life and manners called *The Chinese Letters of the Citizen of the World*, he pretends to be a simple-minded Oriental *spectator* of English affairs.<sup>2</sup> This gives him a pretext for criticizing his fellow-countrymen. He pretends to wonder at their strange love of horseracing, their cumbrous law procedure, the greediness of English lawyers, the would-be elegance of their impecunious dandies like Beau Tibbs and others.

In his very first book Goldsmith stated his theory of writing. – "Let us," he said, "instead of writing finely, try to write naturally." In his books this great English humorist is a model of the good sense, balance and sanity which were so lacking in his life.

**131. RICHARD SHERIDAN (1751-1816).** In Sheridan and Goldsmith, the eighteenth century comedy of manners flared up once more before it finally went out. Like Burke (§ 146) and Goldsmith, Sheridan was an Irishman. Like Burke, he was, too, a member of Parliament, and won great fame as an orator in the celebrated trial of Warren Hastings, the first governor-general of India.

Sheridan's best known comedies are *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* (1777). *The Rivals* contains the farcical Mrs. Malaprop, whose name has become proverbial as a ludicrous mutilator of English. She tries to pass for an educated lady of fashion by using grand words, but only makes everybody laugh at her blunders. Such mistakes are called Malapropisms.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,  
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain...  
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,  
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!*

<sup>2</sup> In spite of their title these essays are *anti-rococo*. The device of satirizing one's own country in letters alleged to be written by foreign travellers was adopted from Montesquieu, in whose *Lettres persanes* (1721) two fictitious Persians write home and give satirical descriptions of what they have seen in France.

\*

## SUMMARY OF XIV. THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY NOVEL

The first modern novel was *Pamela* (1741) by **Samuel Richardson**. It is written in the form of letters. Richardson was a fat little printer who took to novel writing by mere chance, when he was over fifty. The interest of his books lies not in the description of exciting adventures in foreign seas (as in *Robinson Crusoe*), but in the minute analysis of people's feelings in ordinary life at home. He had a profound knowledge of the heart of women.

His second novel, *Clarissa*, was his best. It tells the tragic story of a beautiful girl whom her parents wish to marry to a man she dislikes. His third book was *Sir Charles Grandison*.

Richardson's novels of middle-class life had through Rousseau and Lessing great influence on Europe.

**Henry Fielding** was the next great novelist. He had already written many comedies. In his spare time as a magistrate he wrote three famous works, *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones* (1749) – just a hundred years before *David Copperfield* – and *Amelia*. In these books the sentimentality of Richardson is replaced by irony and humour. He himself called his books comic epics. *Tom Jones* is the best. His skill in plot construction, his realism, his brilliant character-drawing and his manly good humour made him a model for future novelists.

**Smollett**, a ship's surgeon, and, like Fielding, a humorist, wrote the first novels of the sea that we have in English – *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*, books that compare with those of Capt. Marryat, who came a century later (§ 177). A third book, *Humphrey Clinker*, is Smollett's best. Like all his other works it suffers from looseness of construction.

**Laurence Sterne**, a sentimental humorist, wrote *The Life and Adventures of Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey*. *Tristram Shandy* is peculiar in that it lacks plot.

**Oliver Goldsmith** betrays the influence of all four previous writers in his short novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). In his descriptive poem, *The Deserted Village*, in his comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and in his Essays on English life called *The Citizen of the World*, we see the same kindly humour and the same naturalness of style that have made him such a favourite author.



**Dr. Johnson**, his friend, also wrote a novel. It was a “philosophic tale” called *Rasselas*.

This age, which witnessed the Rise of the Novel, also saw the extinction of the Comedy of Manners, for Goldsmith, who wrote *She Stoops To Conquer*, and Richard Sheridan, who wrote *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* (1777), are the last of the school.



## XV. EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROMANTICISM.

### FROM THOMSON TO BURNS AND BLAKE.

132. During the whole of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the classicist school of Pope was in the ascendant. But even when its power was at its height, writers here and there went back to older English models. 'The strain of living in a mysterious universe' had been removed in the scientific and neo-classical world view. Gradually however, quite a number of people found that the strain of living in the clockwork universe, which had come instead, was even greater. Poets grew more and more impatient of the poetic dogmas of Pope and his school, though not till the very end of the century did the explosion come. It goes by the name of the **Romantic Revolt** or the **Romantic Secession**. The first signs of this revolt are seen (1) in the work of James Thomson, and (2) later on in that of Cowper, and (3) more openly in that of the lyric poet Burns. The real classicist poet had no eye for anything but town life and no interest in anything but the doings of the polite world. The working man and the peasant were beneath his notice, except for picturesque purposes in 'Pastorals.' The first tasks of the secessionists were therefore: (1) The re-discovery of Nature; (2) The re-discovery of humanity by sympathy with the humbler classes; (3) The return to Elizabethan freedom of metre.

133. **JAMES THOMSON** (1700-1748) marks the return of poetry to the description of nature and to the metres of (1) Milton; (2) Spenser. (Milton's *diction* was already in use by Pope and his school.)

Educated in Edinburgh for the Scottish Church, Thomson came up to London at the age of 25, bringing with him the manuscript of a poem on **Winter**. It was published in 1726 and was the first part of the poem called **The Seasons**. In this famous poem he describes the varying beauties of the different periods of the year. The poem broke away from Pope in several respects: (1) It was in blank verse in the style of Milton; (2) It showed sincere feeling for Nature and first-hand observation of natural objects; (3) It was, as Wordsworth said, a work of feeling, not of reason alone. It gives sympathetic sketches of



the life of birds, and sees everywhere in Nature signs of the goodness of God. But there is no trace of the mystic passion for Nature afterwards voiced in Wordsworth. Here and there Thomson introduces rustic pictures of men and women. In *Winter*, for instance, he describes how a shepherd lost his way and perished in the snow, and in *Autumn* he gives the story of Lavinia, which is borrowed from the beautiful Biblical pastoral of *Ruth and Boaz*. This was quite a new thing to do. *The Seasons*, in short, differed, not only in theme but also in metre, milieu and sentiment, from the poetry of the town and the school of Pope.

Between 1740 and 1745 there were published no fewer than three other long poems that are remarkable for their themes and their metre; all three are in blank verse and all three seem to show traces of the influence of *The Seasons*, viz: (1) Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*; (2) Blair's *Grave*; (3) Young's *Night Thoughts*.

Thomson's second poem was *The Castle of Indolence*. It is a return to the stanza and, in a certain degree, to the spirit of Spenser. It took a bold man or at least a Scot to venture to admire and imitate Spenser in those days. The plan of the poem is simple enough. The Castle is in the Enchanted Land of Drowsihead. Inside the Castle the victims of the giant Indolence find themselves hopeless captives. They are at last delivered by the Knight of Industry (or Diligence).

**134. POETIC DICTION.** Thomson and his disciples still continued, however, to use the affected classical style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century which was derived from Milton and which was known in its own day as 'poetic diction.' The chief faults of this style are:

1. Latinism of construction and of vocabulary; 2. The over-frequent use of inversion and personification; 3. The use of affected and learned words where simple words would do better; 4. The trick of far-fetched periphrasis, *i.e.*, describing an object without directly naming it (*e.g.*, *the plummy people* or *the feathered choir* for *the birds*; *a gelid cistern* for *a bath*; *the azure main* or *the deep* for *the sea*; *to adjust the fragrant charge of the short tube that fumes beneath his nose* for *to trim his pipe*); 5. The substitution of special words for common ones as *a swain* for *a young man*; *a nymph* or *the fair* for *a young woman*; *a bard* for *a poet*; *on the dewy meads* or *on the lawn* for *in the fields*. 6. Apostrophe (*cf.* § 274).

In Thomson's other poems and in his masque *Alfred* (which contains the famous National Song *Rule Britannia*) – these faults are still more conspicuous. This so-called "poetic diction" is found in literature as late as Blake. It did not lose its vogue till Wordsworth showed how unnatural it was.

**135. EDWARD YOUNG** (1683-1765) was another of the poets whose works showed which way the wind was blowing. His masterpiece is a philosophic poem called *Night Thoughts* (1744). It is "a poem inspired by the death of his wife," and is in *blank verse*. It deals with the mystery of Life, Death and Immortality in quite a different spirit from that shown by the poetry of the School of Pope. It was easy enough, Young said, for poets who were well off and in receipt of government pensions to profess piety and to acquiesce in the fashionable and selfish class religion of the day. Young presented the religious views of other less privileged and less happy social classes; he thus strikes a note of romantic and democratic revolt.

**His Essay on Original Composition** (1759) is almost more famous than his *Night Thoughts*. It is a kind of pre-Wordsworthian manifesto of Romanticism. It is a protest against the tyranny of rules and traditions in literature; its author thinks that direct observation and deep feeling have always been, and must always be, the sources of all good writing and the real touchstone of genius. The *Essay* also contains a noble eulogy of Shakespeare. It was read in Germany and gave a great stimulus to the *Sturm und Drang* movement, as the earliest phase of the Romantic Movement was called in that country.

Young's *Night Thoughts* also had great influence on German writers, especially on poets like Klopstock and Bodmer. It paved the way for Wertherism. Lessing and Herder tried by means of satire to check the morbid imitation of Young. The Italian poet Ugo Foscolo, the author of *I Sepolcri* (1806), at first admired, but finally broke away from Young's theory of resignation to Death, and sang of Death as the 'road to glory,' and of Glory not as leading to the grave (as it does in *Gray's Elegy*) but as the conqueror of Death.

**136. GRAY AND COLLINS.** Two other poets, both great scholars, **Thomas Gray** (1716-1771) and **William Collins** (1721-1759) show in their work, small as it is in bulk, much of the new spirit. Their love of beauty is stronger than their respect for a literary fashion. Gray's poems, *An Ode to Eton College* and *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751),



and his two Pindaric Odes, *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy*, all betray a change of attitude towards poetry, as well as a change of metre and of subject; all these poems treat their subject with *imagination and feeling*.

We should note, too, that from 1759 to 1762 Gray lived in London, studying (in the then recently opened British Museum) Icelandic, Anglo-Saxon and early English poetry.

**Collins**, whose poetry is still smaller in bulk than Gray's, was schooled by the simplicity and purity of Greek poetry. In the few Odes he wrote, he, like Gray, shows real lyrical power. The beautiful *Ode to Evening* is a perfect example of his pure classical simplicity. In a curious way it obtains much of the effect of rhyme without the use of rhyme.

**137. WILLIAM COWPER** (1731-1800) forms a link between Thomson and Wordsworth. He is the chief poet of the transition period that lies between these two poets.

Cowper, the son of a country clergyman, was all his life subject to terrible fits of depression and even of religious insanity. This made it necessary for him to live a retired life. At Olney in Buckinghamshire, tended by the kind and pious Mrs. Unwin, the invalid poet wrote his well-known *Olney Hymns*, and his poem *Table Talk*, criticizing 18<sup>th</sup> century life and literature.

When he was past fifty, a new friendship with a Lady Austen brought him a new era of poetical inspiration. From her he got the story which he turned into *The Diverting History of Mr. John Gilpin*, one of the masterpieces of English humorous poetry. It tells how a worthy London citizen, a draper and captain in the Volunteers, celebrated the anniversary of his wedding day. Forgetting that he cannot ride, John sets out on a horse borrowed from a friend. His steed bolts with him; on his wild career the rider loses his hat and wig, is mistaken for a fugitive highwayman, and is pursued with hue and cry, till at last after many adventures he gets back home breathless and hatless, but safe and sound. The same lady next proposed that he should, as a poetical 'task,' write a poem in the blank verse of his favourite Milton. "On what subject?" asked Cowper. "Oh, any theme will do," replied Lady Austen, "say, *The Sofa*." In this way originated what turned out to be a long, incoherent but very important poem called *The Task*. It describes the poet's walks round Olney, and is remarkable for its loving, minute observation and description of Nature and of quite humble people. The blank verse descriptions of the Gipsy Camp; of Crazy Kate, a poor wanderer on the moors; of the "postman's twanging

horn o'er yonder bridge," and of "grassy lanes close cropp'd by nibbling sheep" show us that we have left the conventional town school of Pope, in subject, in metre, and to some extent in language.

Cowper is a distinguished minor poet. His verses *To Mary Unwin*, and *The Castaway*, pathetically describing his own fate, are among the finest lyrics of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**138. THE GOTHIC NOVEL.** The long French romances of the 17<sup>th</sup> century had depicted only the life of chivalry and dealt with the thoughts of princes. The English novel of manners of the 18<sup>th</sup> century broke clean away from this 'classic' tradition, not out of hostility towards it but out of ignorance of its existence. This new kind of novel delighted the new democracy beyond measure by depicting the life of common folk. The line of development had been democratic.

In 1764, however, an aristocratic reaction against this realistic novel began. **Horace Walpole**, a young nobleman, thought the novel had grown too commonplace. He determined to bring back into it the interesting situations and the high romance of the old stories of chivalry and of the Middle Ages, just as in his castle at Strawberry Hill he tried to restore Gothic architecture. (*Gothic* in 18<sup>th</sup> century literature means 1. barbarous, as belonging to the Dark Ages and as opposed to what is classic; 2. medieval).

Walpole sets forth his doctrine in the preface to the first novel of this new kind, — *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Romance*. It is a tale full of sensational situations and supernatural horrors, — haunted corridors, rooms with trap-doors, clanking chains, portraits that move their eyes and sigh and leave their frames, and statues that bleed. The main characters in it are of aristocratic birth, Nobles and Churchmen. The time is the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Walpole's object was to draw a picture of domestic life in feudal times and to recall the atmosphere of the feudal age.

**139. WALPOLE'S EXAMPLE** was followed by: (1) **Clara Reeve**, who wrote *The Old-English Baron* ('sentimentalized history'); (2) **Mrs. Radcliffe**<sup>1</sup>, the chief of whose widely

---

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, Mrs. Radcliffe stands in a category by herself. She was influenced as much by Richardson and Abbé Prevost as by Walpole and Monk Lewis. Her rationalism forbade anything but a

read novels were *A Sicilian Romance*, *The Italian* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; (3) **Matthew Lewis**, who wrote *The Monk* and is therefore generally called Monk Lewis; (4) **William Beckford**, who wrote *Vathek: An Arabian Tale*. The mere names of these novels are significant. Byron praised *Vathek*, and in the preface of his own drama *Marino Faliero* warmly defends Walpole's Gothic tales as well.

The chief fault of all these Gothic (or Gothistic) novels is that they are too full of ghosts, goblins, skeletons, thunderstorms and devils and that they make too frequent use of the supernatural. It is now usual to laugh at these Tales of Terror, but we should remember the great stimulus they gave to Romanticism by their attempt to create a mysterious and medieval atmosphere. They helped to bring back the mysterious universe of earlier days. Their influence on Sir Walter Scott was a very marked one. Scott imitated the intention, but avoided the mistakes of the Gothic novel. The same influence is seen in the poetry of Keats, e.g., in *St. Agnes' Eve* (§ 172); in Shelley's juvenile poem, *The Wandering Jew*; in E. A. Poe's *Tales* (§ 233); and, above all, in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* (§ 275).

The last Gothic novel of importance was **Emily Brontë's** *Wuthering Heights* (1847). The names of places and persons in this novel are English, but, as Rossetti said, its mood and action are so gruesome that the scene seems to be laid in Hell.

The English Gothic novel also had a great influence on Victor Hugo's theory of the grotesque.

**140. PERCY'S RELIQUES.** This awakening interest in the Middle Ages is also seen in a collection of old Scottish and English ballads published at Edinburgh in 1765 by Bishop Percy. This book, called *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, contained such poems as *Chevy Chase*, *Sir Patrick Spence*, *Edward*, and *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*. It is one of the great generative forces of romantic literature. The naïveté, passion, and the intense dramatic power of these poems stand in bold contrast to the urbane and artificial poetry of Pope. In Germany they created a great sensation and had a deep influence on many German Romanticists such as Bürger and others, and these at a later time in their turn influenced English romantic poets such as Scott and Rossetti. Under the spell of these ballads, Goethe's friend Herder set up his theory that popular or 'communal' poetry is superior to art poetry. In England the spirit of Percy's *Reliques* pervaded ballad poetry from

---

mere toying with the supernatural. Her main purpose was to tell a sentimental tale of adventure, to which the ghost scene was meant to contribute shuddering and tears.



Coleridge and Scott down to Rossetti and Morris. In Germany we find it in Armin and in Brentano's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

*Percy's Reliques* surprised people with the charm of the old folk-poetry and convinced everybody of the importance of saving such unwritten poetry from oblivion before it was too late. The book also led Sir Walter Scott to collect the ballads of the Scottish Border, just as in Germany it led the two Grimms to collect their *Fairy Tales* or *Märchen* (1812). Since those times the Percy Society in England and the Gaelic Society in Ireland have also done much good work in making further collections.

**141. THE RETURN TO THE PAST.** The revival of the study of Shakespeare, Spenser Milton and Chaucer dealt a heavy blow at the school which believed in *correctness*.

Warton's excellent *History of English Poetry*, which came out in 1774, gave a new impetus to the study of Chaucer, Spenser and our older poetry, thus stimulating romanticism.

Just at this period too, two writers, 1. **Chatterton** and 2. **James Macpherson**, imitated the writings of ancient times, and even went so far as to pretend that their work was based on old manuscripts. Their works were branded by their contemporaries as forgeries and the merits of their writings as original works of genius were overlooked.

**Thomas Chatterton** (1752-1770), the son of a church sexton, pretended that he had copied his poems from some old manuscripts that he had discovered in the muniment chest of a church at Bristol. He sent some of these wonderful imitations of medieval English, *The Balade of Charitie* and others, to Horace Walpole. Walpole showed the poems to Gray, who at once pointed out that they were spurious. Walpole, whose patronage Chatterton hoped to gain, quite forgot that he himself had in the preface to *The Castle of Otranto* pretended that he had translated the story from an old Italian MS. The unhappy lad of genius who had written the *Rowley Poems*, and who was starving in a London garret, took his own life.

Chatterton greatly influenced Keats and Rossetti, two famous romantic poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Towards the end of his life Keats turned away from Milton, who had influenced him greatly, and said that he preferred Chatterton because "English must be kept up".



**142. JAMES MACPHERSON** (1736-1796) is famous as the writer of the sentimental prose epics *Fingal* and *Temora*. These compositions were alleged translations of the works of a Gaelic poet of the third century named **Ossian**, the son of Fingal. But Macpherson would never show the Gaelic MS.

The poet Gray, a good Welsh scholar, had already roused popular interest in Celtic stories by his poem *The Bard*,<sup>1</sup> and Macpherson's Ossianic poems were received with applause. Their sentimentality and their rhapsodical language about clouds, waterfalls, storms, ghostly presences and 'battles long ago', had a wide influence on Romanticism. They were instrumental in shifting literature from the atmosphere of the coffee-house, the periwig and the small-sword. They gave a new impulse to the Romantic poets, who were impatient of the conventions of civilization, and they strengthened and chimed in with the new spirit of Wertherism or *poetic despair* then prevalent in Germany, where they had a great vogue. Herder championed the poems as genuine and in his *Volklieder* (1779) published translations of them made by himself in collaboration with the youthful Goethe. They inspired Klopstock to write his Bardic Odes (*Bardische Gesänge*). Goethe's interest in Ossian was, however, a mere passing phase.

Dr. Johnson roundly denounced the poems as forgeries. Most people now agree that the plots were Macpherson's own work, only the general style being Gaelic. With *Ossian* we come to the obscure question of Celtic influence on English.

**143. THE CELTIC INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH LITERATURE.** The Anglo-Saxon conquest had made a clean sweep of the flat country. Very few Celtic words passed into Old English till after the Norman Conquest. But the old language survived in place names and surnames: *mac* = son of (as in Macbeth, Macdonald); *o* = scion of (O'Donnell, O'More). For centuries the Celts continued to hate the Sassenach or Saxon. In Scotland the barriers between the two races were not broken down till 1745.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards intercourse became freer between the Lowlands and the Highlands. The Celts in all parts of the British Isles either remained Catholic or joined Non-conformist sects: they have not become Anglicans.

---

<sup>1</sup>*The Bard*, 1755, which begins 'Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!' was founded on an old but baseless tradition which said that Edward I when he invaded Wales had put to death all the bards that fell into his hands. Irish bard = minstrel.)

<sup>2</sup> cf. p.254.

Through the works of Macpherson, and afterwards through novels and poems of Sir Walter Scott, a number of Highland words passed into English, such as *clan*, *claymore*, *ghillie*, *plaid*, *pibroch*, *reel*, *whisky*. Irish, too, gave *brogue*, *shamrock*, *shillelagh*, *bother* and *slogan*.

In Scottish poetry from Barbour (§ 36) to Burns (§ 148) five elements may be regarded as Celtic contributions: (1) The passionate and poetical way of observing natural scenery; (2) The love of colour; (3) The wittier and more rollicking sort of humour; (4) The poetry of melancholy; (5) Natural magic and the feeling for the supernatural.

**144. HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY.** Three great historians, **David Hume** (1711-1776), **Robertson** (1721-1793) and **Edward Gibbon** (1737-1794) flourished at this time. The greatest of them is Gibbon. His monumental *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is still read and treated with respect. Mommsen acknowledged its usefulness.

**Adam Smith** (1723-1790), who wrote *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), is looked upon as the founder of the new science of Political Economy or Economics, the science which investigates the conditions for the production and distribution of wealth.

**145. THE WESLEYS.** A word must be said, too, about the great religious revival led by **John Wesley** (1703-1791). In his valuable *Journal* this great evangelist and leader of Methodism gives a most graphic account of his work among the labouring classes all over England. The sensationalism of the Wesleyan revivalists or Methodists, as they are called, was combined with sacramentalism and a deep simple piety. This spiritual awakening stimulated the great social and humanitarian reforms that were coming.

Charles Wesley, John's brother, wrote several deeply devotional hymns, hymns that sank into the hearts of the whole nation. Other hymn-writers, such as Cowper and Isaac Watts, belong to the same movement. Hymns like the latter's *O God, Our Help in Ages Past* represent a deep popular reaction against the rationalism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the irreligiousness of the school of Pope.

**146. EDMUND BURKE** (1729-1797) was an orator, a statesman and one of the most eloquent and dignified writers of his age. He lived in stormy times. During his life he saw

England win Canada and India and throw away the United States. He also saw the tempests of Revolution pass over France. The war with America filled him with grief, and in his noble *Speech on Conciliation with America* he pleaded passionately but uselessly for a compromise with the Colonies. Burke is remembered as a great Tory and upholder of tradition.

Burke's most important literary work was his essay *On the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). He considers that the sublime is that which arouses feelings of awe and terror in us. This theory owes its great importance to the fact that it helped the vogue of the sensational or Gothic novel of the time (§ 138).

**147. GEORGE CRABBE** rejected the themes of the conventional school of poetry; but he clung to its conventional metre. Crabbe (1754-1832) was the son of a poor salt-collector at Aldeborough on the coast of Suffolk. After a hard struggle in his early years, this self-taught poet in 1780 went up to London with nothing in his pocket but some MS. poems. He was rescued from destitution only by the kindness of Edmund Burke, who took him into his house and found him a publisher for *The Library*. The poem sold well, and Crabbe was able to study and take orders. Before long he got a parish of his own. In his country vicarage he led a quiet, contented life, loved by his flock and dividing his time between his parishioners, his study and the fields where he went botanizing. His most famous poem, **The Village** (1783), shows him at his best. His honest verse exposed the fictions about rustic happiness and rustic virtue that had long prevailed in poetry. His realism paved the way for the humanitarian movement. Although he took Pope as a model and has been called "Pope in worsted stockings," Crabbe was no mere imitator. His metre was Pope's, but his material was his own. For in an age when poetry devoted itself to the intellectual classes, the wealthy, and the elegant, he wrote the annals of the poor. He owes his fame to the honesty and unflinching truthfulness with which he described the misery and struggles of the poorer classes. 'Nature's sternest painter but the best,' Byron called him. But perhaps the greatest poet of the period was a young peasant living on a bleak and lonely farm in Scotland.

**148. ROBERT BURNS** (1759-1796), the Scottish ploughman poet, was the son of labouring people. The humble clay cottage where he was born still stands at Alloway in



Ayrshire. His father, the “cotter” of whom he has drawn such a homely picture in *The Cotter’s Saturday Night*, had hard work to make both ends meet; the ground was poor, the price of grain was low and the rent of the farm was high.

The lad’s imagination was early awake. There was an old woman in his father’s house to whose wonderful tales of Scottish folk-lore he delighted to listen on winter nights. From her he heard the stories about witches, fairies, devils, ghosts, enchanted churches and the like, which he afterwards used to such good purpose in his poetry (cf. § 273). As he grew older he read books like *The Spectator*, *Pope’s Works*, *Shakespeare’s Plays*, *Locke’s Essays*, and *The Life of Sir William Wallace*. The last of these books helped to fill him with the strong anti-English feeling that made him write “*Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled*,” now the national song of Scotland. Burns’ poems were thoroughly rural and realistic and by no means ‘medieval’ in their inspiration. They were sometimes composed as he walked between the shafts of the plough and were circulated in manuscript and sung at fairs and in village tap-rooms all over the district. Burns became locally famous as a “maker of rhymes”.

His love-affair with Jane Armour (a stone-mason’s daughter who afterwards became his wife) now drew down on his head a stern Presbyterian rebuke. Burns revenged himself on his censors by writing such satirical poems as *The Twa Herds*<sup>1</sup>, *Holy Willie’s Prayer*, *The Unco’ Guid*<sup>1</sup> (= folk too good to live).

Unable to make a living at farming, Burns at last decided to emigrate and to raise enough money to pay his passage he published a collection of his poems at Kilmarnock (1785). To his surprise the book brought him not only money but fame. Edinburgh wanted to see him and he found himself, as Carlyle says, ‘in the capital in the blaze of rank and beauty, handing down jewelled duchesses to dinner’. But before long he had to return to farming. Again unsuccessful, he at last accepted a humble position as exciseman at Dumfries, a sleepy little seaport on the West coast. His salary was £70 a year and he was never promoted. His Jacobite song to *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, and his gift of four small cannon to the French revolutionaries stopped all chance of advancement. But when the French threatened to invade England, Burns became a volunteer and wrote a stirring song against sedition: *Who will not sing ‘God save the King’ / Shall hang as high as the steeple; / But while we sing ‘God save the King’ / We’ll ne’er forget the people*. In London, however, they had

---

<sup>1</sup> *Herd* (G. Hirt) = shepherd. *Unco’* = uncouthly = ineffably.

quite forgotten the poet and let him waste his life away as a poorly-paid beergauger at Dumfries. He died there at the early age of 37.

Burns stands in the very front rank of the world's lyric poets. He excelled in every branch of lyrical poetry. His love-songs and drinking-songs, patriotic lyrics and Jacobite songs; his songs of domestic tenderness like *John Anderson, my jo, John* (jo = sweetheart); and his songs of remembrance such as *Auld Lang Syne*, are known and sung by Scots the whole world over (Lang syne = long since = (in) the old days.)

In his **nature poems**, e.g., the *Lines to Poor Mailie* (a pet sheep), the *Lines to a (Field-)Mouse*, *To a Mountain Daisy*, his warm sympathy for animals and for flowers wells up. In his **poems of social revolt**, as in "A Man's a Man for a' that", we hear the new democratic note of the Revolution, the desire to put merit above prerogatives of mere birth. *A King can mak' a belted knight, / A duke, an earl and a' that, / But an honest man's above his might; / A man's a man for a' that.* "The two Dogs" is another such poem, a conversation between two dogs about social distinctions. It draws the picture of the villainous bailiff (*Verwalter*) into whose hands Burns' father's farm had fallen and whose threatening letters "used to set the whole family in tears."

In his **narrative poems**, such as *Tom o' Shanter* (§ 273), *The Holy Fair*, and *Hallowe'en*, we get vivid and humorous descriptions of Scottish peasant life.

In his **satirical poems** Burns stands equally apart. There is in them none of the personal maliciousness of Pope. They are inspired by a manly hatred of cant and meanness. Three of the best known satirize the Scottish clergy and schoolmasters:

1. In the *Twa Herds* (i.e., shepherds), the poet banters *twa pastors* for the unseemly quarrel into which their theological but un-Christian zeal has led them.<sup>1</sup>
2. In *Holy Willie's Prayer* he draws a ruthless picture of a self-satisfied and impious egoist parading his selfishness under the mask of religion.
3. In *Death and Doctor Hornbook* he pokes fun at a dominie (village schoolmaster) who, to eke out a living, presumes not only to sell medicines but even to prescribe them. Death meets Burns and complains to him that since this learned professor of ABC has come into the village with his nostrums, his own scythe is blunt and he himself without an occupation.

---

<sup>1</sup> He had no love for the 'Auld Lichts.' (or 'Old Lights') as the strict old Calvinists were called in the controversy then going on with the more modern New Lights, „*Orthodox, orthodox, Who believe in John Knox,*” said the Scottish church bells, but this was not by any means Burns' idea of religion.

**149. BURNS' LANGUAGE.** Burns appealed both to his fellow-countrymen and to people outside Scotland as no Scottish writer had ever done before. In England, however, his audience was limited, for the English could not easily understand the language in which his best poems were written.

In Germany he found a fervent admirer in the poet Klaus Groth who, by translating some of B.'s poems into Low German, popularized this homely dialect as a lyrical medium and thus did for it somewhat the same as Burns had done for Scots.

Only a few of Burns' poems – and those are the weakest – are written in pure literary English. Most of them are in Lowland Scottish mingled with English words. Scottish was a literary language long before Burns' time, with both poetry and prose of its own (§ 36). Carlyle is therefore wrong when he says that Burns 'wrote in a rustic dialect known only to a small province of the country he lived in.'

Burns was, in short, the last and finest of a long line of Scottish poets and song-writers. The fame of these writers, however, was entirely local, *i.e.*, confined to Scotland. Not until Burns came did Northern English win a place first in English and then in universal literature.

Burns himself always referred to two of his predecessors, **Allan Ramsay** (d. 1758) and **Fergusson** (d. 1774), as his masters. In originality of genius, in depth of feeling and in vividness of expression, however, Burns towers high above all other Scottish writers who had gone before him. *He showed me*, said Wordsworth in 1803, *how Verse may build a princely Throne / On humble truth.*

**150. LITERARY JACOBITISM IN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND.** The Jacobites believed that the only rightful kings of Great Britain were the Stuarts, and that the Hanoverians were usurpers. The Scottish Highlanders were Jacobites to a man, and were devoted heart and soul to the fallen dynasty. The Rebellion of 1745, which ended in the defeat of the handsome but worthless Young Pretender *the Bonnie Prince Charlie* of the Jacobites, gave the deathblow to active Jacobitism. Jacobitism, after it had ceased to be a treasonable offence, lingered on in literature. It became a kind of imaginative and romantic hero-worship, even among loyalists. Gradually this literary Jacobitism spread from Scotland to England. This romantic sympathy with the vanquished Stuarts inspired



(1) the many beautiful Jacobite ballads of the Scottish poets; (2) it fired the heart of Sir Walter Scott to glorify the Jacobite rebels both in prose and verse; (3) it spread to England, where it is found throughout the whole of 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, from Thackeray's historical novel *Esmond* down to Swinburne and Browning (*Cavalier Ballads*) and the romances of R.L. Stevenson (§ 212).

"Our cause must finally triumph", an exultant Jacobite once said, "for we Jacobites make the people's ballads, the Hanoverians only make their laws." One of the most gallant of these songs celebrates the Jacobite rebellion of 1745.

*'Twas on a Monday morning, / Right early in the year,  
When Charlie cam' to our town, / The Young Chevalier.  
Chorus: Oh! Charlie is my darling, my darling, my darling,  
Charlie is my darling, the Young Chevalier.*

*As he cam' marchin' up the street / The pipes played loud and clear  
And all the folk cam' runnin' out / To meet the Chevalier.  
And there were mony beating' hearts / And mony hopes and fears,  
And mony were the pray'rs put up / For the Young Chevalier.*

At the same time as Burns in Scotland, and even more neglected, there lived in London another great poetic genius, William Blake.

**151. WILLIAM BLAKE** (1757-1827), spent his whole life in London, poor but happy, earning his living as an engraver. He is now famous as a mystic, a poet and painter, a man of daring and unique genius. By some Blake has been idolized as a supreme artist and by others scoffed at as a madman. His magnificent but irregular work as a poet remained almost unrecognised till the Pre-Raphaelite movement began in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As a lyric poet Blake was a real herald of Romanticism. In his *Songs of Innocence*, 1783, and *Songs of Experience*, 1794, two groups of songs which show "the two contrary States of the Human Soul," Blake, by using simple language, anticipates Wordsworth, and his lyric *To the Muses* has been called a trumpet blast that announced Romanticism. In other poems he has the religious sublimity of Milton – a poet whom he devoutly admired. At times, however, Blake's mysticism becomes formless and incomprehensible. He was even more in revolt against the "withered, unbelieving, rationalist 18<sup>th</sup> century" than was Burns. He saw with horror, he said, "the spectre of Rationalism, with its two

great wings, Rousseau and Voltaire, rising and spreading like a hoar-frost and like a mildew over Albion and claiming to be God." Bacon was largely responsible: Blake held that his philosophy had "ruined England" and that his writings were "good advice for Satan's kingdom". One of Blake's best poems is *A New Jerusalem* in which he laments the dire effects of the "dark satanic mills", i.e. of the industrial revolution which sprang from Bacon's scientific humanism. All the same he had hope and dreamed of a new Jerusalem built in "England's green and pleasant land".

The drawings with which this mystic poet and painter illustrated his own handmade books show his daring and unique genius.

\*

### SUMMARY OF XV. EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROMANTICISM

The beginnings of the return of poetry to Nature are first seen (1) in *The Seasons*, a poem written by a young Scot named Thomson in the blank verse of Milton and (2) in the *Castle of Indolence* in the Spenserian stanza by the same poet. In both these poems affected poetic diction is still found.

Young's *Night Thoughts* was a democratic protest against the selfish class religion of the day. Cowper's *Task* shows poetry beginning to treat humble things and humble people with sympathy and charm, while in *John Gilpin* Cowper shows that poetry can be humorous without being bitter or satirical. Other steps towards Romanticism are seen in the interest shown 1. in old history (as in Gray's *Bard*); 2. in old buildings and feudal life (as in the Gothic tales of Horace Walpole); 3. in the collection of old ballads (as in *Percy's Reliques*); 4. in the imitation of old poems (e.g. Macpherson's *Ossian* Chatterton's so-called *Rowley Poems*). It was the period, too, of the first great English historians, Hume and Gibbon. Edmund Burke wrote his *Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful*, and Crabbe, a poor man's son, realistically and sympathetically described the village poor, in the metre of Pope.

In Scotland **Robert Burns** appeared. He was a great lyric poet and the first Scot to gain the ear of England and Europe.

In his narrative poems *Tam o'Shanter*, *Hallowe'en* and others, he paints Scottish peasant life with inimitable humour.



His love songs and his Jacobite lyrics were soon sung all over Scotland, but the poet himself was left to waste his life away as a beer-gauger in a remote seaport.

**William Blake**, a contemporary poet and mystic, lived in London. He wrote some beautiful lyrics and several long, obscure, prophetic poems.



## XVI. THE ROMANTIC REVOLT.

**152. THE ROMANTIC REVOLT** or, as it is sometimes called, the Romantic Revival, was the revolt against the rules and conventions of the 'classical' school. It was led by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Every age has its own sensibility and its own poetry. When a new climate of sensibility sets in, the rhythms and diction of poetry have to be changed to suit it. This is what Shakespeare, Donne, and Webster did at the beginning of the seventeenth century, what Dryden did in the late seventeenth century, what Wordsworth and Coleridge did in about 1800, and what Hopkins, Eliot, and Pound have done for the twentieth century. In each case the new poetry is better than the old in the sense that it is better suited to the delicately accurate rendering of contemporary sensibility. It is unlikely that there are any absolute standards in these matters. The poetry of Dryden and Pope was excellently adapted to its age; the same is true of the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge later on. From an absolute point of view, the one is not better than the other; from an absolute point of view, "each generation", to quote Leopold von Ranke, "is equidistant from eternity."

We judge, nevertheless, from the angle of our own age. This is unavoidable. All the great critics, Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge, Arnold, Eliot, have done so because without such limitation there can be no sincerity and no clear and focussed vision.

The peculiarity of the Romantic poets is their belief in inspiration. Wordsworth dismissed eighteenth-century poetic diction, something that had to be done by someone when the eighteenth century was over, but neither he nor the other Romantics were really very much interested in the words of poetry. Most periods have believed what we believe in the twentieth century, that a poem is made with words and that what matters is not so much the ideas and feelings which the poet exploited for it as the work of art in words which is created from the raw material of these ideas and these feelings. The Romantics, however, liked to think that their verse was "inspired", that it was a kind of automatic writing (though the corrections in their MSS do not support them in this). Wordsworth defined poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" and maintained that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". Byron said that "poetry is the lava of the imagination, whose eruption prevents an earthquake". Shelley insisted that



“poetry is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind”. Keats declared in an early letter that “if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all”. One unfortunate result of these statements and their partial application in practice was the widening of the distinction between form and content by nineteenth-century admirers of the Romantics. Seen in this unnatural isolation, ‘form’ was frowned upon as a frivolous eighteenth-century thing.

Three of the young men who led the Revolt, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, were for a time fired with the ideas of reform preached by the French Revolutionaries.

As these young poets lived near the Lakes they were contemptuously dubbed ‘Lakists’ by the *Edinburg Review*, which disliked both their politics and their poetry. “*They lived on the Lakes – an appropriate quarter / For poems diluted with plenty of water,*” wrote Byron in his famous satire (§ 167). The term ‘Lake Poets’, or ‘Lake School’, has stuck to them ever since. But ‘Lake Poet’ has long since lost its first opprobrious meaning of ‘weak and watery’.

**153. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH** (1770-1850) is the great leader of Romantic Movement. He wanted to make men feel that they were a part of the universe, and that they and the universe were fundamentally good. He tried by poems about simple people, flowers, rivers and mountains to arouse in them a mood of worship, a feeling for the immanent Divine in man and nature.

Wordsworth’s life was a very quiet one, the only stirring event in it being the French Revolution. On leaving Cambridge in 1791, he was so enthusiastic for the new ideas of Liberty and Justice that he went to Paris and joined the revolutionaries. But the Reign of Terror and the rise of Napoleon opened his eyes to the dangers of democracy. In England the Revolution proved to be a time of wild words rather than of wild deeds. Wordsworth would hear nothing of either. He henceforth held that the world was not to be bettered by opposing violence to wrong, but by *right conduct*. Extremists like Shelley therefore accused him of being a deserter from the cause of Humanity. The poet Browning in *The Lost Leader* repeated the charge: *Just for a handful of silver he left us, / Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat! / Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us, / Burns, Shelley were with us, they watch from their graves! / He alone breaks from the van and the freemen, / He alone slinks to the rear and the slaves!*



After a visit to Germany (Goslar, 1798), Wordsworth settled down at Grasmere in the beautiful Lake District of Cumberland, his native county, devoting his life entirely to poetry. He afterwards removed with his wife and his gifted sister Dorothy to Rydal Mount in Westmoreland, where he lived from 1813 to the end of his life.

In 1798, in collaboration with Coleridge, he published the wonderful **Lyrical Ballads**. This volume marks the birth of a new age in English poetry. Its famous *Preface* states the gospel of the new poetry.

The ideal of the two poets was to form a Naturalistic and an Imaginative school of poetry. This dual purpose was to be illustrated in two ways: Coleridge was to deal with **fantastic themes of legend and romance** in such a way as to produce upon the reader **the impression of detailed reality**; Wordsworth was to treat **subjects of common homely life** so imaginatively as to give them the **charm of romance**.

Wordsworth succeeded wonderfully in poems like *Lucy* and *The Solitary Reaper*. In other poems such as *We are Seven* he carried the theory of naturalness and simplicity so far that it looked like a denial of art, and he was accused of making poetry childish.

The volume *Ballads* (1800), and the *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807) contain the flower of Wordsworth's lyric verse – the noble anti-Napoleon sonnets on *Liberty*, the *Ode to Duty*, and the *Ode on Immortality*.

Dwelling in the open air among the hills as the friend of Cumbrian shepherds and dalesmen, Wordsworth tried to express in poetry his sense of the mystic relations between Man and Nature. He felt that his mission as a poet was to interpret the goodness and beauty that lies hid in common things, in everyday tasks and in humble life. In *We are Seven*, the mysticism of the little maid is meant to be wiser than the master's questions, and to convince us of the powerlessness of death.

To many of his contemporaries he was an enigma. Jeffrey of the *Edinburg Review* led the critics in ridiculing his poetry and his doctrine and indeed in deriding the poetry of the Lake School in general. There is no denying that Wordsworth, in both theory and practice, had many vulnerable points.

**154. WORDSWORTH'S DOCTRINES.** In his detestation of Pope's elegant and 'uninspired' manner, Wordsworth went to the very opposite extreme. He hated 'poetic diction' and maintained that between the diction of prose and that of poetry there should



be no essential difference. This was only his exaggerated way of protesting against the poetic diction of the classicists.

His other theory was that all the elements of true poetic grandeur are to be found in their greatest purity in the lives of the poor and humble – not the poor of crowded cities but of the country, for in the country men are in permanent touch with nature. This theory, which is traceable to Rousseau, is, like the first, an exaggeration. The central idea of the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is that great poetry can be written about simple subjects and in a simple manner.

Wordsworth's poems fall, roughly speaking, into four groups:

1. Poems, chiefly narrative, in the early naturalistic method of the *Lyrical Ballads*, – some of them marked by an exaggerated striving after simplicity;
2. The great imaginative Odes, the Sonnets, and shorter narrative poems. In these the excessive naturalism of the first period is abandoned.
3. Long, reflective and descriptive poems in blank verse: **The Prelude**; *The Excursion*. *The Prelude* is undoubtedly Wordsworth's most important poem. It is his autobiography, in which he describes the growth of his poetic sensibility.
4. The poems of his latter period, when he was influenced by a re-perusal of Virgil and Milton.

Wordsworth, the high priest of the immanent Divine in man and nature, did three things for English poetry:

1. He weeded the language of poetry by attacking the poetic diction of the eighteenth century.
2. He showed the beauty and poetry of common things and humble lives, and opened men's eyes to a new and unsuspected world of beauty lying round them.
3. Through Nature he led men to a feeling for the Divine.

Wordsworth is, in short, one of the greatest formative and inspiring influences of English poetry, and one of the greatest poets that England has ever had. But he is curiously unequal in his work. Some of his poems of the first period have even been called silly. Yet he must be judged not by his failures but by his successes.



His basic assumption is that man is good and that therefore his feelings need very little poetic dressing. This was his message and it had great influence. It is the important element in his verse. He was not much of an artist.

**155. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)** shares with Wordsworth the fame of inaugurating the Romantic Movement.<sup>1</sup> His is the poetry of romantic illusion.

Coleridge was born at Ottery St. Mary's in Devonshire, where his father (who is said to have quoted the Bible to his village congregation in the original Hebrew) was vicar and headmaster of the grammar school. After his father's death, the boy was sent to Christ's Hospital – a famous charity school for the orphan sons of gentlemen. Its scholars used to be known, from their garb, as Blue-coat Boys. Charles Lamb, the author of the delightful *Essays of Elia*, was Coleridge's schoolmate there, and lovingly refers to him in his *Essay* as 'the inspired Charity Boy'.

Coleridge went up to Cambridge, but left it without a degree. Full of the wild ideas of the French Revolution, he and his friend Southey formed a plan for founding in America a communistic colony, – a Pantisocracy,<sup>2</sup> as he called it. The only outcome of this dream of 'liberty, fraternity and equality' was the marriage of the two friends with the daughters of a Bristol tradesman (1795).

Coleridge soon afterwards met Wordsworth and the two young poets became close friends.

The outcome of their intercourse was the epoch-making *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798 (§ 153), the opening poem of which was Coleridge's wonderful ballad *The Ancient Mariner* (cf. § 275). Among other poems he wrote are this period are (1) the exquisite lines called *Love or Genevieve*; (2) the first part of the weird, unfinished ballad *Christabel* (Pt. 2. of this poem was composed in 1800, but neither part was published till 1816); (3) the oriental fragment, *Kubla Khan*, an opium dream.

'From 1798 to 1800, Coleridge was in blossom', said Wordsworth, meaning that this was Coleridge's great imaginative period as a poet. It is true that both Wordsworth

<sup>1</sup> The aims of that movement are explained and defended (1) in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* Chs. XIV, XVI-XX, and (2) in Wordsworth's preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*.

<sup>2</sup> *Pant* (= all) + *isos* (= equal) + *cratia* (= rule), i.e., a dominion in which all are equal and all rule.

and Coleridge had periods when they were in their poetic prime and after which their poetry deteriorates. Wordsworth's great poetic period was from about 1798 to about 1808.

In 1798 Coleridge and the Wordsworths visited Germany. Coleridge's studies at Göttingen, where he read German literature and philosophy, proved to be of the utmost importance both for himself and for England.

**156. GERMAN INFLUENCE.** Through Lessing's *Dramaturgie* Coleridge was led to a more methodical study of Shakespeare. In Ch. XXIII of his volume of literary essays called *Biographia Literaria*, he states that he himself, England and Germany owe a great debt to Lessing for helping them to a new understanding of Shakespeare. Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare* (delivered in London) began a new epoch of criticism.

1. Coleridge taught England to revere Shakespeare not as a mere wild and irregular genius but as a supreme literary artist. "Lessing", he says, "proved that in all essentials of art, and in truth to nature, the plays of Shakespeare are truer to the principles of Aristotle than are the productions of Racine and Corneille." But though he said this he did not realize that primarily Shakespeare was a supreme *dramatic* artist. Like Johnson and Lamb and nearly everyone in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Coleridge thought that Shakespeare was greater when read than when acted (§ 65).

2. Coleridge introduced the transcendentalism of Kant and the mysticism of Shelling into England. Kant had given him a broader and calmer view of politics. Kant not only converted Coleridge from Rousseauism, but through him influenced even such men as the revolutionary Godwin. Indirectly, too, German philosophy through Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825), led to that revival of the mystic forms and ceremonies in the English Church afterwards known as the Oxford Movement.

3. In his Gothic tragedy *Osorio, or Remorse*, Coleridge imitated the motives of Schiller's *Geisterseher* and by his interest in the mystic and weird side of German Romanticism quickened the same movement in England and helped on the mood already nourished by the Gothic Novel.

4. After his return to England in 1800 the poet made a masterly translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*. The book is a classic among translations. Such mistakes as 'huge mountains' for 'Riesengebirge', and "Thee I punish for thy lie" for 'Dich straf ich Lügen'



(= I give thee the lie), show, however, that Coleridge's knowledge of German was far from perfect.

**157. COLERIDGE'S OTHER WORK.** On his return to England from Germany, Coleridge lived for a time with Southey at Keswick in the Lake District, but after his estrangement from his wife, he drifted to London. He had, however, become a confirmed opium eater, and his imagination henceforth deserted him. He planned all sorts of vast schemes in poetry, philosophy and criticism, but never carried them out. Carlyle saw him at this time and hearing his oracular monologues to his disciples, compared him to 'a hundred horse-power steam-engine, stuck in the mud and with the boiler burst.' Lamb, more politely, calls Coleridge a 'damaged archangel.'

Coleridge's work as a poet is small in bulk. His shipwrecked will accounts for this. Coleridge is the poet of illusion and mysticism. Although his nature poetry, which is very like Wordsworth's, is wonderful enough, e.g., *Sunrise in the Vale of Chamonix*, it is as the poet of the supernatural that he will for ever remain famous in English literature.

In three of his poems already mentioned, – *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan*, the scene is laid in a fantastic dream world, far remote from the real universe. Out of this dream world Coleridge succeeds in evoking strange creatures and weird regions of romance. In his drama *Osorio* (or *Remorse*) the following song is typical of his dream-like atmosphere and the incantation in his rhythms: *And at evening ever more, / In a chapel on the shore, / Shall the chaunters sad and saitley, / Yellow tapers burning saintly, / Doleful masses chaunt for thee, / Miserere Domine.*

**158. SIR WALTER SCOTT** (1771-1832) was one of the foremost leaders of the Romantic Revival. He did for Scotland what the English romantic school did for England. He revived the old nation and popular elements of Scottish poetry that had lain unheeded so long in the tales, legends, ballads and folk-songs of the Scottish countryside, giving them currency in the sophisticated literature of the time. Both in his poetry and his novels he called up a splendid romantic vision of old Scotland that enchanted the imagination of the whole world.

Scott was born in Edinburgh, and was descended from two old Border families. It was said that he was even prouder of his pedigree than of his writings.

As a boy, he spent a great deal of his time on his grandfather's estate on the Border, a district full of old castles and crumbling abbeys. Even at this early age Scott listened with delight to the old tales and ballads told in this region. When he was a man and had been called to the bar, he still found time for collecting broadsides,<sup>1</sup> old songs, Jacobite relics and scraps of antiquarian learning. On one of his vacation rambles in the Highlands he had the joy of being introduced to some of the very Highlanders who had marched with 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' in the Rebellion of 1745. Scott was an ardent literary Jacobite (§ 150).

In 1811 he bought a romantic old farm, the site of an ancient monastery on the Tweed, near Melrose. Here he built himself a grand feudal mansion, Abbotsford House, and lived like an old Scottish baron turned poet and antiquary. In 1820 the 'laird' of Abbotsford was made a baronet.

Six years later a great misfortune overtook him. A publishing house in which he was a partner failed for £147,000. Scott thought he was in honour bound to pay off the debt, and tried to do so by writing novels. But he worked too hard and the task killed him. He died in 1832, the year of the Reform Bill (*see* § 173).

**159. SCOTT'S LITERARY LIFE** may be divided into two periods. During the first he wrote **romances in verse**, during the second, **romances in prose**. In both the subject is the same, – romantic and feudal Scotland. His verse epics may even be regarded as the preparation for his prose work. Scott's historical novels are thus novels of adventure rather than of character. His great achievement was that he enlarged the scope of the novel of adventure so as to include in it the natural history, the folk-lore and traditions of his own country.

**Scott's Romanticism** is traceable to six kindred influences:

1. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (which he read as a boy of thirteen with such avidity, it is said, that he forgot to eat his dinner).
2. The Scottish popular ballads with their deep, fresh and manly characters (§ 140).
3. Coleridge's poetry (§ 155).
4. Other contemporary English influences, especially the Gothic novels of Walpole (§ 139).

---

<sup>1</sup> Broadsides or broadsheets = broad sheets of printed songs, sold in the streets.

5. Shakespeare. Richard III, for example, suggested not only the dauntless Marmion but also Front de bœuf, the Normal knight in *Ivanhoe*.

6. German literature. Although Scott had only a smattering of German, it was through his contact with German poetry that he was first induced to write romantic verse.

**160. THE INFLUENCE OF GERMANY ON SCOTT.** Scott's attention was first drawn to romantic poetry by **Henry McKenzie's** famous lecture on German literature delivered before the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1788. Scott's earlier writings thus came to be translations. Besides *Götz von Berlichingen* he also translated Bürger's *Leonore* and *Der wilde Jäger* and Goethe's *Erlkönig*. These three uncanny poems had a great influence on him. In them the presence of eerie and mysterious powers is felt throughout. In a note prefaced to the *Erlking* Scott directs that his translation "be read by candle-light and that the candle should be particularly long in the snuff". This was the sort of writing that the Gothic novelists had unsuccessfully aimed at, and which Coleridge alone had attained. It is to be remembered that Bürger had in turn got his inspiration for *Leonore* from the *Percy Ballads*.

Scott's love for German ballads stimulated him in his search for old Border ballads. The first volume of the poems that he thus collected and edited, a book called *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, was published in 1802.

**161. SCOTT'S BALLAD EPICS.** In searching for the material for the book of Border ballads mentioned above, Scott came across the story of *The Dwarf and the Magic book*. Out of this he made his ballad epic *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). (lay = song)

It was from Coleridge's ballad *Christabel* that Scott got the idea of using the ballad style for the narration of longer historical tales. He was thus led to invent the new form called the **ballad epic** which in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* achieved such marked success. The metre of *Christabel* which he here employed greatly startled readers which were accustomed only to Pope and his school. "*The Lay of the Last Minstrel* was meant", says Scott, "to illustrate the life and manners on the Borders in feudal times."

Scott's other verse narratives:



1. *Marmion* (1808) is the tale of an English knight who, after many adventures, dies a soldier's death at Flodden Field. In this battle James IV of Scotland, surrounded by the spears of his faithful Scots, fell mortally wounded.
2. *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) tells how King James V, travelling in disguise, misses his way near Loch Katrine and is rescued by the Lady of the Lake, Ellen Douglas, the daughter of an outlawed noble.
3. *Rokeby* (1812). 4. *The Laird of the Isles* (1813) deals with the adventures of Bruce and describes the Battle of Bannockburn.

The weak points of all these epics of feudalism are the sameness of the heroes and the discursiveness of the style. To pass an old ruin or a bracken bush without stopping to describe it is 'above Scott's might'. The tales are full of action and romantic deeds, of the ring of battle, the shock of lance and shield, and the clatter of hoofs. The verse is crude. Much of *Marmion* was composed, Scott tells us, on horseback, "in grand gallops among the hills".

Scott was the best-seller poet until Byron supplanted him; he then turned to writing prose tales. Thus arose the famous *Waverley Novels*.

**162. SCOTT'S NOVELS.** The 27 *Waverley Novels* (see § 272) may be divided into four groups, the first dealing with life in Scotland during the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the second with Scottish life of an earlier epoch; the third with English history, in all cases at a period before the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the fourth with countries beyond the British Isles.

Scott's first novel was *Waverley*. This book was published anonymously in 1814 and gave its name to the whole series of brilliant historical novels that followed.

Scott treats history with great liberty, especially when he leaves the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the period he knew best. By means of the novel he did for Scottish history what Shakespeare had done for English history by means of the drama, and painted a splendid picture of the Scottish past for the English to admire. He was the first to show England the romance of Scottish scenery, the sturdiness, piety and humour of the Scottish peasantry. He made the two countries admire and respect each other. He thus cemented the union between England and Scotland as no politician could have done. Moreover, he taught both Lowland Scot and Englishman to admire the Highland Celt.

After Scott, the plaid and tartan became a token of romance and bravery. Before the Union, the Highland costume had been considered by nine out of ten Lowlanders to be the dress of a thief.

Scott's novels introduce us to all classes of society, kings, nobles, lairds and chiefs. But his greatest successes in portraiture are humbler figures, such as fishermen, peasant farmers, gypsies, servants. His outlaws, freebooters, robbers and mendicants are also finally drawn. There is no sentimentalism in Scott's work, but there is abundance of martial spirit, humour and pathos. For among the many things Scott learned from Shakespeare, one of the most valuable was the art of relieving tragedy with humorous incident.

Scott and other romanticists revived many long forgotten words used Spencer and the Elizabethans.

**163. SCOTT'S IMITATORS.** Scott's influence is seen throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. The vogue of the historical novel of romance spread all over Europe. In England Scott's chief disciples were G.P.R. James, Bulwer-Lytton, Kingsley and Ainsworth. The last-named, after the fashion of Scott's great French disciple, Victor Hugo, wrote books about romantic old buildings and what had happened in them, *e.g.*, *The Tower of London*, and *Old St. Paul's*. Even Thackeray, who had begun by satirizing *Ivanhoe*, ended by writing *Esmond*, a historical novel about the 18<sup>th</sup> century life.

In Germany, Willibald Alexis (with his novels of Brandenburg), Gustav Freytag (with *Die Ahnen* and *Soll und Haben*), and Wilhelm Hauff with *Lichtenstein*, a story about the Wurtemberg barons; in France, de Vigny and Victor Hugo; in Italy, Manzoni, the author of *I Promessi Sposi* (= The Betrothed) are all in one sense or another writers who studied in Sir Walter Scott's school.

**164. BULWER-LYTTON** (1803-1873) is the most productive of the followers of Sir Walter Scott. He held, however, that Scott's novels were not intellectual enough. Under the influence of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* Bulwer tried to give his own plots a more philosophic basis.

He wrote novels of almost every description, (1) social novels, *e.g.*, *Pelham*; (2) historical novels, *e.g.*, *Rienzi* (dramatized by Wagner), *Harold* (about the Norman



Conquest) and *The Last Days of Pompeii*; (3) supernatural and Gothic novels, such as *Zanoni* and *A Strange Story*; and (4) criminal novels, such as *Eugene Aram* and *Paul Clifford*, the aristocratic highwayman.

He also wrote dramas. He was, in short, one of the most versatile writers of his time and imitated everyone in turn.

**165. MARIA EDGEWORTH** (1767-1849) in her two best known works, *The Absentee* and *Castle Rackrent* (1800), deals, as the names themselves show, with the relations between the Irish peasantry and their landlords. She knew Ireland well and drew the Irish peasant to the life – with his drollery, his brogue, his absurdities and his distress (§ 224). From her Scott conceived the idea of doing the same for the Scottish peasant.

**166. JANE AUSTEN** (1775-1827) was another woman novelist whom Scott praised. She was a far finer artist in the novel than Scott. Indeed in her perfect mastery of the art of the novel she has never been surpassed. Her books were written round about the turn of the century and give excellent portraits of genteel village society in those days, – portraits touched with gentle but keen satire.

She was realistic and anti-romantic; in *Northanger Abbey* she made quiet fun of the Gothic novel, and in *Sense and Sensibility* of the sentimental novel. Her best-known book is *Pride and Prejudice* (1796). It is a comedy, the plot of which shows the long humiliation of a haughty wooer. The technique and exquisite comic power displayed in this novel make it one of the English classics. In spite of her narrow field of observation, or rather because she deliberately limited herself to it, Jane Austen 'achieved art of universal scope.' She chose and used her 'little bit of ivory, six inches wide' to good purpose. She was a master of the art of the novel; all her books have organic unity and concentration of purpose. *Emma* is perhaps her most mature and best novel.

The quiet domestic life in village and country described in her works has also caused them to be called 'novels of the tea-table.' One of the most charming of the later novels of this school is Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851), describing the gossip in a village of old maids.

**167. BYRON** (1788-1824). Wordsworth and Coleridge were in revolt against the poetical conventions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Byron and his followers – called by Coleridge's friend, Southey, the Satanic School – went very much further. They were in revolt against English society, against English religion and against the English monarchical system of government.

Of the English Romantic poets, Byron was the first to win the public ear. His work as a poet is closely bound up with his own personal experiences and his poems, taken together, may be regarded as a kind of fantastic autobiography.

Lord Byron, the *Weltschmerz* poet, was born in 1788, the same year as Schopenhauer, the *Weltschmerz* philosopher.

A Londoner and the son of a spendthrift captain in the Guards, Byron at the age of eleven inherited the title and estates of his great-uncle, who had died childless. After some years at Harrow, the youth went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, where his wild ways and sceptical opinions soon got him into trouble. While still an undergraduate he published his first book of poems, entitled *Hours of Idleness, by Lord Byron, a Minor*. This volume of juvenile verse was ridiculed by the *Edinburgh Review*. In revenge the young poet published a satiric poem in the manner and metre of Pope's *Dunciad*, calling it *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). In this satire, he made all the writers of his time run the gauntlet of his epigrams.

On attaining his majority, Lord Byron made the Grand Tour, in those days the fashionable manner of closing a gentlemen's education. Beginning with the Rhine, his travels extended even to Spain, Albania, Greece, Turkey and Asia Minor. In Constantinople he created a sensation by swimming the Dardanelles.

On his return to England from the Mediterranean, he brought with him two cantos of a poem describing the peoples and places he had visited. The work was published under the title of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (§ 274). It took the public by storm, and Byron became the lion of fashionable society. After the fashion set by Scott he now published in quick succession a number of hastily written verse romances. Readers were getting tired of Scott's tales of the Scottish Highlanders, and readily turned to Byron's still more romantic stories about the fierce mountaineers of Greece and the then unfamiliar Mussulman world of the Levant.

In all these tales – *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair* and its sequel *Lara*, and *The Siege of Corinth*, there is plenty of variety of scenery; their weakness lies in the want of variety in the characters.



Two theatrical personages are, under different names, repeated over and over again in them, – a hero and a heroine. This Byronic hero is always, like the Corsair, a man of “one virtue but a thousand crimes.” He has a melancholy look, a pale brow and irresistible charm for ladies. In each tale there is, too, a Byronic heroine – sensual, devoted, loving, faithful unto death.

**168. BYRON'S MATURER PERIOD.** In 1816 came the turning point in Byron's life. His wife left him after a year of married life and the public, not unfairly, assumed that the poet was chiefly to blame in the matter. Very hard things were said about him. “If what people say of me is true”, he wrote, “England is too good for me; but if their accusations are false, then I am too good for England”. He left his native land, never to return.

Up to this time, his woes had been imaginary and his world-weariness a pose. But now he had a real grievance and his bitterness lends a new and welcome tone of sincerity to his poetry. This sincerity is especially felt when he mocks at the social, political and religious institutions of England.

On his way to the South he passed through Switzerland. There he met Shelley, and the two friends read Goethe's *Faust* together. The change that came into Byron's work at this time is seen in *Canto III* of *Childe Harold* and in two other works written under the influence of Swiss scenery and of Shelley, viz., *Manfred: A Drama*, and the narrative poem *The Prisoner of Chillon*. The *Fourth Canto* of *Childe Harold* and *The Lament of Tasso* were both written at Venice.

While in Italy, Byron met and fell in love with countess Guiccioli. He now, too, read deeply in Italian literature and translated the burlesque poetry of Pulci, imitating its humorous style in his own *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. The latter, a long comic narrative poem, mocking at everything the English held sacred, is one of the best satires in the language. It stands out also as one of the few poems between Donne and Hopkins in which speech rhythm is employed.

In 1824 he sailed for Greece, to aid the Greek insurgents in their struggle for independence. But his health proved unequal to the strain and he died at the beginning of the war.

Byron's chief work was done as a satirist of English life and not as an interpreter of Nature. As a story-teller Byron has little constructive power and little imagination. As for style, his poetry often reads as if it had been dashed off in a moment and often indeed

this was exactly how it *was* written. Often, moreover, he wrote the most careless English. He was a great and demonic force, but not a great teacher or a deep thinker.

In this century his poetry has lost most of its romantic glamour, but the meteoric personality of this Mediterraneanised Englishman still fascinates. Byron and Scott were *popular* poets. Their verse is on the whole facile. They exploited the vague, romantic yearnings of the half-educated. The fan mail written to Byron is most instructive on this point.

**169. BYRONISM.** On the Continent the influence of Byron's personality and writings has been immense, and the pose called Byronism was for a while quite the fashion. In France, Alfred de Musset; in Germany, Heinrich Heine; in Russia, Lermontoff, – all professed themselves the disciples of the pessimistic English lord and posed as misanthropes.

**In Germany** this Byronism is seen (1) in Heine's *Reisebilder* (a sort of prose *Childe Harold*) and in the *Herbräische Melodien*, as well as in Heine's misanthropy and in his poems of Weltschmerz (world-weariness); (2) in Lenau's gloomy romanticism; (3) in the writings of political poets like Herwegh, Hoffmann v. Fallersleben, and Freiligrath; like Byron, they regarded all monarchs as oppressors and held that "Only Revolution / Can save the world from Hell's pollution;" (4) in Liliencron's *Poggfred* (after Don Juan); (5) Treitschke's fine *Essay on Byron* shows even this great champion of monarchy under the spell of Byron's dazzling personality; (6) even the great poet Goethe was, for a time, a fervent believer in him. The figure Euphorion in *Faust* stands for Byron. In Byron Goethe lived over again his own stormy youth and thought that Byron's genius, like his own, would clarify with time. Euphorion was meant to express the reconciliation of the romantic and classic ideals in one man. That was the great hope that Goethe had seen in Byron. Before Goethe died, however, he knew that he had greatly over-estimated his hero.<sup>1</sup>

**170. THOMAS MOORE** (1779-1852). What Burns did for Scotland, Moore tried to do for Ireland. He re-awakened to music the "dear harp of Erin."<sup>2</sup> (Erin = Ireland.)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Brandl, *Goethe und Byron*, Goethe-Jahrbuch, Bd. XX.

<sup>2</sup> The small harp is the national instrument of the Celts and the symbol of their ancient literary and lyric prowess.

In his own day Moore, who has been called the 'shortened shadow of his friend Byron,' was more popular, even in England, than such really great poets as the authors of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

In 1807 Moore began the publication of the well-known *Irish Melodies*, lyrics that he had composed to popular national airs. They are thus in their origin in some respects like the song of Burns, and are even more singable. Some are full of Celtic sadness (e.g., *The Harp that once through Tara's halls* and *Oft in the Stilly Night*). Others like *The Last Rose of Summer* have become popular favourites for their homely sentimentality. They suggested to Byron the well-known *Hebrew Melodies*. Moore also published *National Melodies* and *Sacred Melodies*. His once so famous *Lalla Rookh* (1817), a sham Oriental epic, is a cleverly constructed link and frame story (cf. § 31). Moore edited the *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (1830). To please the Byron family he unfortunately destroyed many of the documents.

**171. SHELLEY** (1792-1822). Like his friend Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley spent his short life in revolt against the traditions and opinions of his fellow-countrymen.<sup>1</sup> Shelley was not only a rebel, he was also a would-be reformer. His passion for reforming the world runs through all his work. He dreamt that democracy and freedom must needs bring happiness to the poor. "*What art thou, Freedom? ... Thou art clothes and fire and food, / For the trampled multitude; No! in countries that are free, / Such starvation cannot be / As in England now we see.*" He believed that by poetry and philosophy the world could be regenerated and made into a new Eden – a *happy Earth, reality of Heaven*. (*Queen Mab IX*.) The keynote to the whole of his poetry and to his plans of reform is his "faith in man", his humanitarianism and his longing for ideal beauty, a beauty he thought unattainable under present social conditions.

Shelley came of a wealthy old Sussex family. He was educated at Eton and Oxford, and was expelled from the University for writing a pamphlet advocating atheism. To make matters worse, he married an uneducated girl and was disowned by his father. The marriage turned out very unhappily. Shelley found out that his wife neither understood

---

<sup>1</sup> While still at Eton he became a convert to Rousseau. As a protest against slavery the young idealist refused to take sugar in his tea, on the ground that "sugar was produced by slave labour."

nor sympathized with his revolutionary ideas and ideals as expressed in *Queen Mab*<sup>1</sup>, a poem he was then writing (1813).

In his poem, *Queen Mab* (i.e., The Fairy Queen) leads the soul of the poet through the world. She reveals to him the past and present with all their senseless and wicked forms of government, religion, and social tyranny. But at the same time she forecasts a future full of hope and happiness – “for the eternal world contains not only evil but also the cure for it”. In *Queen Mab*, then, we trace the doctrine of Rousseau in his English apostle, Godwin, the author of the didactic novel *Caleb Williams*. The same influences are also seen in the long narrative poem *The Revolt of Islam*, where Shelley advocates ‘women’s rights’ and the emancipation of women. Shelley held that Monarchy, Christianity and Marriage should be swept away. Godwin’s daughter, Mary Godwin, deeply sympathized with these radical ideas, and some time afterwards, when Shelley’s first wife had committed suicide, the poet married her. In 1815 Shelley wrote *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude*, again giving a portrait of himself, a youth seeking, and seeking in vain, an ideal embodiment of earthly love. Shelley’s first twenty-two years are ‘a medley of nobility and nonsense.’ It was only in his last eight years that he really found himself. In Switzerland in 1816 he met Byron. From this year dates Shelley’s fine *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. The poem marks a crisis in his life and work. Henceforth his creed and his career were clear to him. He dedicated his life to Poetry and Beauty – the “*awful Loveliness that alone can free / This world from its dark slavery.*”

With the study of Italian, begun in 1813, the world of Tasso, Ariosto and Petrarch was opened to him. From 1818-1822 he lived in Italy. One summer’s day in 1822, while returning from a sail down the coast, his cockle-shell of a boat capsized in a squall in the Gulf of Spezia, and the poet was drowned. By order of the Tuscan authorities, the body, which had been washed ashore, was burned on the beach, Byron and Leigh Hunt being present at the rite. His ashes were buried just inside the walls of Rome, near the Porta San Sebastiano.

To the Italian period (1818-1822) belongs all Shelley’s best work. Three poems: 1. the rather feeble *Sensitive Plant* (1820), 2. *The Witch of Atlas* (1820) and, 3. the passionate love rhapsody *Epipsychidion*, i.e., ‘a little script about the soul’, all give expression to the poet’s longing for ideal Beauty. *Julian and Maddalo*, a poem in the form of a conversation

---

<sup>1</sup> Queen Mab (Celtic ‘Mabh’ = child) is a fairy mentioned in Mercutio’s speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I. 4.

in verse, gives us contrasted portraits of Byron (Maddalo) the pessimist, and Shelley “the Utopian” and Idealist.

Of Shelley’s dramatic works two only are of importance. (1) *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) is a noble lyrical drama inspired by the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus. It is not a play, being rather a series of splendid chants in praise of democracy than a picture of action and passion. Prometheus represents humanity freed at last by the Revolution from the rule of tyrants. (2) *The Cenci*, a realistic tragedy founded upon the story of an old Italian crime that was committed in Rome in 1599. The drama pits absolute virtue against absolute wickedness. The plot tells how *Beatrice Cenci*, a beautiful and noble-minded girl, is driven by the monstrous cruelty and diabolical wickedness of her father, old Count Cenci, to conspire with her stepmother and brothers for the murder of their common tyrant. Shelley altered the real story to suit his own prejudices against the Papal Church.

*Adonais* is a noble elegy in memory of Keats. But it is in his lyrics that Shelley is at his best. Such longer lyrics as *The Skylark* and *The Ode to the Westwind*, with their glorious exaltation, and such lovely short lyrics as *To Night* and *Rarely, rarely comest thou* give him a place among the world’s great masters of lyric poetry.

The intenseness of a sensation was what mattered most to Shelley. There is no place in his poetry for the critical functions of the intelligence, no place at all for wit or humour. It was not that he lacked intelligence or a sense of humour. His prose shows keen intelligence and in a non-serious poem making fun of Wordsworth (*Peter Bell the Third*) he is very funny indeed.

Shelley was full of love for mankind, full of democratic dreams inspired by what he calls the “sacred name of Rousseau” and the Revolution. The poets of the Romantic Revival all found their inspiration in Nature. To Wordsworth Nature was the voice of God. But Shelley desired more – to be made one with Nature. “*Make me thy Lyre, even as the Forest is!*” was his cry to the West Wind. “*Be thou me, impetuous one!.. Be through my lips to unawakened Earth / The trumpet of a prophecy.*”

**172. John Keats** (1795-1821), like Shelley, died young. Like Shelley, too, he spent his life in seeking the Beautiful. But While Shelley regarded poetry only as a means to an end, viz., the reform of the world, Keats regarded it as an end in itself. “*A thing of beauty is a joy forever,*” he said.



Of Keats' life there is but little to tell. His father lived in humble circumstances and kept a livery stable in London. On leaving school, where he learned no Greek, the boy, at the age of sixteen, was apprenticed to an apothecary-surgeon.

After publishing his first volume of *Poems* (1817), Keats devoted his life entirely and passionately to poetry alone. A second volume, *Endymion*, followed in 1818 and a third in 1820. But his health, undermined by consumption, now broke down, and he went, too late, to Rome. There he died<sup>1</sup> at the age of twenty-six.<sup>2</sup> His grave lies in the Protestant cemetery in Rome in a beautiful secluded spot, just as described by Shelley in his *Adonais* (stanzas 49-50).

Keats became a poet through reading Spenser. Spenser and Milton held him under their spell and he restored to English verse the rich sensuousness of those poets. Before he died he changed his mind about Milton, however, and decided that his influence had been bad.

He published, in all, three volumes of verse. His first volume, *Poems* (1817), contains two notable pieces (1) *Sleep and Poetry*, in which he sets forth his romantic theory of poetry; (2) the noble sonnet *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*.

The second volume contains *Endymion*. This somewhat difficult poem, which begins with the line "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever", tells the old Greek story of the love of the moon goddess for a mortal youth, the shepherd boy Endymion. Endymion is the type of man, the poet or artist like Keats himself, into whose life a high imaginative ideal has come through contact with the heavenly powers and who is henceforth in love with ideal beauty.

Keats' third and last book of poems, issued in 1820, contains all his best work – work which places him among the immortals of English verse. The longest poem in it is *Hyperion*, an unfinished fragment of a Greek myth in Miltonic blank verse. Its theme is the downfall of the gods or Titans, who are led by Hyperion. The Titans are overthrown by the younger order of gods – who are led by Apollo – by reason of the beauty which the younger possess. The poem is unfinished because during its composition Keats began to see the shortcomings of the Miltonic manner. *Paradise Lost* and *Hyperion* are fine sounding and rhetorical, but not closely enough experienced and too remote from the

---

<sup>1</sup>Byron's mistaken theory that Keats was killed by the *Quarterly Review's* savage criticism of *Endymion* is expressed in the famous lines in *Don Juan*:

*'Tis strange the mind, that fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article'.*

<sup>2</sup> The house where he died, on the Piazza di Spagna, has now been turned into a Keats museum.

natural rhythms of English to satisfy Keats for long. Accordingly he broke off the composition of *Hyperion* and tried to rewrite it in plain, un-Miltonic verse. This revised version, called *The Fall of Hyperion*, is preferred by many people today.

Two older poems, *Lamia* and the beautiful ballad called *La Belle sans Merci*, tell of the enchantment of young knights by beautiful women who lure their lovers to ruin. One of these women turns out to be a witch, the other a serpent. — The following two poems also deal with medieval subjects: (1) *Isabella or The Pot of Basil* (in *ottava rima*), a Florentine story from Boccaccio about the murder of Isabella's lover, Lorenzo, by her two purse-proud merchant brothers, and Isabella's tender devotion to her lover's memory; (2) *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

Finally, the volume of 1820 contained the five great odes: *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*<sup>1</sup>, *To Psyche*, *To Autumn*, and *On Melancholy*. These odes are his best work. Keats' poems fall, it will be seen, into two groups: (1) Those dealing with Greek mythology; (2) Those dealing with medieval themes. In all these poems we trace the new Romantic precept: love Beauty for Beauty's sake, for beauty in life and in art is the best thing there is, even when (as in *Lamia*) it is sheer illusion.

With Keats the Romantic Movement reached its climax. It continued with diminishing strength through the nineteenth century, and the magic and sensuousness of Keats is echoed e.g. in Tennyson and in the Pre-Raphaelites. Of all the Romantics, Keats has probably been the most influential. He dominates the English poetry of the nineteenth century. In Germany his influence is seen on the poetry of Hofmannsthal and Stefan George. It was of course his sensuous Spenserian and his rhetorical Miltonic verse which exercised this influence; it was not until the present century that the late *Fall of Hyperion* was appreciated.

\*

## SUMMARY OF XVI. THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

The Romantic Revolt came in the train of the French Revolution and embodied in poetry the revolutionary ideals of freedom. Its leaders were Wordsworth and Coleridge.

---

<sup>1</sup> Keats, the most Greek-like of all English the poets, could not read Greek. He got his knowledge of Greek myths, strange to say, from the pages of *Lempriere's Classical Dictionary* and a few translations that fell into his hands.



**William Wordsworth** (1770-1850), after spending some years in France during the Revolution, settled down in the Lake District and devoted his life to poetry.

In 1798 he and Coleridge published the *Lyrical Ballads*. Its *Preface* was a manifesto proclaiming the poetics of the new school. This preface declares that great poetry can be written about simple subjects and in simple language. It also declares that every-day life can be so treated as to have the charm of romance, and that romantic and supernatural themes can be so treated as to produce the impression of reality. Coleridge's ballad narrative, *The Ancient Mariner*, was a splendid example of the second, and Wordsworth's *We are Seven* of the first kind of poetry.

Wordsworth wrote many lyrics, odes and sonnets, not to mention such long blank-verse poems as *The Excursion*. The puzzle is that Wordsworth, who wrote supreme verse, also wrote much verse that is quite worthless. But he must be judged only by his best. For his best poetry has made him one of the great inspiring forces of English literature.

**Coleridge** (1772-1834) is the most eerie of the Romanticists. Besides his contribution to the *Lyrical Ballads* he wrote *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*, poems wonderfully suggestive of the unworldly dream mood in which they were conceived. The latter shows the influence on the poet of the old ballads contained in *Percy's Reliques*.

Coleridge after his return from Germany translated Schiller's *Wallenstein*. German influence is also seen in his *Lectures on Shakespeare* in defence of Shakespeare's methods of dramatic construction.

But the man who did most to popularize the Romantic Movement was the Edinburgh lawyer, Sir Walter Scott.

Sir **Walter Scott** (1771-1832) spent his childhood on his grandfather's estate on the Borders, a district full of old legends and romance. When he was a man he translated German ballads, gathered and edited the old Border ballads, and himself wrote a number of romantic narrative poems which read like expanded ballads, and have therefore been called *ballad epics*. The chief of these are: *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*. There had never been anything like them before, and they had a great vogue. Even more famous than his 'romances in verse' are his 'romances in prose', or *historical novels*. The first of these historical novels, **Waverley**, appeared in 1814. It deals with the Jacobite rising of 1745 under Bonnie Prince Charlie. It was followed by 26 other novels, the best of which, such as *Ivanhoe*, *Old Mortality*, *Kenilworth*, *The Heart of Midlothian* and *Rob Roy*, deal with the England and Scotland of the past. Others of his novels dealt with foreign parts.

Scott's books give wonderful pictures of Scottish life, and include all sorts of characters, from princes to beggars. They made the English understand and respect the Scots as they had never done before.

Scott was soon imitated and thus became a founder of a great school of historical novelists, among whom **Ainsworth** and **Bulwer-Lytton** deserve mention. On the Continent, too, he had many imitators. **Jane Austen** (1775-1817) wrote novels of social life in the provinces with such exquisite art that she ranks as one of the three or four great masters of the form.

**Lord Byron** (1788-1824) became the poet of the day after Scott. In a series of brilliant but superficial poems, he gave a voice to the revolutionary passion of Europe in the Napoleonic age.

After a wild life as an undergraduate at Cambridge, this young nobleman had travelled in Southern Europe, swum the Hellespont, written poetry. He had returned to England, become famous as a poet only to quarrel with English society and then go to live abroad for the rest of his life. He died in Greece fighting as a volunteer in the cause of the Greek insurgents. His best known poems are *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon* and the satirical comic epic, *Don Juan*. He also wrote plays, such as *Cain* and *Manfred*, which by some people are regarded as mere romantic rant. Like his verse tales these dramas show plenty of variety of scenery but little of character.

In some ways, for instance in his toleration of the cliché and in his aristocratic aloofness, he is perhaps nearer to the 18<sup>th</sup> century poets than to the great poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The English gazed at him in wonder, but they have never really admired him or fallen in love either with him or with his poetry as foreign nations have done.

**Thomas Moore**, the author of the *Irish Melodies*, is the lyric poet of Ireland. He was Byron's friend and after Byron's death edited the *Life and Letters of Lord Byron*.

A second group of Romanticists includes Shelley and Keats.

**Shelley** (1792-1822) was an idealist. His early poem *Queen Mab* shows him in revolt against the government and religion of his day. His chief poems were written after he had settled down in Italy in 1818 with his second wife, Mary Godwin. In *Prometheus Unbound*, a splendid lyrical drama, he sings his favourite theme – the liberation of Humanity from the tyrants that have hitherto crushed and tortured it. *The Cenci*, a drama aimed against the Papacy, deals with a terrible crime of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The best of all Shelley's works are his beautiful lyrics and odes, and *Adonais*, a passionate elegy on the

death of Keats, who died at Rome in 1821 at the age of twenty-six. Shelley himself was drowned a year later off Spezia.

**John Keats**, the son of a London stable-keeper, became a poet through reading Spenser and Milton. He wrote some of the most characteristic and most imaginative poetry of the Romantic Revival. His earlier poems, like *Endymion* (on a theme from Greek mythology), contained many faults and the *Quarterly Review* savagely advised the ex-apothecary's apprentice 'to get back to his gallipots.' They were succeeded by such richly romantic poems as *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the ballad *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and the great odes *To a Grecian Urn* and *To a Nightingale*. At the end of his life Keats turned away from Milton and tried in the revised version of *Hyperion* to write in a straightforward, less romantic way.

Keats has been in England the most influential of the Romantics, probably even more than Wordsworth. It was the sensuous, decorated Spenserian Keats and the rhetorical Miltonic Keats that the nineteenth century appreciated.



## XVII. THE VICTORIAN PERIOD (I).

**173. REFORM.** The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is dominated by the theories of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Bentham's motto was **Utility**: or 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number.' He and his followers the Utilitarians, regarded this as the true ideal of democracy. Bentham aimed at the reform (1) of the law, (2) of prisons and (3) of the British Constitution. It was due largely to him that the famous Reform Bill of 1832 was passed. It reformed Parliament by extending the franchise (or right to vote), and by redistributing the seats, so that the big new industrial towns now for the first time won great political power, and England passed from the rule of aristocracy under the rule of the middle classes.

A new era had dawned. Science was being applied to industry, and England, to the dismay of men like Wordsworth and Ruskin, was fast changing from an agricultural into an industrial country, from a lovely country into an ugly one, a country of smoke and of great factory towns, and from a semi-feudal into a semi-democratic state.

The Victorian era also witnessed an immense philanthropic effort to lift the lower classes out of the misery into which hasty and greedy urbanization had plunged them. There was an effort to give them better education and humaner laws and to protect and help them in their hard struggle for existence. In this movement, and in educating the millions of voters to vote intelligently, literature, and especially the novel, was to play a great part.

**174. THOMAS CARLYLE** (1795-1881) was a great moral teacher and inspirer of his age and a great personality in the literary life of his century. He stands for Scottish Puritanism turned Romantic.

He came of a family of Scottish Puritans, his father being a humble stone-mason at Ecclefechan. He studied at Edinburgh University with the idea of becoming a minister of the Presbyterian Church, but soon gave up all thoughts of any pulpit but literature. Inspired by German Romanticism this dour youth was destined to become the greatest lay preacher of his age.

In reading Mme de Staël's book on Germany, he found hints that in Germany men were thinking in a way different from elsewhere and he determined to learn German and

study the new German writers. After much trouble he got a copy of Schiller and next year copies of *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*.

In these early years of his manhood he passed through a crisis of bitter doubt. But as soon as he became familiar with Goethe, a new life began for him. He was able to speak his "Everlasting Yea," to say 'Yes! Life is a good and glorious thing!' and so dismiss the gloomy pessimistic thoughts he had about life. He was grateful to Goethe as his deliverer, and his enthusiasm for German Literature led him to introduce the great writers of Germany to his countrymen. He thus became the apostle of German philosophy in England. He wrote a *Life of Schiller* and *Essays on the German Romanticists*, and translated Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. But Fichte's glorified moral will appealed to the Puritan in Carlyle more than did the Olympic vision of Goethe, and before long Carlyle left Goethe for Fichte. German philosophy henceforth coloured his whole life and thought. Carlyle was not an abstract philosopher; he was rather a preacher on texts provided for him by Fichte and his other German teachers. His works all have the practical object of influencing conduct. His *Sartor Resartus* (= The Tailor Re-patched) or *The Philosophy of Clothes*, is a sort of fantastic autobiographical novel somewhat after the fashion of *Wilhelm Meister*. It is at the same time a powerful didactic satire on humanity. In it he teaches that it is not fine clothes or outward show that makes a man, but high character and love of truth. "A great new moral force has arisen in Europe", said Goethe when he read this work.

It was the first of his books to be written in the romantic, but rather outlandish, tempestuous style known as Carlylese. This style, a style that was 'like a mountain-wind sweeping through an orchard', he adopted from Jean Paul. With its prose poetry, its brilliant portraits, its grim humour, its flashing energy, its eccentricities of emphasis and vocabulary, it roused English readers as this German writer had roused Carlyle.

In another book, *Heroes and Hero Worship*, he takes Luther, Shakespeare, Dante, Burns and others to illustrate his favourite theory that history is made by great men, and not by mobs or parliaments. The same doctrine is at the root of his three historical works; (1) *The History of the French Revolution*, a book that in its fire and fury for Liberty has been said to be 'more revolutionary than the Revolution itself;' it is history 'read by flashes of lightning;' (2) *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* and (3) *The History of Frederick the Great*, Carlyle, like a belated war correspondent, visited Germany to study the Silesian battlefields and report on a campaign fought a hundred years before. In this book he gives



a most graphic description of the wars, the court and personages of Fredrick the Great's times.

In *Chartism* and in *Past and Present* Carlyle dealt with the great social problems of his day. In the latter of these two books he contrasts the satisfactory monastic England of the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the new industrial England. In his antidemocratic *Latter-day Pamphlets* (1850), he deals with the need for reform in English prisons, in Parliament, and elsewhere.

**Carlyle's Teaching.** In opposition to the veneration of the age for mere material wealth, Carlyle taught that *character* and not gold is the thing to measure men's worth by; that men should live not for pleasure but for duty and work; that all work was sacred that was honestly done for an honest purpose, for the good of man and the honour of God. He thus taught a *religion of deeds*. Bentham's Utilitarianism he denounced as egoism in disguise.

**175. LORD MACAULAY** (1800-1859). Another famous historian and essayist of the time was Thomas Babington Macaulay. His brilliant *Essays*, such as those of *Clive*, *Warren Hastings* and *Milton*, are remarkable for their clarity of style and picturesque presentation rather than for depth of thought.

His *History of England from James II to the Revolution* is the work by which he is best known. It is one of the principal sources of Thackeray's *Esmond* (§ 186). Macaulay's aim was to make history as vivid and fascinating as a novel of Scott's. But Macaulay was a Whig and an ardent reformer and in writing this history of England's great fight against absolute monarchy, he is often prejudiced and unfair in his judgements. His *History of England* has been dubbed a 'political pamphlet in seven volumes'. There is no denying, however, that his work is full of splendid descriptive passages.

He also wrote stirring historical verse, such as the *Lays of Ancient Rome* and *The Armada*.

**176. THE EDINBURGH REVIEW.** In order to help on the new ideas of reform in England, Lord Jeffrey in 1802 started the *Edinburgh Review*. This magazine did so much for the dissemination of Whig principles that Walter Scott and the Tories had to start another Review, the *Quarterly* (1808), to counteract its influence.



Although they disclaimed any political tendency, both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* tried to influence politics through critical dissertations on literature. Many of the great writers of the day wrote articles in them. These articles were called *Essays*, a rather misleading term; for some when printed singly fill a fair-sized volume.

Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh*, was famous for his dogmatic and sweeping criticisms, especially for his attacks on the Lakists. Coleridge's *Christabel* Jeffrey called a 'mixture of raving and drivelling', Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality* he spoke of as 'illegible and unintelligible.'

Jeffrey explained Beauty by the theory of "association of ideas"; we find a shepherd's hut beautiful, he says, because we associate it with the peace and quiet of pastoral life.

One of the many reforms advocated by the founders of the *Edinburgh Review* was that of education. They wanted to see the excellent Scottish system of village schools introduced into the schoolless villages of England. They also called for a change in the harsh criminal code. In those days the theft of objects to the value of five shillings was punishable with death, and people were transported for such comparatively trivial offences as poaching and theft.

Other well-known Reviews were *Blackwood's Review* and *The London Review*. In the latter, **Charles Lamb**, a delight essayist, the author of the *Tales from Shakespeare*, wrote various *Essays*.

Of all the Reviews, *The Quarterly* was the most notorious for allowing political antagonisms to bias its literary judgements. Its savage attack on Keats, for instance, was prompted by the mistaken belief that Keats was a radical (*cf.* § 172, n.).

Both Reviews did good work in insisting on the importance of the serious discussion of literary standards and principles. They were often rude and they were often wrong, but they provided a forum for battles of the kind that ought to be fought in every generation. Since the early nineteenth century periodical criticism in England became better mannered but rather weak and watery. An exception today is the invaluable *Scrutiny*.<sup>1</sup>

**177. THE HUMANITARIAN NOVEL.** Up to the year 1837 the popularity of Sir Walter Scott's feudal romances was unchallenged. On the appearance of Charles Dickens,

---

<sup>1</sup> Edited by F. R. Leavis, published quarterly by Deighton Bell & Co., Ltd., Cambridge

however, a change took place. Dickens, by harking back to the Richardson-Fielding tradition, made people take more interest in their own times than in the far-away past, and more interest in the lives of the quite common people around them than in those of the knights and ladies of romance.

Dickens' theme is the social condition of England after the Napoleonic wars. He put into the novel the new ideas of social reform and social regeneration preached by men like Bentham (§ 173) and Carlyle. Instead of making people shudder at the imaginary woes of nuns and maidens in dungeons and castles as the Gothic novelists had done, he made them weep over the real misery of the poor and their children in the great new industrial towns, in the factories, in the workhouses, and in the slums and ghettos of London. He wanted to rouse the sympathy of his readers and make them sweep away these evils.

Dickens was thus the leader of the movement in literature that used the Novel and Poetry to awaken men to the need for humane reforms. In verse the same aim is seen in the poems of **Tom Hood** (1799-1845), in his denunciation of the underpaid work of women in *The Song of the Shirt*.

A notable predecessor of Dickens was **Captain Marryat** (1792-1848), who advocated humanitarian reforms in the navy. Two of his best sea stories are *Peter Simple* and the English classic of the sea, *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836). Both books in their breeziness and their eccentricities remind us of Smollett (§ 128). Marryat has Smollett's humour without his brutality.

**178. CHARLES DICKENS** (1812-1870). Dickens was born at Portsmouth where his father was for a time a clerk in the Naval Dockyard. During the lad's early life his family often suffered poverty and he had little schooling. In his lonely hours he greedily read Cervantes, Le Sage, and several of the eighteenth-century English writers that he found when rummaging about in a dusty old garret in his father's house. These books had a permanent influence on his style.

After the family had removed to London (1822), the father was thrown into prison for debt. Little Charles, a sensitive boy of ten, was sent to work in a blacking factory, where he had to paste labels on bottles for six shillings a week. Long afterwards he described the drudgery, shame and bitterness of those years in his novel *David Copperfield*.



With time his father's circumstances improved, and at the age of 16, Dickens got a situation in a lawyer's office.<sup>1</sup> While in this lawyer's office he learned shorthand, and before long forsook the law for journalism, becoming a parliamentary reporter on the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*.

In his spare time, he now wrote a number of sketches descriptive of London life. To his delight these sketches were accepted by various newspapers. They were afterwards published in book form as *Sketches by Boz*, and their success decided him in favour of a literary career.

His next work was *The Pickwick Papers* (1837). Published at first in shilling numbers, it took England by storm. Henceforth the public greedily read whatever he chose to write for them. "I would rather have written that book than be Lord Chief Justice of England," said Lord Campbell. As a novel, however, the book was full of faults. It had neither plot nor construction. But it gave people in England the first chance they had had since the Napoleonic wars to enjoy a hearty laugh.

Dickens' energy as a writer was enormous. Within the next 33 years he wrote no fewer than 13 long novels; he edited *Household Words*, and afterwards *All the Year Round*, both monthly magazines; and, as if that were not enough, he gave courses of public readings both in England and in America.

But he had overtaxed his strength. Quite suddenly in 1870 he died at his home at Gad's Hill, leaving a new novel, *The Mystery of Edward Drrod*, unfinished.

He was buried in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Dickens' great achievement for literature was **the discovery of modern London**. Not only was he the writer who romanticized London and the low middle-classes; he was also the first missionary of social reform to penetrate into the dark slums of the great city. To make such squalid haunts interesting, he surrounded them with romance and humour.

**179. DICKENS' WORKS.** In the *Pickwick Papers* he introduced to the world a club of amateur Cockney scientists presided over by the portly, soft-hearted and bespectacled Mr. Pickwick, a kind of Don Quixote, Vicar of Wakefield and John Gilpin rolled into one. The members of the club get into all sorts of droll predicaments, from which they are

---

<sup>1</sup> To this legal apprenticeship he no doubt owe such figures in his works as Uriah Heep, Dodson and Fogg, and others.

often extricated by Sam Weller, Mr. Pickwick's witty, light-hearted, imperturbable, shrewd and faithful servant, a kind of Cockney Sancho Panza.

*Oliver Twist* (1838) is a realistic story of criminal life. It tells how a workhouse boy gets into the clutches of a gang of London thieves led by Jew Fagin. He escapes from their influence in spite of them, and at last becomes a respectable citizen. "In little Oliver," said Dickens, "I wished to show the principle of the Good surviving through every adverse circumstance." *Oliver Twist* is thus a picaresque or rogue novel with a didactic tendency.

Dickens began his next novel, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), the idea of showing up the cheap private schools run by such vampire school-masters as Mr. Squeers of Dotheboys Hall.<sup>1</sup> It developed in the end, however, into a full biographical novel of adventure. The hero, Nicholas, overcomes all difficulties through the kindly help of the Cheeryble brothers, two rich and good-hearted merchants.

*The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840) tells the story of how little Nell tries by her pathetic devotion to save her bankrupt grandfather, the keeper of the "Shop," from the clutches of Quilp, the dwarf, one of his creditors. The pair wander through England and have many strange adventures and meet many odd people. 'Poor little Nell,' worn out by her unselfish devotion, dies at last just when help is close at hand.

*Barnaby Rudge* is the story of a mysterious murder. One part of the book is an attempt at an historical novel and deals with the 'No Popery' riots of 1780, when the mob set fire to Newgate and for a time held London in terror. *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843) was meant to exhibit selfishness in all its forms. It was written after Dickens' return from America and deeply offended Americans by its frank – some said malicious – references to American conditions. *Dombey and Son* (1848) shows how the pride of a great London merchant is humbled and his heart softened by loss and misfortune. Here, as in all his other books with marked didactic tendencies, Dickens lightens the tragedy by bringing in a throng of humorous characters. *David Copperfield* (1849), a book in which Dickens relates the story of his own life, was followed by *Bleak House*. In *Bleak House* he satirizes and denounces the slow process of English law and the heart-breaking delays and red tape of the Court of Chancery. In construction it is perhaps the best of Dickens' novels. "In *Bleak House*", he says, "I have purposely dwelt upon the romantic side of familiar things." And this is the secret of his art in all his great works.

On his remaining novels the chief are: *Hard Times* (1854), describing labour troubles in Coketown, a place somewhere in the 'Black Country'; *Little Dorrit* (1857), an

---

<sup>1</sup> Dotheboys = *cheat* the heoys, 'To do' is slang for 'to cheat'.

attack on the cruel system of debtors' prisons; *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), a melodramatic picture of Paris and London at the time of the French Revolution; *Great Expectations* (1860), a novel of which Dickens himself thought highly – it is well constructed; it is also a sermon against snobbishness and ingratitude; and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865).

Nor must we forget the charming little tales Dickens wrote as Christmas stories, such as *The Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1843-1848).

**180. DICKENS' QUALITIES.** Dickens had many **grave faults**: (1) He is often melodramatic when he means to be tragic and merely facetious when he means to be humorous; (2) His sentimentality and pathos are often unpleasant to modern readers, his comic scenes often exaggerated and grotesque; (3) His method of composing with the printer's messenger waiting impatiently at his elbow led him to make up his plots as he went along. It is said that he often knew as little as his readers what the next chapter of a book was to contain.

**His supreme merits**, on the other hand, are plain to all. He is full of life, of the joy of life and belief in life. His style, though not polished, is always unaffected, fluent, sincere, full of go and to the point. His goodness of heart, his firm belief in human nature, his good temper, breeziness and infectious gaiety win all hearts. Above all for inexhaustible fertility in the invention of comic incident, of comic characters and comic situations, for bringing in a host of new types of men, and for the creation of characters of greater intensity than human beings, he is unique in literature. In brief, despite his shortcomings in technique, this 'inspired Cockney' is one of the greatest and most original writers in all English literature.

**181. OTHER HUMANITARIAN NOVELS.** Many novelists have since followed Dickens' example of dealing with social problems as material for fiction. Seven names may here be given:

**Benjamin Disraeli**, Lord Beaconsfield (1804-1881), in his *Sybil* (1845) described the condition of Lancashire workmen, in the years following the first Chartist riots.

1. **Charles Kingsley** (1819-1875), like Dickens a Radical novelist, tried, after the labour troubles of 1848, to use literature, in his novels *Yeast* and *Alton Locke*, for popular sermons

on the labour question. Kingsley's other novels were historical and had either a religious or a patriotic tendency. *Hypatia* dealt with the struggle between Christianity and Paganism at Alexandria in the 5<sup>th</sup> century; in *Hereward the Wake* he described the final struggles of the Anglo-Saxons against the Normans in the fenlands around Ely and in the *Westward Ho* the daring deeds done by the men of Devon in the days of the Spanish Armada.

2. **Mrs. Beecher Stowe.** An American humanitarian novel of the time was Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Mrs. Stowe appealed to the Southern slaveholder for the humaner treatment of the negro and the abolition of slavery.

3. **Charles Reade** (1814-1884), an artist and a scholar, was a novelist of the philanthropic school of Dickens. His finest work, however, lies in a different sphere, that of the historical novel. 'I know nothing sadder than the artistic career of Charles Reade,' says the critic Oscar Wilde in his *Intentions*: 'Reade wrote one beautiful book, and wasted the rest of his life in a foolish attempt to be modern, and to draw public attention to the state of our convict prisons and the mismanagement of our private lunatic asylums.'

To 'one great work' Wilde refers to is *The Cloister and the Hearth*. It shows, as its name implies, the tragic conflict between love and religion in a man's heart in medieval times. The hero of this carefully documented story was a real person and the father of the celebrated Erasmus of Rotterdam.

So far as technique is concerned, the most accomplished of Dickens' disciples was **Wilkie Collins** (1824-1889), the author of *The Woman in White* and *After Dark*. His well-written mystery story *The Moonstone* opens the long list of English detective novels.

Collins also had a marked influence on Dickens.

4. **Sir Walter Besant** wrote *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882) and through this novel inaugurated a most important philanthropic movement; for the People's Palace, in the poorer part of London called the East End, was the direct outcome of the book. This building was meant to draw people from the public houses, by giving them proper entertainment in their leisure hours. In Germany, Krupp, to the same end, built the Saalbau (or "Mechanics' Hall") at Essen.

5. The humanitarian novel became more and more a sermon on the woes following in the track of modern industrialism, as those woes increased. This is best seen in the novels of one of the most outspoken of Dickens' disciples – the realistic novelist **George Gissing** (1857-1903).



6. In the work of **H. G. Wells** (1866-1946), one of the most prolific of modern English novelists, we see the more modern humanitarian novel (§ 221).

**182. DICKENS' INFLUENCE ON GERMANY**, as was to be expected from the close affinities of the two peoples, soon made itself felt. *David Copperfield* was translated and became almost as popular as Germany as in England and America.

1. Gustav Freytag in his *Soll und Haben* wrote a similar novel, in which he showed how the heart is developed by honest love and honest work.
2. Otto Ludwig not only dealt as a critic with the stimulus given by Dickens to the *Dorfgeschichte* but himself wrote a village story, *Heiterethei*, in which in the same way as Dickens he uses subordinate humorous characters taken from humble life.
3. Fritz Reuter, the Low German Dickens, while in prison learnt whole pages of *Pickwick* by heart and created a German counterpart of this cockney hero in Onkel Bräsig, while in *Kein Hüsung* he gave us a parallel to *Hard Times*.
4. In Spielhagen's *Hammer und Amboss*, too, we see plain traces of the influence of *David Copperfield*.
5. Another warm admirer of Dickens was Wilhelm Raabe.
6. In more recent times Gustav Frenssen had paid homage to the Copperfield tradition in *Jörn Uhl*.

**183. JOHN RUSKIN** (1819-1900), the great humanitarian moralist and art critic, was, like Dickens, an idealist fighting against an age that believed in unlimited competition, an age that held that men who could not help themselves should go to the wall. Ruskin tried by teaching art and by preaching a new political economy to soften the brutal hardships of the system.

A Londoner, the only son of a wealthy wine-merchant, Ruskin was educated at home until he entered Christ Church, Oxford, in 1836.

In 1843, only a short time after leaving College, he published anonymously the first volume of *Modern Painters*. It made a great sensation, both by its style and its originality, and at once gave the writer a foremost place as an art critic. The object of the book was to make the British public rightly appreciate the genius and art of Turner, the



early impressionist landscape painter. By treating the subject in a popular manner, he tried to make art appeal to everybody. Vols. II-IV followed, describing the work of the great religious painters of Florence and Venice, and comparing them with Turner.

Ruskin's next books, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853), not only described the beauties of Gothic architecture but **ascribed these beauties to the moral and social system of the Middle Ages.**

**184. ART AND MORALS.** Ruskin held that there was an intimate connection between morality and art. This theory led him to try and make the art of England better by first making the people live more wholesome lives. There can be no art without morality, he said, and no morality where there is poverty and ignorance. Social reforms thus became necessary at the basis for art. William Morris, the poet, went through practically the same stages and became a reformer and later on a socialist.

After a certain point Ruskin's writings nearly all have a philanthropic, didactic and humanitarian tendency. In such books as *Unto this Last* (1860) and *Munera Pulveris*, he attacked the economic system of capital and wages. He taught that that nation is the richest which produces the greatest number of good and happy men. He often discussed his theories with Carlyle, whom he hooked up to as his master.

Ruskin's views must be seen against the background of the appalling drop in aesthetic standards which accompanied industrialization and the uprooting of the peasantry.

From theory, Ruskin went over to practice of philanthropy and started several schemes of social reform. He mooted plans, for instance, for the better housing of the working classes in London and for road-making as a substitute for athletic games among the students at Oxford; he advocated labour colonies and the promotion of home industries, such as hand-weaving and the spinning of linen; and he planned schemes for the draining and cultivation of the swamps near his home at Coniston Water, in Lancashire.

Among the best known of his later works are: (1) *Sesame and Lilies*, about books and the right way to read them; (2.) *Time and Tide*; open letters to the workmen of England; and (4.) *Praeterita*, his autobiography. His style is ornate, particularly in his earlier works.



**185. THACKERAY** (1811-1863). Dickens drew his material from the poor and lower middle-class of London. Thackeray, another great humorist of entirely diverse genius, by his brilliant pictures of the upper-middle and aristocratic classes, completed the work begun by Dickens. Between them they depicted the new democracy of the Victorian age.

Thackeray was born in Calcutta as the son of a high official in the Indian Civil Service. His familiarity with Indian official circles in England gave him the models from which he drew such Anglo-Indian types as those of Joe Sedley in *Vanity Fair* and Colonel Newcome.

When five years of age the boy was sent home to England to be educated. On the voyage the vessel touched at St. Helena, and Thackeray there saw the "Corsican ogre," Buonaparte, who, he was told, "ate three sheep every day and all the little boys he could get hold of."

He received the main part of his education at the Charterhouse School, which he branded in his books as the "Slaughterhouse". "There are at present 370 boys here," he writes to his mother, "and I wish there were 369". From there, in course of time, he went up to Cambridge. In 1830 he visited Weimar – which in his novels he calls "Pumpnickel" – and was graciously received by Goethe.

On coming of age he inherited a modest but sufficient fortune, and went to Paris to study art. By investing this money in a new newspaper, and partly, as it seems, by gambling, he soon lost it. In 1836 he nevertheless married and next year found himself obliged to return to London to earn a living with his pen. He wrote humorous sketches, ballads and short stories for *Punch* and *Fraser's Magazine*.

His work for *Punch*, both as a draughtsman and as a writer, is of great importance. It made him discover and develop his genius as a humourist. In *The Snob Papers* (1846) he gave vivacious and satirical sketches of London Club life. In these he dealt especially with the sort of men called 'snobs.' A snob is a man who has an exaggerated respect for social position or wealth and is inclined to be ashamed of socially inferior connections or to be servile to his social superiors.

These *Snob Papers* touched a very tender spot in the English national character and gained much more attention than did the novel *Barry Lyndon*, a masterpiece of irony and wit, which he wrote about the same time. This capital rogue story gives the boastful reminiscences of an Irish adventurer who had served in the army of Frederick the Great and seen life in various German duchies.



**186. THACKERAY'S FIVE GREAT NOVELS.** In 1847 *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, began to appear and at once raised Thackeray to the highest rank in fiction, both as a creator and a writer. In its *realism*, it began a new epoch.

*Pendennis* (1848) came next. It aims at describing with honest realism the life of the average young English gentleman of the time. In many respects Arthur Pendennis is supposed to be a portrait of Thackeray himself. In the *History of Henry Esmond* (1852), Thackeray gives a graphic picture of the age of Queen Anne and the Jacobite plots in the times of the Old Pretender. This book marks the revival of the historical novel, which is here treated from a new standpoint. *Esmond* tries to describe the past *realistically*, i.e., as contemporary writers might have described it. In its style, it intentionally imitates the language of the writers of Queen Anne's time.

In *Vanity Fair* Thackeray had laughed at Scott and his romantic descriptions of the past. In *Esmond*, too, inspired chiefly by Macaulay's *History of England from James II to the Revolution* (§ 175), he treats history from an objective, anti-romantic standpoint.

*The Virginians* is a sequel to *Esmond*; it shows us the Esmonds in America at the time of the American Revolution.

Thackeray's next book, *The Newcomes*, is, next to *Vanity Fair*, the most popular of all his works. Colonel Newcome's pathetic death as a poor pensioner in the Charterhouse, is one of the best known scenes in English literature. This good old Indian Colonel is Thackeray's beau-ideal of an English gentleman.

Besides these five great novel, Thackeray wrote the *English Humorists of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (a preparatory study to *Esmond*), *The Rose and the Ring* (a classic among children's stories), *The Four Georges*, and *The Roundabout Papers*.

**187. THACKERAY'S QUALITIES.** Thackeray's heart was as great as his intellect. The combination of these qualities made him the great humorous satirist of the life of his day. Like all satiric humorists, Thackeray has had to put up with charges of cynicism. But he was no cynic; he never sneered at humanity. He honestly writes of life as he saw it, and not of life as a tradition or as his readers expected him to see it. He scourged what he thought the bad manners and faults of the people of his day, but he did so with the love, honesty and humour of a great man and a great artist. In technique he is particularly good

at building up suspense through a series of preparatory scenes leading to an important scene – and at always fulfilling expectations in the latter.

**188. THE CONFLICT OF SCIENCE AND FAITH.** No other event of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had such a far-reaching and revolutionizing effect upon the thought of the world as the publication by Darwin in 1859 of his *Origin of Species by Natural Selection*. It seemed to give a new meaning to the universe, and to begin a new epoch in the history of humanity. It seemed to be opposed to all religious belief and to pull down all the temples of men's faith about their ears. For a long time a storm of abuse raged round Darwin's head. People said that his theory dragged men down to the level of brutes. Gradually, however, it was seen that what Darwin called a theory of *descent* was in reality a theory of *ascent*. 'Life comes through the slime, but not from it.'

**189. CHARLES DARWIN** was born in 1809, the same year as Tennyson, Gladstone, Poe and Lincoln. On leaving the University of Cambridge (1831), he was appointed naturalist on board H.M.S. Beagle, then about to start on a surveying cruise in the Southern Seas. After five years' absence he returned to England and set patiently to work to give scientific form to the ideas he had in his mind. He published *The Origin of Species* in 1859, and *The Descent of Man* in 1871.

His work was continued by his disciple and defender, **Thomas Huxley** (1825-1895), and his conclusions were supported by the parallel researches of the philosopher, **Herbert Spencer** (1820-1903), who based his system of philosophy on the theory of evolution as applied to the whole universe. Like such propagandists as Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy and others who had since preached, Spencer had almost no historical sense. The teaching of his great contemporary, **John Stuart Mill** (1807-1873), the champion of Utilitarianism, also had a profound effect on the whole civilized world. The Utilitarians maintained that the utility of actions, *i.e.* their fitness to produce happiness, was the real basis of moral distinctions. They regarded philosophy chiefly as a means towards social and political reform (§ 173).

The era of evolutionary science which Spencer and Darwin inaugurated could not but deeply affect imaginative literature. All men had to take sides either with them or against them; ignore them they could not.



This conflict of science with faith gives a clue to the undertone of pessimism running through the works of such Victorian writers as Arnold, Tennyson, Morris and Thackeray.

In the novel, the effect of the new theories of Darwin, Spencer and Huxley are seen in the realistic work of George Elliot and, later in the century, in that of Hardy, Shaw, Wells and especially in that of Samuel Butler (§ 219).

**190. GEORGE ELIOT** (1819-1880), whose real name was Mary Anne Evans, is the founder of the psychological novel, *i.e.*, the novel in which character is minutely analysed. Her books are full of the religious problems of her time.

She is at her best when dealing with the middle classes, the shopkeepers, tradesmen and country folk of the Midlands, the part of England where she was brought up and where her childhood was spent amidst farms, cottages, barns, cowsheds and hedgerows. Here she got to know the country parsons, horsedealers, village publicans and parish clerks portrayed in her books.

Her best works dealing with English life are *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*. In 1863 she published *Romola*, a historical novel describing life in Florence in the times of Savonarola. *Middlemarch*, in spite of its philosophical paragraphs, is perhaps the best of her works. It shows the conflict of old and new ideas in religion.

In George Eliot's earlier novels better than anywhere else, we gain deep insight into the great Nonconformist religious revival among the working classes of England in her day, the fruits of Wesley's work (§ 145). Her fresh and original way of looking at the world, her full-hearted sympathy for humanity, her fine humour and her unflinching realism make her one of the major novelists.

**191. ANTHONY TROLLOPE** (1815-1888) is a Victorian novelist who enjoys a considerable vogue today as an entertainer. His quiet tales of life in an English cathedral town have great charm for modern city dwellers. The series of *Barchester* novels are his best known works. Trollope wrote his very competent novels in a matter-of-fact way for money and he tells us exactly how much – it was usually a considerable sum – he obtained for each in his *Autobiography*. This disclosure so much shocked the Victorians,

who believed in the inspirational origin of literature, that for a time Trollope was not read.

\*

## SUMMARY OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD (I)

The three great writers of the Age of Social Reform and the Rule of the Middle Classes are **Carlyle**, **Dickens**, and **Thackeray**.

**Thomas Carlyle** (1795-1881) was the son of a Scottish mason. German literature and philosophy had a great influence upon him. It coloured his whole teaching and his way of writing. His chief works are *Sartor Resartus*, *The French Revolution*, *The Life of Cromwell*, *The history of Frederick the Great* and lectures on *Hero Worship*.

His eloquent appeal for the fairer treatment of the laboring classes led to the great philanthropic movement in literature known as the humanitarian movement.

**Charles Dickens** (1812-1870) had to pass through many hardships in early life. His first important work, *Pickwick Papers*, revealed by its treatment of Cockney life his genius as a comic writer. In the novels that followed there is, in addition to humour in the description of London life, a strongly marked purpose of social reform. *Oliver Twist* is a story about the lives of London thieves; *Nicholas Nickleby* describes the miserable lives of boys in cheap boarding-schools; *David Copperfield* in many ways Dickens' best work, was published in 1849, just a hundred years after *Tom Jones*. It is to some extent an autobiographical novel.

Dickens died prematurely from overwork in 1870. Of all the English novelists and humorists, he is the most popular. His books are not free from faults. Though full of finely drawn comic characters and situations, they suffer from hastily extemporized plots and faulty construction.

Among the many **humanitarian novelists** that followed Dickens, the best-known are Disraeli, Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Reade, Mrs. Beecher Stowe and Walter Besant.

In the hands of Dickens' followers the purpose of the humanitarian novel sometimes became too manifest. The work of George Gissing is depressing in its realism.

**William Makepeace Thackeray** (1811-1863) turned aside from the low comedy of Dickens to satirical comedy dealing with the upper and upper-middle classes of England.



He is the greatest satirist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He began by writing sketches in the satirical comic paper *Punch*. His first successful story, *Vanity Fair* (1847), which he called *a novel without a hero* in order to emphasize its realistic character, was a satirical study of the life of the richer classes in London. Becky Sharp, an unprincipled but exceedingly clever adventuress, is the leading character in it.

His other novels are *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, *Esmond* (a story of the Jacobite plots in Queen Anne's reign), and *The Virginians*, a sequel to *Esmond*.

Four years before Thackeray died, Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, a book which contained the theory of evolution. Its effect is traceable throughout the thought and literature of the rest of the century.

**George Eliot** is usually considered the founder of the psychological novel. She had a keen social conscience and the moral courage to live an emancipated life. **Anthony Trollope** wrote competent and entertaining novels which are widely read today.



## XVIII. THE VICTORIAN PERIOD (2).

**192. VICTORIAN ROMANTICISM.** By the premature deaths of three young poets of such brilliant promise as Keats, Shelley, and Byron, it seemed as if English poetry was to suffer an eclipse for many generations to come. But the ideas and desires which had inspired romanticism were not dead. Within ten years after Byron's death, two new poets of widely diverse genius, Tennyson and Browning, had published their first poems and continued the romantic movement. **The First Romantic Period** of the 19<sup>th</sup> century closed, let us say, with Scott's death in 1832. **The Second Romantic Period** began with the publication of Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott* in the same year.

**The Third Romantic Period**, or rather the Pre-Raphaelite phase of romanticism, began in 1850 with the publication of some of Rossetti's poems in a paper called *The Germ*. The group of Pre-Raphaelite secessionists included, besides Rossetti and his sister, William Morris and Algernon Swinburne.

**193. LORD TENNYSON** (1809-1892) continued and developed the poetical tradition of Wordsworth and Keats.

Alfred Tennyson was the son of an English clergyman of old family. He was educated at Cambridge, spending his vacations at his father's rectory only a score or so of miles away across the fens and meres of Lincolnshire. These fens gave him the scenery for many of his poems.

Tennyson's first two volumes of *Poems* appeared in 1830 and 1832. Some of these poems, such as *The Lady of Shalott* and *The Lotos Eaters*, with their word-music and their unworldly atmosphere, were reminiscent of Coleridge.

A far deeper, far more passionate and human tone came into the *Poems* of 1842. They contained such pieces as *Locksley Hall*, a dramatic monologue full of defiance and resolution, and the splendid epic fragment *Morte d'Arthur*. Since publishing his early work the poet had felt the storm and stress of life: (1) His father had died and he had been flung on his own resources. (2) In 1833 his close friend Hallam had died. (3) In 1836 he had fallen in love with the lady whom for lack of means he could not marry till 1850.



These events all helped to give the poems of 1842 and the following years their deeper tone.

In 1850 Tennyson published his best-known work, *In Memoriam*, written to the memory of his friend Arthur Hallam. It is a collection of lyrics, all in the same metre, and is the record of the grief and religious doubt of the poet in the three years following his friend's death. This poem, which he had begun as an elegy, ended by becoming a passionate defence of the poet's faith in the immortality of the soul.

The last trace of Tennyson's sufferings of that period is seen in his dramatic monologue *Maud* (1855). It is the story of a lover who is caught serenading the squire's daughter. He is insulted and forced into a duel by her purse-proud brother. In the ensuing duel the brother is killed. Maud now spurns her lover as a murderer, and in desperation he joins the army starting for the Crimea. The poem is a protest against contemporary worship of material wealth, and may be looked upon as concluding the period of Tennyson's personal poetry.

Later he turned for subjects to Malory's Arthurian *Morte D'Arthur*, a book that had fascinated him when he wrote *The Lady of Shalott*. The result was the twelve *Idylls of the King* (1857-1872). These romantic tales in blank verse have a certain allegorical meaning underlying them and binding them together, for their aim is "to show sense at war with soul." "By Arthur I meant the soul, by the Round Table the passions and capacities of a man," said Tennyson. King Arthur is meant, as in Spenser, to be the pattern warrior in this upward fight of the human soul in quest of perfection.

Tennyson's genius was fully rewarded in his own age. He was made Laureate in 1850 and in 1884 he was raised to the peerage. His wide culture, his deep feeling, his competent versifying, his firm belief that art dare not divorce itself from morals, and even his sentimentality (as in *The May Queen*), made him a worthy, if 'somewhat ladylike' representative of the Victorian age. He had an ear for verse rhythms and a dignified manner but little more.

The great question of Tennyson's day was the conflict of Science and Faith. This he rather shirked than vanquished. In fact he shirked the realities of his time always and this is why his poetry sounds hollow now. Instead of making poetry out of the impact of reality he turned away from it and sought "the poetic" in a hazy romantic dream-world. His example had a bad effect on English poetry. The eighteenth century believed that certain kinds of diction were "poetic" and others not; the nineteenth century believed that certain kinds of subject-matter were "poetic" and others not.

**194. ROBERT BROWNING** (1812-1889) is in many ways the very opposite of Tennyson. He is a romantic poet in partial revolt against romanticism. For he as heartily disliked the poetry of sensuous rhythms as he did the poetry of illusion and mysticism. He aimed rather at poetry which would glorify character and action, and he held that man live only to set forth God's praise. He is thus, both in his teaching and in his style, the complement of Carlyle. To the admirers of the smooth and fastidious verse of Tennyson, Browning's rugged, argumentative colloquial verse with its jagged rhythms and doggerel rhymes seemed nothing less than grotesque.

**195. BROWNING'S LIFE.** Browning, the son of rich parents, was born and bred in London. Being a Nonconformist he was not allowed to study at Oxford or Cambridge. His only university, as he himself said, was Italy. His reading was eccentric. Hence it is that his poetry teems with so many puzzling allusions.

His life was a smooth and happy one. As he was a man of independent means, it was of no consequence to him that his books did not sell. After his marriage to Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1846, he lived and worked in Italy in happiness and contentment for fifteen years. Browning's intense love for Italy colours all his poetry.

**196. BROWNING'S WRITINGS.** His work, which is about five times as voluminous as that of Tennyson, may be roughly divided into two great periods:

The first period contains his **experiments in romantic drama**; the second is the period of his **dramatic monologues**, the form in which all his best work was done. The *Dramatic Monologue* is a sort of melodrama – a drama in which there is only one speaker. This speaker is made to reveal his own character by telling the part that he and others have played in some poignant experience culminating in the present. Between the dramas and the pure monologues (in blank verse), lie the poems which Browning called *Romantic Lyrics* and *Ballads*. These and the *Dramatic Lyrics* (monologues in rhyme) form a kind of transition stage between the dramas and the dramatic monologues.

In Browning's first or experimental period, the most notable poems are: (1) *Paracelsus* (1835), a lyrical drama with a theme somewhat like that of Goethe's *Faust*; (2)

*Strafford* (1837), a historical drama dealing with the trial and condemnation of this great minister of Charles I; (3) *Pippa Passes* (1841), a lyrical drama. Regarded as dramas they are failures. Their strength lies in Browning's skill in analysing and describing character in words; their weakness comes from their inability to portray character in action.

To this period also belongs *Sordello* (1840). "In this poem," says the poet in a characteristic note, "my stress lay upon the development of a soul: little else is worth study." *Sordello* is a troubadour who fell in love with his master's wife and she with him. He is mentioned in Dante's *Commedia*.

Among the dramatic monologues of Browning's second period, the best examples are to be found in *Men and Women* (1855), *Dramatis Personae*, *The Ring and the Book* and the two series of *Dramatic Idylls* (1879-1880).

Browning emphatically denies that he in any way expresses his own opinions in any of these dramatic and semi-dramatic poems. He claims that "although lyric in expression, they are in reality always dramatic, being so many utterances of so many dramatic personages, not me."

Intermediate, and in a neutral zone, as it were, between the two main periods, stands a volume of religious poems called *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* (1850). They are spoken in the poet's own name, and not in that of an imaginary third person; they give us Browning's personal opinions on the great problems of life and death. In these poems, as in *Prospice* and other poems of later date, the poet passionately declares his hope in the soul's immortality. In many of his shorter poems and lyrics Browning tries to stir his reader to admire loyalty, activity and courage. In his rousing *Cavalier Tunes*, for instance, he gives us a good example of the literary Jacobitism we noticed in Scott (§ 158). *Pheidippides* tells the story of the heroic Greek runner who ran from Athens to Sparta to ask help when Xerxes invaded Greece. *Heróe Riel* is the story of a Breton sailor who saved the French fleet from the English by steering it in through a difficult passage between the rocks and the entrance to St. Malo, where the English could not follow. *How We Bought the Good News from Ghent to Aix* tells in galloping rhythm the story of a gallant ride. *The Incident in the French Camp* shows the heroic devotion of a young officer to Napoleon. Another well-known poem, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, deals with a German legend. ('Pied' means dressed in many colours).

At his best Browning is a very fine poet, combining virility with delicacy. At least one of his monologues, *My Last Duchess*, is a perfect achievement recalling the best work



of the Elizabethan dramatists. He wrote blank verse which was sensitive and wide in range; when it is particularly good it relies most on the rhythms of the speaking voice. Browning is much less objective and dramatic than he thought. He is essentially a provocative and didactic poet. The keynote of his teaching is a high-spirited optimism. He affirmed the divine in man.

**197. BROWNING'S 'OBSCURITY'.** In Victorian times, from the publication in 1840 of *Sordello*, Browning's name was a byword for obscurity. Everybody knows Carlyle's jest – how Mrs. Carlyle after reading *Sordello* could not tell whether *Sordello* was a man, a place or a river. Years later Browning retorted that he had written the poem “only for a few” and had “counted on their studying it with greater care.”

All the short poems mentioned above are simple enough; the Victorians, however, found many of his longer poems very difficult indeed. This was because they were so accustomed to the sort of romantic verse in which the mind is lulled to sleep that they did not expect to have to use their brains in reading poetry. But Browning uses his brain in writing, it is the striking and the unromantic and the un-Victorian characteristic of his verse, and his readers have to do the same. This seems natural to us but in the romantic period poetry was considered to be a drug.

Browning's poetry undoubtedly had a salutary and tonic effect upon his century by opposing some of the more effeminate sides of romanticism.

**198. ELIZABETH BARRET BROWNING (1806-1861)** was the representative poetess of the Victorian age.

A shock in early life shattered her already frail health and for years she had to live as an invalid in a darkened room at her home in London.

In this long period of illness and banishment from life (1821-1844), her poetic genius, instead of being damped, grew from year to year in depth, intensity and originality.

Her **early poems** (up to 1833) show the influence of Pope and Byron. Her **second period** (1833-1845) is the period of her religious and contemplative poetry, of the poems of renunciation expressing her own personal sorrow, and of humanitarian poems like *The*

*Cry of the Children*. This latter poem is an appeal of passionate motherly love for the protection of poor children working in mines and factories.

Her deeply pathetic poem *Cowper's Grave*, which also belongs to this period, shows the kinship she felt between her own fate and that of the author of *The Castaway*.

In 1845, however, a new life began for her. She loved and was loved by Robert Browning. In her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, all of which were written before her marriage, she pours out her love, she hopes and her misgivings about the great happiness in store for her. These *Sonnets from the Portuguese* – the title was intentionally ambiguous and misleading to people who did not know that Browning had nicknamed Elizabeth herself 'the Portuguese' – take rank with the sonnet sequences of Shakespeare and Rossetti (cf. § 45).

After her marriage she went to live for the rest of her life in Italy. The fifteen years which form her **third** or **Italian period** of poetry, show a diminishing of her lyrical power. *Aurora Leigh* is a long narrative poem interwoven with humanitarian and social reform motives.

**199. THE PRE-RAPHAELITE OR NEW ROMANTIC MOVEMENT.** In 1848 three painters met in London and founded what they called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The aim of this little band of secessionists was to protest against conventionality in art, which at that time took the form of Raphael worship. They felt there was something theatrical about Raphael's art. Not that they had any wish to ignore Raphael. They wanted to make art more sincere, more intense and more spiritual by restoring to it the ingenuousness and directness that they found in Raphael's predecessors. They were influenced, too, by the work of the German painters of the Nazarene school at Rome, who had already followed a similar ideal. The public laughed at these Pre-Raphaelite theories and would have nothing to do with their symbolic paintings until the great art critic Ruskin came forward and defended them.

The terms Pre-Raphaelite and Pre-Raphaelitism were at first used only with reference to painting. Soon, however, they were extended to literature, and though vague they are convenient as a title for this new offshoot of symbolic romanticism. The founder of the P.R.B., or Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, was a young poet and painter named Rossetti.



**200. DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI** (1828-1882) was born in London. His father, himself a poet and critic, was an Italian refugee who married an Englishwoman and settled in England.

At an early age the boy showed the romantic bent of his mind by rendering into English Bürger's *Leonore* and by poring over the old folios of Dante. He translated Dante's *Vita Nuova*, and his reverence for the great Florentine became one of the most fruitful inspirations of his life. His translation of the *Early Italian Poets* is well done. It was while engaged on the latter work that Rossetti wrote his famous Pre-Raphaelite poem *The Blessed Damozel*. Rossetti was not only a poet but a painter as well.

Rossetti's poems fall into two main groups:

(1) **The sonnet group**, deriving inspiration from his Italian sympathies, is full of the mysticism and passion of Dante. This group includes his best work, especially the sonnet sequence of 101 sonnets called *The House of Life*.

(2) **The ballad group**. These ballads draw their inspiration from the earlier English romanticism of *Percy's Reliques*.

Rossetti's work in poetry, though small in bulk and limited in range, takes a fairly high place for its skill, its concentration of effect, and the Italian sense of form that it shows.

**201. CHRISTINA ROSSETTI** (1830-1894) had in full measure her brother's sense of form as well as his mastery of words. In her religious lyrics she has depth and pathos.

Her earliest verses appeared in *The Germ*, the magazine of the P.R.B. The first volume of her poetry, *Goblin Market* and other Poems, was published in 1862.

**202. WILLIAM MORRIS** (1834-1896) was one of the most versatile minds of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When a student at Oxford, the bent of his mind showed itself in its friendship with Burne-Jones, the future Pre-Raphaelite painter. Holiday tours in France filled Morris with enthusiasm for medieval architecture. In 1858 he published *The Defence of Guinevere* and other poems, in which he described the harmony and fullness of life in the Middle



Ages. But it was not only by means of poetry that Morris tried to make modern life more beautiful. He himself worked as a designer; and in 1861 he opened a shop in London for the sale of wall paper, furniture, stained glass, etc. This movement had been started by Ruskin (*cf.* § 183). Its purpose was to fight the corruption of taste brought about by the industrial revolution. Aesthetic standards were lower than they had ever been.

At the famous printing press at Kelmscott Morris started a typographical revival. Taking Italian and German masterpieces of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries as models, the Kelmscott Press succeeded in reforming modern printing in England. In Germany, the famous *Insel Verlag* and others have taken up this poet printer's ideas.

Morris's poems *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), and *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-1871) mark the beginning of the second period – the period of his narrative poems. In his third period he took up the heroic epic in his form of translations from the Icelandic. *Sigurd the Volsung*, his masterpiece, was published in 1876. He also translated *The Æneid*, *The Odyssey*, and the old English epic *Beowulf*.

In the latter part of his life he became a social reformer. 'The effect of the industrial revolution has been to dehumanise life,' he said. 'So the only thing to do is to reconstruct society on a new and sound basis. Then we shall have a new and sound art.' He therefore became a Socialist.

In his poetry Morris is a typical Romanticist. Dissatisfied with life in the world around him, he flees in search of beauty to a sensuous world of illusion and dreams that his imagination built up for him in the Middle Ages. He claims Chaucer as his master but he lacks Chaucer's humorous ease and humility. His tales have the weakness of romantic escapism: he found solace in day-dreaming about remote times and his verse springs from this. Chaucer's tales on the other hand are often about his own times: he accepted realistically the life about him and this was good for his art. Morris was more successful in his life than in his verse. He deserves the highest praise for his attempts to improve taste. Hand labour in the arts and crafts must again oust machinery, he said. 'Morris knew by an act of faith,' says the Irish poet Yeats, 'that the economists should take their measurements not from life but from the vision of the world made perfect that is buried deep in all minds.' One of his pleasantest works is the Utopian romance called *News from Nowhere*.

**203. PRE-RAPHAELITE DISCONTENT WITH THE MODERN WORLD.** Rossetti, the mystic, had fled to medieval poetry and to a romanticized Dante. Another Pre-Raphaelite, Swinburne, in his insatiable sensuousness, in his tempestuous desire for the beauty which he could not find in modern life, fled back to pagan Greece and to the Renaissance. The secret of both poets is a failure to reconcile themselves to the views and ideals of their own century and that they could see no way of improving them. The march of the machine seemed irresistible and faith in real life was thus killed for them. All they could do was to dream of an ideal of beauty in a fictitious past.

*I mean by a picture, says Burne-Jones, the painter, a beautiful romantic dream of something that never was and never will be – in a land no one can define or remember, only desire – and the forms in it divinely beautiful.*

It is clear that from such assumptions neither good poetry nor good painting could come. Such typical nineteenth-century verse as that of Swinburne is a continuous dragged chant.

**204. ALEGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE** (1837-1909) was born in London. He came of an old Northumbrian family. As described by an old lady who knew him as a lad, he was 'a red-haired, ill-tempered little boy who always carried a volume of Shakespeare under his arm and slept with it under his pillow.' After being educated at Eton and in France, the youth went up to Oxford at the comparatively late age of twenty. At Oxford began his lifelong friendship with Rossetti, Morris and Burne-Jones. At the university Swinburne not only became an accomplished Greek scholar and ardent admirer of everything Greek but also conceived a deep dislike for Christianity, "the creed of the pale Galilean," as he called this religion.

It was not unnatural, then, that his romanticism should take the form of a worship of pagan Greek ideals. This pronounced Hellenism first revealed itself in his lyrical drama *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865). This drama and *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), an epic written in heroic couplets, are the best known of his longer works. *Atalanta* marks the beginning and *Tristram* the end of his best period.

**205. THE INSPIRATION OF ITALY.** In 1871 Swinburne's enthusiasm for democracy was quickened by contact with the Italian patriot Mazzini and expressed itself in a



volume of brilliant republican lyrics, *Songs before Sunrise*. The book contained such passionate songs of freedom as *The Song of Man*, *Siena* and *The Halt before Rome*.

Two groups of poets, Byron, Shelley and Landor<sup>1</sup> in the first part, and Meredith and the Brownings in the middle years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had already championed the cause of Italian freedom. After the liberation of Italy by Garibaldi in 1870, Swinburne's poems again gave eloquent expression of this ideal.

The best years of his early and middle manhood Swinburne devoted to the composition of a great historical trilogy on *Mary Stuart*. The three dramas that compose it are *Chasterlard* (1865), *Bothwell* (1874) and *Mary Stuart* (1881). These plays, like the lyrical Greek dramas already mentioned, were book-dramas, *i.e.*, they were not meant for the real stage. In spite of the magic of the rhythm and music in his poetry, Swinburne's work strikes us as monotonous. His attitude to life never seems to have deepened and clarified. His friend, George Meredith, is perhaps thinking of Swinburne when in the prologue to *The Egoist* he describes men as 'galloping to Hymen, galloping to Bacchus to escape the malady of modern thought, and the galloping is in vain.' More hostile critics have referred to Swinburne's style as the maximum of sound combined with the minimum of sense. Wherever we open Swinburne we find poetry in which verse rhythm is everything and speech rhythm nothing. He is very fond of alliteration, for instance, but he uses it without relating to the meaning, it has no connection with semantic stress as it has in Hopkins.

Near to the Pre-Raphaelite painters and poets are two other writers of note: **Walter Peter** and **Coventry Patmore**.

**206. WALTER PATER** (1839-1894) represented a sort of Pre-Raphaelite movement for the intensifying of prose style. He wrote some of the best essays on art ever published in English, *e.g.*, on *Winkelmann*, *Michael Angelo*, *Da Vinci*.

Pater's masterpiece is *Marius the Epicurean*. This novel deals with the life and intellectual conflicts of a young Roman patrician who is supposed to live at the time when

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864), who, through his 12 volumes of *Imaginary Conversations*, lives for ever in English literature, passed almost his whole life in Italy. The work of two great poets, Browning and Swinburne, is based to no small extent on the example and inspiration of Landor. Landor returned to austerer standards. He has many of the classical virtues.

the old pagan beliefs in which he has been brought up are giving way to Christianity. His *Imaginary Portraits*, too, are excellent.

**Coventry Patmore**, a Catholic Romantic, wrote several notable poems, among them a long idyll called *The Angel in the House* in praise of married love.

Another Christian poet of the time was John Keble, an Anglican clergyman who, together with the Oxford divine, John Henry Newman, published the famous *Tracts for the Times* which started the Tractarian or Oxford Movement.

**207. THE OXFORD MOVEMENT** shows still another side of Victorian England. For generations the Church of England had been asleep. Neither the murmurings of the Dissenters nor the battle-cry of the French Revolution had disturbed her slumbers. "Portly divines," says Lyotton Strachey (§ 247), "subscribed with a sigh or a smile to the Thirty-nine Articles, sank quietly into easy livings, rode gaily to hounds of a morning as gentlemen should, drank their two bottles of port of an evening. "They did their duty as clergymen, they thought, by keeping an eye on the poor of the parish and by conducting the Sunday services in a becoming manner. Otherwise they differed neither outwardly nor inwardly from laymen. In 1840, however, **John Keble** and **John Henry Newman** with their *Tracts for the Times* started the Oxford Movement. It was an attempt to bring a deeper spirituality into the offices of the Church by restoring certain medieval medieval rites, old ceremonies and dogmas which were forbidden at the Reformation and which fell completely into disuse after Cromwell's destruction of the Church of Archbishop Laud. In the series of Tracts they published, the reformers tried to bring the Church of England to a sense of its continuity with the Age of the Apostles and the Fathers. The Tractarians, as they were called, lamented the action of the Bishops who in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. had given Henry VIII his own way. 'The only good thing I know about Cranmer,' said Keble's friend Froude, 'is that he burnt well.'" Some of the leaders of the movement afterward left the Anglican Church altogether and went over to Catholicism. **Cardinal Newman** (1801-1890), the writer of the beautiful hymn *Lead, Kindly Light*, is the best known of them. His novel *Callisters*, a story of the conflict between Christianity and pagan idealism in the third century, was answered by Kingsley's *Hypatia*, an anti-Catholic novel. Newman's masterpiece is the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, the best religious autobiography in English literature. It defends his change of creed and is a fine piece of prose, simple and straightforward. (G. drokoyia = defence = justification). Since Cardinal Newman's time



Catholicism, the faith of medieval England, has made great strides in Great Britain. The new Cathedral at Westminster in London is a visible sign of this Catholic revival.

Newman attacked the rationalistic spirit bequeathed by the Renaissance. In this he joins hands with such previous critics, of scientific humanism as William Blake and with the many people in the twentieth century who regarded the exaggerated faith in man's powers which in different ways characterizes the four centuries between 1500 and 1900 as the chief cause of our disasters. This attitude is forcefully summed up in the words of **T. E. Hulme**, the critic who wrote in 1913: "As if it were not the business of every honest man at the present age, has agreed with Hulme, and he has certainly agreed with Newman that the only hope of salvation is Christianity, which may again save Europe as it did when Rome fell.

**G.K. Chesterton** (1874-1936), another convert to the Catholic faith, was a popular story-teller and Catholic propagandist. Mention must also be made of **Francis Thompson** (1859-1907), the Catholic poet and mystic, who wrote a religious lyric *The Hound of Heaven*.

Today Anglo-Catholicism deriving from the Oxford Movement of the last century is a very important force in English religion. Roman Catholicism is also active and converts to it, e.g. the novelist Graham Greene, are found in the front ranks of contemporary letters.

**208. MATTHEW ARNOLD** (1822-1888) and his friend **Arthur Clough** express Victorian religious skepticism.

Matthew Arnold is best known as the leading literary critic of the Victorian period, in his *Essay in Criticism*. In these and in his other prose works he tried to break down the insular prejudices of his countrymen and to bring English culture into touch with that of the Continent. He believed, like Goethe, that all true culture has its source in the art and philosophy of ancient Greece. In his book *Literature and Dogma* he championed the cause of Hellenism against the utilitarian Hebraism of the Bible.

As we see in his beautiful *Memorial Verse to Wordsworth* (1859), the poets Goethe and Wordsworth were to Arnold the great representatives of modern thought. Arnold's essays did much to make these two poets better understood in England.



He had the gift of coining striking phrases. "Philistine" and "Philistinism" are examples of words he made current to express the smug self-complacency and lack of the English middle classes of his time.

Matthew Arnold's poetry is derivative and technically skillful within the limitation of verse rhythm. His best poem is probably *The Scholar Gipsy*, a nostalgic verse narrative with famous descriptions of the countryside round Oxford. Many of his shorter poems, such as *A Summer Night*, *Dover Beach*, *Memorial Verses to Wordsworth*, *To Marguerite* and *Rugby Chapel* are successful renderings of a typically Victorian mood of comfortable pessimism.

**209. GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844-1889)** is the nineteenth-century poet who gives most pleasure today and who has exercised most influence on the twentieth-century verse.

Hopkins was the son of an official in the Consular service. He went to Highgate School and Balliol College, Oxford, where in 1866 he became a Roman Catholic. In 1868 he entered the Jesuit novitiate and in 1877 he was ordained. He worked as a priest in various parts of England until in 1884 he was appointed Professor of Classics at University College, Dublin, where he remained till he died five years later.

His poetry was not published until 1918. During his life-time the friends to whom he showed it thought it too odd for publication. It is quite unlike the romantic poetry of the nineteenth century, so much so as hardly to seem poetry at all to readers whose taste was adjusted to Tennyson and Swinburne. Hopkins' stresses are wholly semantic — they emphasize the sense; and it is really only stresses, not syllables, that count in his prosody for he can use any number of unstressed syllables in a line or put stressed syllables side by side. He uses alliteration to give further weight to the stresses. Basically his rhythms are those of speech but they are sometimes elaborated into exhilarating architectonic patterns. He has explained his system of prosody himself and calls it "sprung rhythm". The result is vigorous, masculine verse which allows mind and senses to function simultaneously.

In writing verse of this kind Hopkins was showing astonishing originality. Everything in the last two hundred years was against it, the eighteenth-century classical tradition as well as the romantic pursuit of the unreal which required rhythms that drug the mind. On the other hand, Hopkins has affinities, which he partly recognized, with

some elements in Old and Middle English poetry and with seventeenth-century speech-rhythm verse, and he thus marks a revival of the colloquial tradition. When his poetry came out in 1918 a revival of this tradition had already started and again “the intellect was at the tips of the sense” as it had been in Donne. Hopkins reinforced the example of T.S. Eliot (§ 253) and is one of the major influences behind modern poetry.

As a very young man Hopkins had written romantic verse of a Keatsian kind. On entering the Jesuit order he stopped writing for seven years. When he began again in 1775 with his superb *Wreck of the Deutschland*, which describes the loss in a storm of a passenger steamer of that name, it is in the new manner. With its thirty-five eight-lined stanzas, this is his longest poem. The rest of his poems are short. *The Windhover*, *Felix Randal*, *Spring and Fall*, *Pied Beauty*, and the sonnets dating from the Dublin period of which one begins “*I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day*” are among the best.

Hopkins was an intense lover of the natural world with a unique power of re-creating the detail of its beauty in his verse. He was also an intense lover of the Creator, and the two loves, though he knows that they can really be reconciled, sometimes tear him in opposite directions. Out of this metaphysical conflict springs what a friend called “the terrible crystal” of his verse, its excruciating yet exquisite tenseness. Hopkins often recalls Rilke.

Hopkins’ *Journal* and his *Letters* contain highly interesting criticism. The following remark about Keats reflects the new temper of the verse he started writing after his seven-year silence: “It is impossible not to feel with weariness how his verse is at every turn abandoning itself to an unmanly and enervating luxury”.

\*

## SUMMARY OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD 2

The Victorian age saw a continuation with diminished vigour of the Romantic Movement. However, though poetry was weaker there was a great deal of it.

**Gerard Manley Hopkins** (1844-1889) is the Victorian poet who is most appreciated today, and after him Robert Browning. Hopkins helped to revive speech rhythm and the organic use of stress. He has had an important influence on modern poetry.



The representative poet of the age was Tennyson, who, on Wordsworth's death in 1850, became a Poet Laureate. **Alfred, Lord Tennyson** (1809-1892), a master of the art of verse melody, continued and developed the poetical tradition of Wordsworth and Keats.

Tennyson was the son of a Lincolnshire clergyman. His principal works are 1) *In Memoriam* (1850), an elegy, or rather a series of religious lyrics; 2) *Maud*, a dramatic monologue; 3) *the Idylls of the King*, a number of shorter epics dealing with the story of Arthur, and his Knights, and 4) *Enoch Arden*, an epic of humble life. Besides a large number of shorter lyrics he also wrote a dramatic trilogy dealing with the history of England. Tennyson approached poetry from the standpoint of sensuousness and emotion restrained by chivalrous piety.

**Robert Browning** (1812-1889) approached poetry from the angle of intellect and stubborn optimism. Tennyson's poetry is emotional, Browning's is argumentative and more or less philosophical; it has a healthy, manly ring after the languors of the Romanticists. He believed in character and action rather than in romantic moon-gazing and wool-gathering. Browning's first period was filled with attempts at romantic drama, such as *Paracelsus*, *Pippa Passes*, *Strafford* and *The Blot on the Scutcheon*.

His second period is that of his Dramatic Lyrics and Dramatic Monologues, – and in this style of poetry, which is a compromise between epic, lyric and drama, he scored his greatest successes. *The Ring and the Book* is a series of such monologues.

His gifted wife, **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (1806-1861), wrote beautiful religious lyrics as well as humanitarian poems like *The Cry of the Children*, and a long poem called *Aurora Leigh*. The latter poem was a novel of purpose put into verse.

**The Pre-Raphaelites.** Just before the middle of the century the society called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood – The P.R.B. – made an effort to bring more passion, intensity and mysticism into art. Pre-Raphaelitism was thus an offshoot of romanticism. Its chief leader was **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (1828-1882), who was both a painter and a poet. He wrote: (1) *Sonnets* and (2) *Ballads*, the former from medieval Italian, and the latter from medieval English models. All his poetry is carefully attentive to form. With him here more or less closely associated:

1. **Christina Rossetti** (1830-1849), famous for her religious poetry;
2. **William Morris** (1834-1896), the author of *The Earthly Paradise*, and of excellent translations of Icelandic, Anglo-Saxon, Greek and Latin epics;
3. **Swinburne**.



**Algernon Charles Swinburne** (1837-1909), exalted the ideals and religion of ancient Greece over the English civilization of the present. His *Atlanta in Calydon* is a drama of revolt and pessimism. *Tristram of Lyonesse* is the best of his epics. He also wrote a large number of *Songs and Ballads*, many of them revolutionary in tendency. His many dramas, including the *Maria Stuart* trilogy, were written, he said, not for the real but for an ideal theatre.

His verse is very musical, but the meaning is often hazy. Unsympathetic critics have said of it that it contains the maximum of sound with the minimum of sense.

**Walter Pater** (1839-1894) wrote fine essays on art as well as a classical novel, *Marius the Epicurean*, describing Roman life in the time of Marcus Aurelius.

During the middle Victorian period, a wave of pessimism swept over England. The conflict between science and religion was made more acute by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. The effect of the religious doubts of the time is seen in the undertone of despair in **Tennyson**; in the loudly optimistic poetry of **Browning**; in the flight of the Pre-Raphaelites to Medievalism for comfort; in the work of **Walter Pater**, who shows men standing in doubt at the crossways between new faiths and old; in the pessimism of **Matthew Arnold** (1822-1888); in the spiritual aspirations of the **Oxford Movement**, as well as in the psychological and philosophical novels of **George Eliot** (1819-1880) and other writers of the day.



## XIX. THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

**210. GEORGE MEREDITH** (1828-1909). Dickens had used the novel as an instrument for humanitarian reform; Thackeray had used it as an instrument of satire; Meredith, more of a poet than either, tried to do for the novel what the Pre-Raphaelites had tried to do for poetry, *viz.*, to bring into it the passion and intensity of imaginative art (*e.g.*, *Richard Feverel*). Thackeray's novel of social satire became in his hands a novel of high comedy (*e.g.*, *The Egoist*).

His first great novel was *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859). It is interesting psychologically but its romantic interludes now seem sentimental. Meredith's second period (1860-1870) is one of brilliant experiments, both in prose and in verse, the chief novels being *Evan Harrington* and *Rhoda Fleming*. With *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* and *Beauchamp's Career*, two novels remarkable for their picaresque breadth of canvas and fine descriptions of English scenery, Meredith's third and greatest period begins.

In 1879 *The Egoist* came out. It won for its author supreme rank as a writer of high comedy. It is a psychological novel written largely in very clever, stylized dialogue. *The Egoist* should be read together with his fine critical *Essay on Comedy*, the main ideas of which are adapted from Jean Paul. Meredith maintains that the social function of comedy is to improve society by making people laugh at their own faults and follies.

Meredith's style is lively and forceful; he aims at terseness and condensation and is fond of epigram. Like Browning, he often seemed obscure to the Victorians, and he sometimes amused himself by encouraging them in this belief and being deliberately difficult as in the opening chapter of *Diana of the Crossways*.

Meredith was considered a highbrow novelist in his own time. Since his death his reputation has fallen in England, but it should recover. His work has vitality and originality.

**211. THOMAS HARDY** (1840-1928) is a representative of Darwinian realism in the English novel. Like Meredith he was a 'pagan'. But in everything he saw Nemesis as persistently as Meredith saw Pan. In all his novels Hardy depicts man as the helpless victim of Time and Fate.

Born in a thatched cottage on the edge of the Dorsetshire moors, Hardy grew up in the "Hungry Forties". Some of his novels deny Freedom of Will and declare that life has no real ethical basis. In novels like *Tess* and *Jude* he depicts men as being ruined not by their crimes but by their virtues and Fate as gloating over their downfall. These *Wessex Novels* all deal with 'Wessex', the central southern counties of England where he mostly lived and for which he had such a deep imaginative sympathy. They depict the tragedy and comedy of obscure provincial life. Meredith writes of lords and ladies, Hardy of peasants, artisans, and farm labourers, describing farm life as it was in the Dorsetshire in early Victorian days, before industrialism, railways and the village school had changed it for ever. The most famous of the twenty volumes he published are *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1892), *Jude the Obscure* (1896), and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). His novels are chiefly interesting for their sense of setting, for the background picture they give of Wessex.

The publication of *Jude* raised a storm of protest from the conventionally minded and Hardy decided to write no more novels for a reading public which showed so little understanding. The rest of his life was given to poetry, which he had really preferred to novel writing all the time. The best of his lyric are excellent in their unaffected bareness. They are good in texture, which his novels are not. In 1909 Hardy published a long epic drama with a comic background, *The Dynasts*, unveiling the tragedy of Napoleonic Europe. "*Tragedy is Life's true guise. Comedy lies.*"

Other novelists as well as Hardy are particularly connected with some region of England. One of these regional novelists is **Sheila K. Smith** in, for instance, *Sussex Gorse*. **D.H. Lawrence**, a writer of much greater stature, has described his native Nottinghamshire with brilliant skill in his early novels, *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers*, all in some of his short stories (§ 249).

**212. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON** (1850-1894) wrote novels of adventure. His stories of wreckers, pirates, gold-diggers, prisoners of war, smugglers and the like still fascinate young people. Like another Defoe, he loves to talk about far-off seas, regions (as he says in his charming *Child's Book of Verses*) *Where beneath another sky, / Parrot islands anchored lie, / And watched by cockatoos and goats / Are lonely Crusoes building boats*. Adult emotions, the adult world in general, play little part in Stevenson's books. His particular form of escapism from Victorian reality is into a harmless and rather charming, childish make-



believe. His prose is careful but slightly artificial, though this stricture applies more to the essays he wrote than to his novels, which on the whole are successful in giving the impression of simple ease and grace. His best romances of adventure are *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *Catriona* and *the Master of Ballantrae*, the last-named a stirring story of the days of Culloden and Bonnie Prince Charlie.

**213. RUDYARD KIPLING** (1865-1936) is the representative writer of the phase of intense British imperialism which culminated in the last years of Victoria's reign. His tales are mainly about India.

Kipling was born in Bombay and sent to England to be educated. On his return to India he became sub-editor of a newspaper at Lahore (1882-1889). The sketches and tales (about soldiers, sailors, Indian horse-dealers and troopers of the North West Provinces) that he wrote for this Anglo-Indian newspaper were published in London in book form in 1890 and at once caused a sensation.

Kipling wrote (1) Short Stories; (2) Novels; (3) Short Poems. His best work was done in the form of the short story and he was one of the first English writers to concentrate on this form. His first book of this kind, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, is a collection of realistic stories dealing with the military life of the English garrison in India, with Anglo-Indian society, and with the life of the natives. Of Kipling's longer stories, *Kim* (1901) is the best. It relates the adventures of Kim, the half-caste orphan child of an Irish sergeant in India. Kipling's most fascinating work is his *Jungle Book*, a successful revival of the beast epic of the Middle Ages. It tells how Mowgli, a man-child, is suckled by a she-wolf and brought up among the wild beasts or "people of the jungle," and how he learns their lore and is happy among them. It is full of the mysterious atmosphere of India. The *Jungle Book* has the advantage of being free from the imperialistic propaganda which makes most of Kipling's work seem vulgar to present-day readers.

Kipling wrote much doggerel verse, some of it, with its exaggerated rhythm and copious use of slang, effective in the same way as the music-hall songs on which it was largely modelled: it is full of "go" and "swing". *Barrack Room Ballads*, his best-known volume of verse, deals with military life. In addition to a familiar, he could also adopt an inflated, pontifical manner in his verse and he uses this to sum up his idea of the moral justification of imperialism in the well-known poem *The White Man's Burden*.

Kipling has considerable natural talent as a writer. For instance he was good at constructing short stories. In most of his work, however, he uses his talents crudely and puts popularity before quality.

**John Masefield** (born 1874) was another romantic realist who in his *Deep-Sea Ballads* paints the sailor's life with much the same colour and dash as Kipling used for the soldier's. Masefield is the present Poet Laureate.

**214. JOSEPH CONRAD** (1857-1924), a Russian Pole who had settled in London, was in his early books yet another romantic realist who dealt with ships and the sea.

Conrad, or, to give him his real name, Korzeniowski, was born in the Ukraine. After studying law at a Russian university, he yielded to his craving for adventure and went to sea. He served before the mast on various vessels and finally joined an English brig and in due course obtained his certificates as mate and master mariner. He made various voyages to the South Seas, the Congo and the Malay Archipelago. In 1894 weak health induced him to give up the sea and take to novel writing. Although he wrote in a foreign language, his prose is outstandingly good.

Conrad began with books such as *Allmayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* dealing with regions where Europeans and Asiatics meet. His first story of any importance, however, was *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1898), a weird tale of the sea, describing the uncanny spell which a malingering negro giant contrived during a long sea voyage to throw over a whole ship's crew.

In the latter part of his life Conrad objected strongly to being labeled "the poet of the sea". "As a matter of fact, I have written of the sea very little, if the pages be counted," said Conrad in 1923, a year before his death. It is only his early books which deal with the sea. Later ones such as *The Secret Agent* hardly mention it, and it is these which he himself preferred. Modern critical opinion agrees with him here though he is still known popularly as "the novelist of the sea". It is true that his early books about the sea are in their way excellent; in them man's steadfastness in fighting the elements inspires this Slav mariner and he often writes fine purple passages. The excellence of his later work is different. Here he is the deliberate artist in the novel, a writer who exchanged ideas with Henry James (§ 246) and learnt a great deal from him. His vision of life has deepened and become more complex. He uses the adventures tale or the "thriller" as Shakespeare did: he charges it with the significance of his personal vision.

**215. CONAN DOYLE'S** (1859-1930) detective stories fall under the heading of realistic tales of adventure. In *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, to mention only two books of a long series, Conan Doyle relates the experiences of an amateur detective confronted with the task of solving crimes that baffle the best detectives of Scotland Yard. These tales gain a new fascination for the present-day reader by being set in the strange London of the 'eighties', a London which now belongs to the past as completely as does the London of Dickens. In these detective novels, London is a great silent city where hansom cabs are seen flitting through ghostly fogs, where gas-lamps gleam faintly in dark, eerie streets; a London where the glare of electric light is still unknown, a London without motorcars, without the Underground and without telephones. The figure of Sherlock Holmes has now taken a permanent place among the stock characters of English fiction.

**216. THE NATURALISTIC SCHOOL.** Towards the end of the Victorian age, the influence of the school represented in France by such writers as Zola, Maupassant and de Huysmans, and later by Rémy de Goncourt, who depicted Man and his actions as the resultant of environment and heredity, spread to England. Their theory was that Art ought to be identical with Nature. They even put this theory into a formula and said that  $Art = Nature - x$ , the  $x$  representing the inadequacy of language as a means of expression. Zola's first British disciple was a young Anglo-Irishman named George Moore, who had been studying painting in Paris.

**George Moore** (1852-1933), like the Wandering Jew, spent his life in search of a spiritual fatherland. Finding the provincialism of his native country intolerable, he took refuge in France and then England. At each change he announced that he had at last found the country of his dreams, but his heart was in France and in his *Confessions of a Young Man* he says "It was Paris that made me what I am."

As a novelist Moore began with such Zolaesque studies as *The Mummer's Wife* (1884) and *A Drama in Muslin* (1886). *Esther Waters* (1894) and, later on, *Evelyn Innes* all betray his admiration for the French and especially for Zola, whom he calls the "Homer of modern life." In Moore's last three books, his Hail and Farewell to letters, *Ave, Salve*, and *Vale*, he describes his life in Ireland and the part he played in the Irish literary revival.

His best contribution to this movement was his collection of short stories called *The Untilled Field*.

But the best-known representative of the French naturalist school in England is **Arnold Bennett**, the novelist of the Black Country (Staffordshire).

Bennett (1867-1932) was the first to realize that the grey-skied, grimy region known as the Potteries, bristling with its myriads of ugly blast-furnaces, high chimneys, pitheads and heaps of slag, with towns crowded with dour and narrow-minded Methodists, contained excellent "copy" for a series of novels. With *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns* he scored an instantaneous success and followed it up with other tales on the same theme.

As soon as he had made enough money to leave England, Bennett made Paris his headquarters. Despite the fact that he lived in France from 1900 to 1910, no fewer than ten out of the fourteen novels he wrote before 1914 deal with life in the Five Towns of the Staffordshire Pottery District. Bennett manufactured novels and dramas just as methodically as his friends at home manufactured crockery. From the very start he made no secret of the fact that he wrote mainly to make money. Bennett's style, despite its clarity, energy, pungent wit and irony, is hard and shallow.

**217. THE DIVORCE BETWEEN POETRY AND THE STAGE.** The Elizabethan is the great period of the English drama; the English stage has never fully recovered since the Puritans closed the theatres in 1642. In the Restoration period and in the eighteenth century only comedies were good. On the eve of the nineteenth century the theatres brought in melodrama from France. The term melodrama was at first applied to sensational drama set off with music, but gradually the word came to have its present meaning. By 'melodrama' we now mean a play that depends for its effect on highly sensational situations. The bad people in it are villains of the deepest dye and the good people are angelic. A melodrama always has a happy ending and the villain, of course, always gets the worst of it.

The higher drama was dead. Tragedies were written by poets of the Romantic Revival (Shelly, Byron) and the Victorian period (Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne), but they were not seriously intended for the stage and in the end the Victorian poets abandoned all pretence that what they wrote might be acted and used the dialogue form to compose "book dramas". The divorce between poetry and the stage was complete.

**218. THE DRAMATIC REVIVAL.** In the eighties a new dramatic force brought fresh life to the theatre. This new force was the realistic problem drama of the Scandinavians.

Ibsen gave a check to melodrama. He taught the playwrights and the public that the drama of modern life could be made into a serious *criticism of life* and still remains interesting. Ibsen's realism, however, was too stark to be popular in England without some dilution by humour and sentiment.

The five chief writers of prose plays touched by this new movement are:

(1) **Pinero** (1855-1934), who astonished everybody by daring to write a play with a tragic ending, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. His chief plays, however, represent a revival of the old comedy of manners, realistic satire mixed with force.

(2) **Henry Arthur Jones** (1851-1929), who began with melodrama such as *The Silver King* but advanced to satirical comedy (*The Liars, The Hypocrites*).

(3) **John Galsworthy**, who in his realistic dramas, e.g., *Justice* (about prison reform), and *Strife* (about a modern strike) makes the drama do the same work as the humanitarian novel (§ 222).

(4) **Oscar Wilde** (1865-1900), a desperado of sensualism, who dazzled London with ironical social comedies full of wit, epigram and paradox, (e.g. *A Woman of No Importance, The Importance of Being Ernest, An Ideal Husband* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*), and shocked it with a French romantic tragedy of lust and bloodshed, *Salome*. (The type of light social drama cultivated by Oscar Wilde has been continued since by Somerset Maugham).

(5) **Bernard Shaw** who writes 'problem plays' about modern middle-class society and criticises it from the standpoint of the Socialist reformer (§ 220).

**Verse Plays.** In the thirties of the twentieth century efficient dramatic verse was restored to the English stage in the plays T. S. Eliot (*Murder in the Cathedral, Family Reunion*) and W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood (*The Ascent of F 6*) and others (§ 253, 4). Recently the use of verse has spread from the small experimental theatres to the London West End. Christopher Fry is a popular verse dramatist.

**219. SAMUEL BUTLER** (1835-1902). Young men towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century reacted from what they considered to be the authoritarianism and narrowness of their parents. The Victorian ideas of family life, of morality and of religion were called in question and denounced as irrational. The main protagonist of this revolt in England was Samuel Butler. He lived and wrote in comparative obscurity. Since his death, however, he has been acclaimed as one of the seminal minds of his age. Some of the seeds of revolt which sowed sprang up to yield a hundredfold in the works of Bernard Shaw. In the preface to *Major Barbara*, Shaw, with his usual air of authority, pronounces Butler “the greatest English writer of the latter half of the XIX Century” and laughs at the English for not having perceived how much he, Shaw himself, owed to “Butler’s extraordinary satire on English life, *The Way of All Flesh*.” Butler came from East Anglia. After distinguishing himself at Cambridge University, he quarrelled with his father and emigrated to New Zealand. With the £ 4,000 which his father had given him he bought a sheep-run and in a few years had doubled his capital. This lonely sheep-run gave him the setting for his famous anti-Darwin romance, *Erewhon, or Over the Range*, published in 1872, after his return to England. Thirty years later he published a sequel, *Erewhon Revisited* (Erewhon = nowhere, read backwards). The most notable of his novels, *The Way of All Flesh*, did not come out until a year after his death. It is largely autobiographical.

In his book on *Life and Habit*, Butler denounces Darwin’s theory of Natural Selection. He thought that Darwin’s doctrine, if accepted, would reduce man to a mere mechanism. In *Erewhon* Butler describes an imaginary country, whose inhabitants had centuries before, on the advice of their wise men, decreed that machines were the enemies of man and that all but the simplest machinery be destroyed. These sages taught that at one time fire, at another, rock, and at yet another, plant life had been the highest form of conscious existence, and that the time might perhaps come when Man himself would in his turn be superseded by machines if he allowed them to gain ascendancy over him. To prevent this, all machines in the land of Erewhon had been destroyed. The European visitor, Mr. Higgs, finds that he has committed a capital offence by bringing even watch into the country. In the land of Erewhon Mr. Higgs finds, too, that a cold in the head is frowned upon but crime regarded as an illness. Butler also ridicules Victorian religion in Erewhon.

**220. BERNARD SHAW** was born in Dublin in 1856. "I am a typical Irishman," he says, "my family having originally come from the north of England. When I was a boy, my parents let me go my own way... At school I learned nothing. I thus escaped the danger of thinking I was educated merely because I had learned to mispronounce Greek and Latin." In 1876 he migrated to London where he took up journalism and eventually became a dramatic critic. In London, having come under the influence of the Communist Karl Marx and of Henry George, the American land reformer, he joined them in denouncing the English system of landlordism and capitalism. "As an Irishman," says Shaw, "I could pretend to patriotism neither for the country I had abandoned nor for the country that had ruined it. I was a Socialist, believing in equality as the only possible permanent basis of social organization." He began his career as a propagandist by preaching Socialism in the streets of London. "It was from a cart in Hyde Park," he afterwards boasted, "that I first caught the ear of the British public."

Having as a critic championed Ibsen, Shaw tried to justify his faith in the new Scandinavian dramatist by writing similar plays criticising English social conditions. The performance of his first play, *Widowers' Houses*, was attended by crowds of Socialist admirers from Hyde Park, who applauded the piece the louder, the more the anti-Socialists hooted it.

In 1894, when the discussion concerning Ibsen's *Doll's House* and the New Woman was at its height, Shaw wrote *The Philanderer*. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* came next and was forbidden by the Censor. Finding the stage barred to him, Shaw began publishing book-plays with lengthy commentaries in the form of prefaces. He claimed that he was thus inaugurating a new form of art, half novel and half drama, adapted either for the stage or for the solitude of the library. The explanatory dissertations which Shaw henceforth prefaced to his dramas are sometimes longer than the plays themselves. "I write both plays and prefaces", he says, "with the deliberate object of converting people to my opinion."

By 1910 he had written nineteen plays and by 1927 a dozen more. "I found there was no limit but laziness to my power of conjuring up imaginary people in imaginary places and finding pretexts for theatrical scenes between them."

Shaw's earliest dramatic work consists of a group of propagandist plays dealing with the "economic crimes of society": *Widowers' Houses*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *The Philanderer*. These three plays he labeled *unpleasant*, he says, "because they were meant to force the reader to face unpleasant facts."



In the second stage of this development, in order to arouse more interest, Shaw mixed farce with satire. He ridicules what he calls the “heresies of the romantic school,” hero-worship, military glamour and the like. In *Arms and the Man* he debunks military glory. In *The Man of Destiny* he writes a mock heroic skit on Napoleon. In *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1900) he laughs at the conceptions of ancient history found in Shakespeare, and in *Man and Superman* (1903) he sets out to controvert the “ridiculous” old romantic ideas about courtship. He explains ‘courtship’ from the rationalist standpoint as the “war of the sexes.” In *John Bull’s Other Island* (1904) he attacks British rule in Ireland and in the preface denounces the British occupation of the early Christians and in *The Doctor’s Dilemma* makes fun of doctors and of modern medicine. *Heartbreak House* is a half farcical, half desperate study of Europe. In *Back to Methuselah* he deals with the origin and destiny of man. *Saint Joan* is perhaps his most successful play: his heroine is an impassioned and moving “first Protestant”. Every two or three years Shaw brings out a new play. The last was a slight but amusing comedy called *Buoyant Billions* in 1949.

‘People call Shaw a thinker’, says H. G. Wells, ‘but I doubt whether he has ever done any consecutive thinking at all.’ It has also been said of him that his mind is “a chaos of clear ideas”.

The weakness of Shaw’s plays is that they are fuller of argument than of action. They have been called ‘discussion plays’, the characters themselves all being argumentative and pseudo-intellectual rather than emotional. But Shaw’s long arguments, false and fallacious though they often are, are spiced with so much paradox and wit, his paradoxes are so naughtily impudent, and he himself so mirthfully cocksure about the infallibility of his panaceas, that he everywhere creates amusement and everywhere finds admirers.

**221. H. G. WELLS** (1866-1946). Born in Kent, this prolific novelist and keen social reformer began life as a draper’s apprentice. By dint of hard work he managed to win a science scholarship and went up to London. In London, like the hero of his novel *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, he studied physics, chemistry and biology at South Kensington. He then taught chemistry at a London school and began writing short stories dealing with the marvels of natural science. In *The Time Machine* (1895), Wells starts with the metaphysical idea that time is merely a dimension of space and relates how a wonderful machine was built that carried the inventor 800,000 years into the future and ultimately

brought him back to describe to the modern world the terrible vision he had seen. The book is meant to demonstrate that if the present sharp division between Labour and Capital be allowed to continue, Man will with biological inevitability sooner or later develop into two species, the one a race of beautiful but idle beings, living in palaces on the surface of the earth, and the other race of serfs, dwelling in caverns underground and, like owls, unable to see except in the dark. The story is meant to be a warning against the belief in Herbert Spencer's *laissez faire* gospel that the human mind was destined somehow or other to drift on from light to light. *The Time Machine* thrilled the whole English-speaking world and henceforth the public read whatever Wells liked to write. For the next thirty years he wrote novels of enlightenment, the object of which was to save the world from the fate foretold in *The Time Machine*. As a rationalist Wells held that reason, common sense and science would suffice to achieve Utopia. As time went on, he laid increasing stress on reform, deliberately choosing to neglect his chance of becoming a great creative novelist.

Well's novels fall into four groups: 1. **The early period of short stories and fantastic scientific romances**, such as *The Time Machine*, *The Stolen Bacillus*, *Tales of Space and Time*, *The Invisible Man* and *the War of the Worlds*; 2. **Utopian Studies: A Modern Utopia** (1905), showing life on a distant planet as a model for life on the earth to copy; *Mankind in the Making*; 3. **Fantastic Utopian Romances** (arising out of 2) e.g.: *The Food of the Gods*, in which scientific discovery is represented as a food which stimulates Gargantuan growth and so alters the scale of human affairs; *In the Days of the Comet*, in which the consequences of a sudden enhancement of the moral qualities of mankind are imagined; 4. **The realistic, semi-autobiographical novels** dealing with the social problems that confront the class from which the author himself had sprung: *Kipps*, the study of the soul of a shop-assistant (1905); *The History of Mr. Polly*; *Tono Bungay* (1909). Of all his books these three are the most human in their appeal. In *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, Wells describes his attitude towards the Great War. He was a great internationalist.

At first Wells delighted all types of reader with his scientific fantasies, including the great master of the art of the novel, Henry James (§ 243, 6), who was horrified when his brilliant protégé began "to take up politics". Wells replied by saying that to James the novel was "an end, like painting", whereas to him it was now "a means" to reform. Into this task of spreading what he thought were progressive ideas, Wells threw all his rich resources, a vitality equal to Shaw's and the abundant facility of Dickens. He often writes



loosely and badly in his later work but he always writes with enthusiasm. He is the most capacious of the popularizers in the novel of ideas.

In his realistic studies of the lower classes Wells gives many graphic instances of the modern Cockney dialect. In *Kipp's* for instance, "f", takes the places of "th:" Two fousand; [e] replaces [æ]: Gerrick Club. The "h" is omitted: The 'ouse door shuts at 'arf past ten. Wadjer mean? (What do you mean?) The "n" of an is overstressed before vowels: a nactor (= an actor). A nabit = an (h)abit. I'm a norphan = I'm an orphan. Final consonants omitted: Goo'bye; toce (toast); you ben lef' money = you've been left money. "You" is used as a singular with "was" and "is": If you was me. The past participle is used as a preterite or perfect: I seen 'im do it.

**222. JOHN GALSWORTHY** (1867-1993) was educated at Harrow and Oxford and was called to the Bar in 1890. In *The Island Pharisees* (1905) he denounced the injustice and selfishness of a society in which "one man dines out of gold and another has to die in the gutter." With his next book *The Man of Property* (1906), Galsworthy opened a series of studies dealing with the life of the well-to-do middle classes and satirizing the selfishness of the modern theory of property as well as the family life that is based on it. The purpose of all his work has been, as he states in a letter written to a German friend in 1920, "to point out the hardships of the poor, to suggest tolerance as a virtue and *to maintain that birth, position and riches are mere luck* which should make the fortunate owners wish to share with the unfortunate." Galsworthy's best book, *The Forsyte Saga*, and its various sequels, *The White Monkey*, *The Silver Spoon* and *The Swansong*, are likewise devoted to the study of the theory of property. The Forsyte family is satirized in all its multiple branches. As successful tea-merchants, solicitors, land and estate agents, underwriters, etc., the Forsytes stand in Galsworthy's works for the typical John Bull of the late Victorian and post-Victorian period.

In his plays, too, Galsworthy deals with the problem of Rich *versus* Poor (§ 218).

**223. HUMOROUS NOVELS.** One of the funniest books in the language is *Zuleika Dobson* by Max Beerbohm, who is also a brilliant caricaturist. It is the story of the effect of unusual feminine charm on English university life.



A very popular writer with obvious and stereotyped humour was Jerome K. Jerome, who made England laugh with his *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* and with the farcical *Three Men in a Boat*. Another of his books, *Three Men on the Bummel*, in clear and easy English and with good-natured Cockney humour describes the experiences of three London clerks who spend their holiday on a cycling tour through Germany. The three are made to give their impressions of the Father-land and Jerome thus gets a chance of comparing go-as-you-please England with an over-orderly Germany. The book is a humorous homily on a text Jerome found in Carlyle to the effect that 'one of the chief virtues of the Prussians is their readiness to be drilled.' He pretends, for instance, to believe that the poplar has become such a favourite tree along the German roads only because it is so ready to stand straight and upright like a soldier standing to attention. W. W. Jacobs, born 1863, was another humorous writer.

The great humourists in the English novel, however, are Sterne, Jane Austen, Dickens, and James Joyce (§ 249).

**224. THE IRISH LITERARY REVIVAL.** The literary revival that took place in Ireland round the turn of the century was a great-hearted attempt to revive a national Irish literature – a literature that should express the soul and aspirations of the Celtic race.

The Irish novels of such writers as Maria Edgeworth and Charles Lever (1806-1872) had shown the Irish peasant from the standpoint of the Anglo-Irish land-owning classes. The modern and anti-English revival in Ireland aims at showing the Irish peasant as a Celt. It aims, too, at reviving the old Celtic spirit and traditions of the country and even the Celtic language. Thanks to the efforts of a band of enthusiasts, this old Irish or Celtic tongue became, after the Irish Revolution of 1922, the official language of the country. Every effort is also being made to save the remnants of Ireland's ancient literature – a literature that contains mystic primeval paganism side by side with early Christianity.

Old Irish legends, ballads, fairy-tales and folk-lore have been and are being carefully collected and sifted. An Irish Literary Theatre, too, has been founded in Dublin and plays are performed in it in Celtic and English, adapted to stimulate national feeling 'by giving sincere and original drama in sincere, quiet, simple acting'. The scenery, too, was reduced to Elizabethan simplicity. The leaders of this revival were William Butler Yeats (b. 1865) and Lady Gregory.



**225. W. B. YEATS** (1865-1939) wrote poems, plays, and autobiographical and critical prose. In his early work, up to the first decade of this century, Yeats is the Irish romantic. In his later work he was very different and ranks as one of the few important modern poets, using speech rhythms and metaphysical imagery.

In his book *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1905) he contends that the spiritual life of man, the life and the adventures of the soul, are alone of importance, the life of the body being as nothing. It is the creed of William Blake and of Browning, wedded to the mystic symbolism of the French writer Villiers de Lisle-Adam, who said "As for mere living, our servants will do that for us."

Yeats' prose tales, lyrics, and dramas, are filled with supernatural and mystic motives. *The Countess Cathleen*, a prose drama, is a good example of his philosophy. The Countess is the great lady of a famine-stricken district in Ireland. When demons come to buy the souls of the poor, she in her charity steps in and saves the poor starving people, giving them gold to buy food with. But at last her money comes to an end, and in despair she sells her own soul to the merchant-demons so that she may relieve the sufferers. She thus saves them at the cost of her own salvation. But on the Day of Judgment she is forgiven, "for God judges the intention, not the deed."

The tendency underlying the play is evident, the merchant-demons being the English landlords. The tendency is, however, quite unconscious. For there was nothing Yeats objected to in dramatic art more strongly than the use of the theatre for political purpose or for the introduction of social passion and propaganda, whether veiled or open. It is for this reason that Yeats held so poor an opinion of Shaw and Ibsen as dramatists.

Other plays of Yeats are *The Pot of Broth* (a comedy); *The Land of Heart's Desire*; *The Hour-Glass, A Morality*; and *Shadow Waters*. They represent an attempt to bring poetry back to the theatre. But they show Yeats rather as a reflective and lyric poet than as a dramatist. The poetry by Yeats which appeals to the reader of today is small in quantity but excellent in quality. Most of it is to be found in the volumes published in the twenties and thirties. Perhaps finest of all are two lyrics expressing the fascination which the Byzantine world exercised on Yeats' imagination, *Sailing to Byzantium* and *Byzantium*.

**226.** The only Irish playwrights of the New Irish school who have really impressed the English with their dramatic talent are **J. M. Synge** and **Sean O'Casey**.

Passing through Paris in the winter of 1898, Yeats found shivering in an attic in the Latin Quarter a lonely young Irish poet, **JOHN M. SYNGE** (1871-1909), who was reading French books and dreaming "to do for Galway what Pierre Loti in his *Pêcheur d'Islande* had done for Brittany." Following Yeats' advice Synge left Paris and went to live among the rude fisherfolk of the wild islands at the entrance to the Bay of Galway to gather material for an Irish drama. In the little book that he wrote on *The Arran Islands*, we see Synge sitting by a turf fire in a modest inn, listening to the old tales told by the islanders, half in Gaelic, half in English. Synge now elaborated the rich but rather artificial Anglo-Irish language in which he was afterwards to express the soul of this primitive people. The beggars, brawlers, tinkers, drunken peasants, rapacious priests and quarrelsome old women of his plays, all speak Anglo-Irish, with a rhythm found nowhere else in English literature.

In these plays, this romantic realist and humorist sets before us almost exclusively twisted and backward people. At first Dublin audiences thought that Synge's realism was an insult to Ireland and hooted his plays off the stage. Gradually they saw, however, that there was a deep Celtic idealism beneath the crude, farcical ways of these poor Irish peasants. In *The Well of the Saints*, for instance, Synge shows us two blind beggars, Martin Doul and his wife Mary, sitting begging by the wayside. "What a fine thing it would be," they say to each other, "if we could be cured of our blindness and see how beautiful the world is?" By a miracle a saintly priest restores their sight; but instead of happiness sight brings them misery. Each now sees how ugly the other is and what cheating and misery there is in the grey world they had imagined so bright. On again becoming blind they refuse to allow the priest to restore their sight. They prefer illusion to reality.

In *The Playboy of the Western World*, his most famous drama, Synge takes an entirely farcical theme. Christy Mahon, the 'hero' of the Western World (i.e. Ireland), is a simple young peasant who goes about boasting that he has killed his father. Egged on by the admiration which this spirited protest against his father's tyranny excites among the inmates of the shebeen (= country inn), Christy poses as a great hero. But his father turns up and explains that he had only been stunned by the blow his son dealt him. Everybody now laughs at Christy's vainglorious boastings, seeing him to be a mere playboy, a clown and a make-believe.



With its rich, melodious style, its vivid imagery and humour this play is a deliberate protest against what Synge in his preface calls the joyless and pallid diction of the new intellectual drama of Ibsen. In this as in all Synge's prose plays, the talk of his Celtic peasants sounds like verse in disguise.

**227. SEAN O'CASEY**, (b. 1885), a man of the people and without literary training, has written a series of melodramatic but deeply felt plays showing the effect the fighting had on the working-classes of Dublin during the Irish insurrections. In three dramas O'Casey represents the three terrible upheavals in which he himself took part. In *The Plough and the Stars* he deals with the rebellion of 1916; in *The Shadow of a Gunman* with the Black and Tan War of 1920, and in *Juno and the Paycock* with the Civil War of 1922. All three plays with their intense realism and pathos may be regarded as the voice of the common people protesting against the machine-gun method of settling political disputes.

In *Juno and the Paycock*, the two outstanding figures are 1.) a drunken father, "Captain" Jack Boyle, who is nicknamed the "peacock" by his wife on account of his useless and vanity; 2.) Mrs. Boyle, the heroic mother, who goes by the name of Juno because everything important in her life happens in June.

The purport of *Juno and the Paycock*<sup>1</sup> is summed up in the touching prayer for peace offered up by Juno when she hears of the death of her son, "Mother of God, have pity on us all! Blessed Virgin, where was you whin me darlin' son was riddled with bullets! Sacred Heart of Jesus, take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh! Take away this murtherin' hate, and give us Thine own Eternal Love." Note that in reading Synge and O'Casey aloud, the r's must always be trilled.

**228. THE KAIL-YARD SCHOOL** (*Kale* = M. E. *cole* = *cabbage*) is the national school of Scottish writers of fiction who, on principle, give their writings a realistic touch by using Scottish dialect in their tales of humble life, about people who cultivate their own kailyards, *i.e.*, kitchen-gardens. The most famous of the 'kailyarders' is **Sir James Barrie**, whose romantic, sentimental humour is best seen in such tales as *A Window in Thrums*, *Auld Licht Idylls*, in the children's fairy story *Peter and Wendy* and in the play, *Peter Pan*.

---

<sup>1</sup> (In Anglo-Irish *Paycock* [pe'kok] = peacock; *me darlin'* = my darling; *murtherin'* = murderous.

\*

## SUMMARY OF THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

**George Meredith** (1829-1909). *The Egoist*, his masterpiece and his most original work, is a satirical comedy of high life. Meredith's theory that comedy should produce intellectual laughter is stated in his *Essay on Comedy*. This essay is a protest against the spirit of farce and low comedy then prevalent.

Meredith's chief fault is his wilful obscurity, a fault that more and more characterizes his latter works. He is nevertheless one of the most stimulating of all the great novelists.

**Thomas Hardy** has written naturalistic novels, chiefly about Dorset life. The best are *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

**Rudyard Kipling** in his Anglo-Indian short stories and later in his novel *Kim* gave realistic descriptions of the life of the English military and civilians in India, and in the *Jungle Book* described the wonders of forest life there. In his poetry he described the life of the common soldier with coarse but sympathetic realism (e.g., *The Barrack-room Ballads*).

**Robert Louis Stevenson** revived the story of adventure with effectiveness both in style and in character-drawing. *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and its sequel, *Catriona*, are his best-known novels. He died in Samoa, where he had gone for the sake of his health. Save for occasional Shakespeare revivals, the English stage had seen little but melodrama and farce during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A new force came in with Ibsen's plays in the eighties, and a kind of dramatic revival took place. **Pinero** and **Jones** set the example, abandoning farcical comedy and melodrama for serious drama. The most original of the new playwrights of the Ibsen school is **Bernard Shaw**, an Irishman and a Socialist. His plays are full of clever conversation about social problems. Their aim is to ridicule the romantic notions and social conventions of the Victorian age, both in life and literature. Among the most successful of them are *You Never Can Tell*, *Major Barbara* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

**The Irish literary revival** aims at reviving Irish or Celtic literature as a basis for Irish nationalism.

**W. B. Yeats** was a poet who changed his manner entirely in middle life. He began as an Irish romanticist and ended as one of the most important and influential of modern poets.

**J. M. Synge** and **Sean O'Casey** are the outstanding modern Irish dramatists.



## XX. NOTES ON AMERICAN LITERATURE.

**229. AMERICAN HISTORY.** The English Colonies in America were founded in the early years of the reign of James I, about the time when Shakespeare was preparing to leave London and retire to Stratford (§ 65).

The Colonies remained loyal to the mother-country till 1775, when the unimaginative attempts of the Government in London to levy taxes towards the cost of maintaining military forces in America without at the same time organizing political representation for the Colonists, led to vehement protest. This independent and anti-imperialist spirit was fanned to flame by the famous pamphlet on *Common Sense*, written in the spirit of Rosseau by Tom Paine, an Englishman who was a friend of the American writer, Benjamin Franklin. The Americans rose in rebellion. In the course of the war that followed, the New England Colonies declared themselves independent (July 4, 1776). In 1783 Great Britain finally recognised the seceding provinces as a sovereign state.

On separating from England, the United States, which then had a population of 1½ millions, formed themselves into a republic. The Government was to be '*of the People, by the People, for the People, and through the People.*' The most striking note of American literature has ever since been its enthusiasm for democracy and its impatience of everything bordering on feudalism.

The second great crisis in the history of the U.S. was the Civil War of 1863-1865, when the Southern States refused to abolish slavery and claimed the right to secede. After a long and bitter struggle and many battles, the Southern States were vanquished by the Puritan Northern States and forced to obey and remain in the Union.

**230. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN** (1706-1790) is the first American writer of note. In *Poor Richard's Almanac*, written before the War of Independence, he taught his fellow-colonists by his humorous proverbial philosophy how to be good and happy citizens.

**231. WASHINGTON IRVING** (1783-1859) was a humorist of the type of Addison. He first became famous through his *History of New York by Diedrich Knickerbocker*, in which

he makes good-natured fun of the New England Dutch. In his famous *Sketch Book* he recorded his impressions of America and England. One of these *Sketches* describes *John Bull* as seen through American spectacles, another describes *Westminster Abbey*. In a third he tells the humorous story of *Rip Van Winkle*, an American citizen who fell asleep in the woods as a subject of King George III and awoke twenty years afterwards to find the country a republic.

**232. FENIMORE COOPER** (1789-1851) turned for his novels to the life of the American backwoodsmen, Red Indians, fur-traders, scouts, etc. His theme is the romance of the forest and the prairie. Such works of his as *The Deerslayer*, *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder*, the so-called *Leatherstocking Tales*, are the favourite reading of all boys. His weakness is his indistinct character-drawing.

**233. EDGAR ALLAN POE** (1809-1849), is famous as a consummate master of the short story. His collection of stories, known as *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, are, as the title denotes, Gothic in character. He loves the gruesome, the supernatural and the terrible. One of his stories called *The Gold Bug* (bug = insect), for instance, describes a search for treasure hidden long ago by pirates of the Spanish Main, the guide being a pretended madman. Another, the *MS. Found in a Bottle*, describes the voyage of an enchanted ship to its doom in the South Polar seas.

Poe also wrote strange poems with heavily exaggerated verse rhythm and clever but superficial onomatopoeia. They are not rated very high in the English-speaking world but they had an important influence on French symbolist poetry. *The Raven* is his best-known poem.

**234. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE** (1804-1864) followed Poe in the development of the Gothic tale, using its motives in the realistic description of New England life. His novels and short stories have a moral basis, which is always lacking in the tales of his predecessor. The best-known works of this great novelist are *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Marble Faun* and *The Scarlet Letter*.



**235. HERMAN MELVILLE** (1819-1891). The reputation of this novelist has revived in recent years. His best book is *Moby Dick, or the Whale* (1852), a story of a sea-captain's fight against a whale which is at the same time an allegory of man's predicament. Two earlier novels, *Typee* and *Omoo*, are realistic accounts of Melville's personal experiences in the South Seas.

**236. LONGFELLOW** (1807-1882), America's most popular poet, was for many years a professor of Modern Languages at Harvard.

Of his long poems, two deal with American life in the romantic days of the early settlers: *Evangeline*, and *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. Both are written in rather monotonous hexameters. A third poem, *Hiawatha*, takes the Red Indians, hunting, and forest-life as its themes, after the fashion of Fenimore Cooper's novels. But Longfellow's attempt to exalt savage life into a subject for an epic is not really successful.

**237. WALT WHITMAN** (1819-1892), the most American of all American poets, was the son of a farmer. When he began writing he determined not to borrow any of his poetry from any foreign source. He told the muse of poetry it was high time she gave up talking about Troy and Odysseus and such things and talked about America. *Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia. Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts, that matter of Troy and Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings. Placard "Removed" and "To let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus.* The consequence of this break with Europe is a style often lacking in culture, full of eccentricities, full of audacities of thought and expression. But his work is also full of flashes of inspiration and of noble impulses. He is the poet of American democracy, a really democratic romanticist. He set down his creed in his famous poem *A Song of Myself*. Like Browning, this thorough-going impressionist deliberately 'forsook books and the Palaces of Art for the Palaces of Experience.'

Whitman's best-known books are *Leaves of Grass* (1855) and *Drum-Taps* (1865). In the struggle between North and South the poet had served with the troops as a volunteer army-nurse and some of his noblest poems were inspired by the events of the Civil War. His two moving lyrics *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed* and *My Captain* are full of glowing hero-worship for Lincoln and the cause that Lincoln championed.



**238. WHITTIER** (1807-1892) was a Quaker poet. He was also an ardent advocate of the abolition of slavery and some of his best poems, such as *The Slave Ships* and *Barbara Fritchie*, deal either with slavery or with incidents in the Civil War that was fought to abolish it.

In the American Civil War it was the English struggle of Puritan *versus* Cavalier over again, and again it is the Puritans who are the zealous idealists.

**239. EMILY DICKINSON** (1830-1886) is the greatest American woman poet. Her poems are brief and subjective. They were not published until 1924.

**240. BRET HARTE** (1839-1902), a poet and humorist, is one of the chief masters of the short story in modern literature. In such well-known Californian tales as *The Luck of Roaring Camp* and *An Idyll of Red Gulch*, he describes the wild and romantic life of the gold-diggings at the time when the gold-fever was at its height. His fine prose descriptions of life on the cattle-ranches and in the great mountain gorges of the Far West, as well as his short romantic narratives in verse, won for him world-wide fame as a humorist and story-teller.

**241. MARK TWAIN**, really Samuel Clemens (1835-1910), like Bret Harte, rose from poverty. In his early days a pilot on the Mississippi, he eventually became a newspaper proprietor and the privileged court-jester of the American nation. His book *The Innocents Abroad* gives a humorous account of the travels of some American tourists in the Old World. It was followed by *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Huckleberry Finn*.

**242. RALPH WALDO EMERSON** (1803-1882), is an American Carlyle. He wrote *Essays* on Nature, History, Literature and Philosophy. He is the great popular teacher of his country and preached eloquently against the dangers that he saw for America in



Mammonism. It has been said that he lacked that continuity of reasoning power without which no man can be a philosopher and that he also lacked continuity of emotional power. His chain of thought often breaks just before the real solution to the problem is reached. But by his cheerful faith in Man's destiny he was a splendid inspirer not merely of America but of the whole world.

The same longing for some escape from the materialism and narrowness of Colonial civilisation forced Americans more and more to seek contact with the older culture and tradition of Europe. This urge to revisit more especially the Western and South Western countries of Europe, England, France, Spain and Italy, expressed itself most notably in **Henry James**, **T.S. Eliot**, and **Ezra Pound**.

**243. HENRY JAMES** (1843-1916) is America's greatest novelist, the only American who has produced novels which in form and subject count as European classics (§ 246).

The twenty-four volumes of his collected works (in the London edition published by Macmillan's) fall into three periods in which may be traced the author's unflagging pursuit of greater perfection of form. The best-known novels of the first period are *The American*, 1877, describing the experiences of an American who comes to France determined to get a wife in Paris, "the best article in the market... the best thing going;" *Daisy Miller* (1878), *Washington Square* (1881), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). In the middle period the most notable stories are *The Tragic Muse* (1890), *Spoils of Poynton* (1897) and in the final period *The Ambassadors* (1903), describing the discovery of Europe by a New Englander who up till then had been fettered in the narrower American concept of life.

An individualist and an upholder of tradition, Henry James had a passion for analysing the refinements of civilisation and the lives of leisured people. In the pursuit of intellectual values, this artist of genius became an exile, taking up his permanent abode in Europe. In one of his books, *The Madonna of the Future*, he says that America's silent past, her deafening present, her absorption in industry and business, her 'standardisation' of life and ideas, all help to drive her artists to live abroad, in Paris and Italy, in perpetual banishment. He himself settled in England and took British nationality.

**244. EZRA POUND** (b. 1886) marks the entrance of American poetry, just as Henry James marks that of the novel, into European literature. Like Henry James, his compatriot, Ezra



Pound, too, has become 'an exile,' fleeing from the 'deafening present' of America to live first in London, then in Paris and then in Italy. The School of Imagism which this writer champions insists that poetry shall present hard and clear-cut 'images', avoiding all mere verbiage, i.e., words that are sentimental, vague, insincere or merely decorative.

Ezra Pound's collected poems *Personae* were published in New York (1926). They have had a marked influence on the poetry of America and have helped to check the vogue of slipshod "free verse". He warns his disciples that free verse should only be used when it yields effects of rhythm more beautiful than those obtainable by the use of set metre and accentual verse.

Pound is not so important for his own poetry as for the influence which he exercised, largely by personal contact, on other poets such as T. S. Eliot and Yeats. His ideas about poetry hold a central position in the aesthetics of modern verse.

**T. S. Eliot** (b. 1888) is the greatest living poet in the English-speaking world. He is an American by birth but like Henry James he took British nationality and he lives in England. He will be treated at greater length in the next chapter.

**RECENT AMERICAN LITERATURE.** Of great interest is the recent emergence of a vigorous and specifically American literature. Previously American letters centred in English-minded New England, and writers gravitated, often in the flesh as with James, Eliot, Pound, and Gertrude Stein, towards Europe. But the writers who were just old enough to be in World War I, **Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, John dos Passos** (all born between 1896 and 1898) have now established a distinctively American novel. The younger generation, **James Farrell, Erskine Caldwell, John Steinbeck** (all born between 1902 and 1904), have not even undergone European apprenticeship, as e.g. Hemingway did, and there is now a flowering of youthful vitality in the Middle West, in the South, and in California, as well as in the older East.

Hemingway, Faulkner, and Dos Passos have all made interesting experiments in the novel and helped to extend its range. Hemingway uses a passive "I" narrator, a "dumb ox", who registers a flow of often violent events without getting at all excited. He has adapted from Gertrude Stein a "continuous present" prose; it is full of repetitions and seems even simpler than real speech but is actually highly stylized. This "Hemingwayese" has combined with other related styles, e.g. that of Dos Passos, to



establish a useful common style known as “plain writing”. Faulkner comes from the Mississippi and writes vivid, contorted novels about the life of the South.

In the younger generation, Caldwell and Steinbeck reflect the social tendency of the thirties. They write with a direct social purpose in plain prose.



## XXI. RECENT LITERATURE.

**245. THE READING PUBLICS.** Elementary education was greatly extended in the latter part of the nineteenth century and this process has continued in the twentieth. One result has been a growth of reading matter: in quantity the English literature of the present century far exceeds that of any earlier period. If we take fiction alone, we find that about two hundred million words<sup>1</sup> were published every month between the wars. This huge increase has been accompanied by a splitting up of the reading public. There is now no one who writes for everyone who can read, the 'common miscellaneous public', to use Addison's phrase, of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century writers, because a single reading public no longer exists. Instead there are the more or less distinct reading publics who are known to one another, if not always to themselves, as 'highbrows', 'middlebrows' and 'lowbrows'. Very few writers write for, and very few readers are at home in, more than one of these divisions. Almost the only type of book that to some extent overrides these distinctions is the 'pure' detective story.

In some of its social aspects this splitting up of the reading public is distressing. From the literary point of view it has both advantages and disadvantages. It has meant, on the one hand, that the most talented and enterprising writers have been able to devote themselves almost exclusively to readers who are interested in literature as an art and as a forum of ideas. Relieved from the necessity of pleasing every kind of reader, they have enjoyed great freedom of experiment and have added substantially to the range and technique of the written word. On the other hand it must be remembered that the old necessity to please a single and miscellaneous public was a stabilizing influence, and emancipation from it has not unnaturally led to an impoverishment in intelligibility in some of the most interesting modern writers. It has meant too that the main-in-the-street kind of reader has been largely catered for by inferior writers; there has been much mass production of drugs for the mind at this level.

If we add up, however, we can probably say that in quality as well as in quantity the English literature of the last half century compares well with that of any other in the past. It is in the novel that achievement is most striking. The novel is the main literary

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 1932 by Q.D. Leavis.

form of the twentieth century: two out of the every three books published have been novels.

**246. THE TRADITIONAL NOVEL AND THE JAMESIAN NOVEL.** Henry James (1843-1916), an American by birth and an Englishman by naturalization, belongs chronologically to the nineteenth rather than to the twentieth century, but we return (§ 243) to him here because he was a very great inaugurator and has had a profound influence on modern fiction. In its short two hundred years of life up to James, the English novel had established a magnificent tradition of comprehensiveness: from Richardson and Fielding to Dickens and Hardy it had been rich in vitality, in vivid characterization, in inventiveness of plot, in humour and insight. But on the whole<sup>1</sup> this traditional English novel gave little attention to the particular quality which Henry James considered of primary importance, namely form, aesthetic concentration, organic unity.

A novel or a short story by James is as symmetrical, as delicately organized around one single situation as a classical play. In *The Ambassadors* (1903), for instance, the two chief characters change places in an exactly symmetrical pattern: Strether, who leaves America to 'rescue' a young compatriot called Newsome from the influence of Paris, falls himself a willing victim to its fascination and remains there when Newsome goes home. Every drop of significance is squeezed out of the central situation, which is kept before us on every page, yet not the least irrelevance is allowed to disturb the due subordination of every sentence, of every phrase, to the oneness of the total effect. Everything that could illuminate the situation, the core of the finished work of art, had to be included, and the sentences are often very long, full of buildings up and chisellings down, for James was determined to present nothing less, though nothing more, than the 'stubborn truth'; yet at the same time everything is in perfect proportion, every delicate expansion fits exactly into the preconceived harmony.

In short, what James did, with his brilliant handling of form, was to show that the novel could be a fine art. What he did was to establish the art novel, which sacrifices comprehensiveness and elasticity with a view to revealing the order in the disorder of life. He established it as an alternative to the traditional chapter-of-life novel, which sacrifices concentration in order to present life directly in all its untidy profusion – and

---

<sup>1</sup> The outstanding exception is Jane Austen (§ 166).

since his time every novelist has had to choose between these two kinds of novel or attempt some compromise between them.

James' influence has been very great through his criticism as well as by example. He was the first great writer to deal fully with the problem of the novel, the Aristotle of the *genre*. This very important criticism is to be found in the *Prefaces* in which he tells how he wrote each of the novels.

**247. ICONOCLASM.** In his intense interest in form James is an English Flaubert, but he did not sympathize with the iconoclastic side of naturalism. He never forgave Flaubert for receiving him in a dressing gown. The 'debunking' of nineteenth-century conventions was the chief task, not of James, but of **Samuel Butler** (1835-1902; § 219). In his interesting *Note-books*, Butler says that he tried to make his work "belong to the youth of a public opinion". More than anyone else he is undoubtedly the spiritual father of the innumerable attacks in modern literature on the Victorian values, for instance the plays and prefaces of **Bernard Shaw** (§ 220), who acknowledges his indebtedness, and the biographies of **Lytton Strachey**<sup>1</sup> (1880-1932). Recently these attacks have to some extent died down. In the traditionally constructed and often excellent novels of **Joyce Cary**<sup>2</sup> (born 1888) the life and values of the Victorian period are treated with respect.

**248. H. G. WELLS, ARNOLD BENNETT, & JOHN GALSWORTHY**, born 1866-7, are now thought to have enjoyed reputations in excess of their merits. They were all tempted by the art novel. Bennett (§ 216) abandoned it for profitable, competent potboilers. He said himself that if he had written three books instead of thirty he might have been a good writer; actually he wrote at least one good novel: *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908). Wells (§ 221) and Galsworthy (§ 222) both climbed over to Butler's side of the fence and gave up the art novel for the novel of social criticism. Galsworthy has a higher reputation on the continent than in England.

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g.: *Eminent Victorians*, 1918; *Queen Victoria*, 1921

<sup>2</sup> E.g.: *Herself Surprised*, 1941; *To be a Pilgrim*, 1942. His best novel is perhaps *The Horse's Mouth*, 1944.

**249. E. M. FORSTER, VIRGINIA WOOLF, JAMES JOYCE, & D. H. LAWRENCE**, born 1879-84, are the four novelists whose reputations seem most securely established of all those whose work falls wholly within the present century. They can hardly be said to form a distinct group but in different ways they all belong to the same climate of feeling. They all cultivated sensitivity to the inward life, to what Lawrence calls the 'fluid' element in life and Virginia Woolf 'the fugitive... the moments of illumination... matches struck unexpectedly in the dark'. It is typical of their attitude that Virginia Woolf should have condemned Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy as materialists<sup>1</sup>.

The first to publish was **E. M. Forster** (b.1879), who puts his main stress on the importance of the unmuddled personal relations between individuals of the same or different nationality. Forster is the chief exponent of the creed of private values, as superior to public values, which is particularly associated with the twenties of this century. The poet W. H. Auden (§ 254) expresses it thus: *Private faces in public places are nicer and wiser than public faces in private places.*

In theory, in his excellent study of the novel entitled *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster refuses to sacrifice the wealth of the chapter-of-life novel for the 'chilly' perfection of the Jamesian art novel, but *Howards End* (1910) and *Passage to India* (1924) have more pattern and concentration than was usual before James. *Passage to India* is irradiated by the mystery of a certain strange event which symbolizes the irrational and inexplicable element in life and gives the book a structural keystone. The subject-matter is personal relations between Indians and English in India. *Howards End* is about personal relations between different kinds of English people<sup>2</sup>.

**Virginia Woolf** (1882-1942) had much in common with Forster but was more experimental technically and more exclusively an artist in her novels. She developed the interior monologue method used by Dorothy Richardson and with it peered inwards into the stream of consciousness to pin down impressions. Even more than Forster, she was impatient of plot; in her novels events only matter in so far as they effect the minds and imaginations and senses of her characters. Moreover, her characterization is

---

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf led the attack on the older generation of novelists. See her essay, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.*

<sup>2</sup> Forster's other novels: *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, 1905; *The Longest Journey*, 1907; *A Room with a View*, 1908.

untraditional. She is not primarily interested in the differences between her characters. Instead, her main concern is to use them as sensitive instruments to record human consciousness, particularly on its shifting borderlands. Her impressionistic material is most successfully handled in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), the thoughts of the characters circling round the lighthouse, the co-ordinating symbol of the book, like moths round a lamp. Two other very successful novels are *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *The Waves* (1931). The latter is remarkable for its understanding of childhood<sup>1</sup>.

Impressionism is perhaps even better suited to the short story than to the novel. Virginia Woolf's short story, *Kew Gardens*, is excellent, and so are many by the impressionistic **Katherine Mansfield** (1888-1923), who was probably the best writer in this form in the English literature of the twentieth century<sup>2</sup>.

Virginia Woolf was a feminist as well as a novelist. Her long essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), is a particularly delightful feminist document. Her curious, amusing *Orlando* (1928) should also be mentioned; one of its merits is that it is a stimulating introduction to the English sense of period in history.

**James Joyce** (1882-1941) was the most original of modern novelists and probably the greatest. In *Ulysses* (1922) he succeeded better than any other writer in bridging the gap between the chapter-of-life novel and the art novel. There is all the profusion of Dickens and Sterne, and underneath, though most of us have to read Stuart Gilbert's study of the book to find it, a most meticulous order and symmetry. Possibly this gap, between the ideal of inclusiveness and the ideal of form, is really unbridgeable, possibly the pattern of *Ulysses* is rather imposed upon the disorder of life than extracted from it, but Joyce's achievement is nevertheless remarkable. The book tells the story of the thoughts and actions of three people in the course of one day, 16 June 1904, in Dublin, Joyce's native city. As in the *Odyssey* there are eighteen episodes, and throughout a close parallelism with Homer's poem provides a basic pattern and at the same time, by contrast with the heroic world-view, emphasizes Joyce's satirical outlook. At the end of the book, in Marion Bloom's monologue, the individual stream of consciousness flows into the river of the collective subconsciousness of man, in which Joyce believed, and which he

---

<sup>1</sup> *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929) by Richard Hughes (b.1900) is another brilliant novel about childhood. It is relatively new subject in literature.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Mansfield's later stories, about her native New Zealand, are best. E.g.: *Prelude*, *At the Bay*, *The Doll's House*.

spent the last twenty years of his life trying to record in his very difficult *Finnegan's Wake* (1939). In this book, which took seventeen years to write, he carries to extremes his refusal, first apparent in *Ulysses*, to be limited by the ordinary vocabulary: he coins words as he wishes and makes them convey various meanings at the same time, like a chord in music. He is more richly connotative in his use of words than any other writer in the literature of the world, so much so that often only a perplexingly small part of meaning can be grasped at a first reading. There are, however, no linguistic obstacles to the understanding of his earlier work, *Dubliners* (1914) and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). The first is a volume of excellent short stories about Dublin life in the naturalist tradition.

*A Portrait* is Joyce's fascinating autobiography in which he describes his Jesuit upbringing in Dublin and his reaction from it. At the end of this book Stephen Dedalus, who is Joyce himself and who reappears as one of the three main characters in *Ulysses*, says: 'I go to encounter... the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race'. This was the task Joyce set himself. T.S. Eliot has called him 'the most ethically orthodox of the more eminent writers of my time.'

**D. H. Lawrence** (1884-1930). The scientific-mechanistic civilization we have been building since the seventeenth century was alien to the climate of feeling of all these four novelists, but most violent in attacking it was D. H. Lawrence, the son of a Nottinghamshire coalminer. A writer with great natural gifts, he regarded himself primarily as a reformer and prophet, contending that since in the present chaotic state of the world great art was impossible, it was better to try to bring about a state of affairs in which it would again be possible than to write minor art. As an artist, Lawrence is particularly successful in his short stories. The early, autobiographical *Sons and Lovers* (1913) is usually considered to be his best novel. In most of his novels his message muddies his style.

When he is at his best, he shows a keen sense of the objective world and a wonderful faculty for instantaneous perception, but this excellence is rarely maintained for long; soon his eyes cloud over and he starts beating out his message in frenzied, repetitive elation.

Lawrence believed that modern *Angst* was fundamentally due to excessive cerebration at the expense of the instincts, that today we are 'cerebrating makeshifts, mechanical and intellectual experiments, not men and women'. He tried to correct this



disharmony by preaching the central importance of natural relations between the sexes. In the sense that he had a definite solution to offer, however doubtful we may feel about its merit, he must be regarded as the most affirmative of modern writers. He did in fact have a considerable influence in counteracting the disillusionment of the twenties.

**250. DISENCHANTMENT.** On the whole the tone of the twenties was one of disenchantment undisturbed by the accompanying pursuit of inwardness and the cult of personal relations. This is seen in the novels of Joyce and in the early poetry of T. S. Eliot, and at a lower level of perception in the popular plays of Noel Coward. In America it is found in the novels of Faulkner and Hemingway.

Indeed, some writers were too sophisticated even to be disenchanted, or so they pretended. **Norman Douglas's** witty novel *South Wind* (1917), and the amusing, fantastic tales of **Ronald Firbank** started a minor tradition of highly polished, small-scale achievements such as the very funny early novels of **Aldous Huxley** (b. 1894)<sup>1</sup> and **Evelyn Waugh** (b.1903)<sup>2</sup>. In the later twenties, Aldous Huxley was converted, chiefly due to the influence of D. H. Lawrence, from this witty skepticism to a more constructive attitude. Rampion in *Point Counter Point* (1928) is a portrait of Lawrence, and Huxley's attack on the fearful efficiency of the natural scientist's *Brave New World* (1932) is wholly in line with the Lawrencian philosophy.

**251. PROSE IN THE THIRTIES AND SINCE.** In the early thirties new currents set in. The largely passive disillusionment of the twenties was shaken off as frivolous and under the pressure of the slump and the menace of war there was a growing return to the study of man in his relations to society and the universe. The re-orientation towards society is seen most clearly in the Left Wing novelists connected with the so-called 'New Country' movement, **Edward Upward**<sup>3</sup> and **Rex Warner** (b. 1905)<sup>4</sup>, and in the reportage of social conditions by Mass Observation and such writers as **George Orwell** (1903-1950)<sup>5</sup>. The re-

<sup>1</sup> E. g.: *Chrome Yellow*, 1921; *Antic Hay*, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> E.g.: *Decline and Fall*, 1928; *Black Mischief*, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> *Journey to the Border*, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> *The Wild Goose Chase*, 1937; *The Aerodrome*, 1941.

<sup>5</sup> *Down and Out in London and Paris*, 1933; *The Road to Wigan Pier*, 1937; *Coming up for Air*, 1939. *Animal Farm*, 1945, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949, should also be mentioned.



orientation towards religion began, less noticeably, at about the same time. It grew increasingly powerful and has largely absorbed the New Country movement. It is partly Catholic, partly oriental-mystic. The Catholic branch is represented by the converts **Graham Greene** (b. 1904) and **Evelyn Waugh**. Aldous Huxley is the best-known representative of the oriental branch. (Always quick to respond to changes in outlook, he reflects many of them in his work; starting as a witty sceptic, he became a reformer and then religious; these phases of his, typical of the twenties, thirties and forties, are presented as the three chief characters in his *Time Must Have A Stop* [1944]). **Somerset Maugham's** inferior novel, *The Razor's Edge* (1944) also presents the mystic point of view and the ideal of 'non-attachment', The most talented writer converted to it is **Christopher Isherwood** (b. 1904), a novelist who showed great promise in the thirties<sup>1</sup>.

Greene, Waugh and Isherwood were the outstanding younger novelists. Greene has revived the story element, using flight themes; in his best novels he combines the excitement of a Hitchcock film with the profundity of Conrad. He is particularly brilliant in depicting evil. Greene's best novels are *The Man Within* (1929), *Rumour at Nightfall* (1931), *Brighton Rock* (1938), and *The Power and the Glory* (1944). To some extent both he and Waugh span the reading publics, Greene partly by writing some of his many books with less care so that they are not much more than thrillers, Waugh by being irresistibly amusing.

Broadly speaking, the thirties and forties, **even in religious writers**, show a move away from the characteristic inwardness of the twenties. **Wyndham Lewis**<sup>2</sup> says he prefers the sunlit surface of the earth to the 'intestinal billowing of dark subterranean passion' in Lawrence. Richard Hillary<sup>3</sup> and Cyril Connolly<sup>4</sup> speak disapprovingly of the 'evil of life... ingrown in self' and of 'the concept of life as an arrogant private dream'. Greene's *Rumour at Nightfall* describes a conversion from the Forster ethic, in this case to Catholicism.

There was now a tendency to externalize, to work with a group, to communicate more widely. In technique this is seen in the revival of allegory. In allegory things happen, and at the same time the happenings symbolize ideas, so that the allegorical method is a convenient way of fusing the inward with the outward. Allegory, moreover, encourages

<sup>1</sup> *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) is perhaps his best novel.

<sup>2</sup> *In Men Without Art*, 1934. Wyndham Lewis is a critic as well as a novelist and painter. Other important twentieth-century critics: T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, T. E. Hulme, F. R. Leavis.

<sup>3</sup> Author of the autobiographical *Last Enemy*, 1942.

<sup>4</sup> Editor of the literary periodical *Horizon*.



popularity because of the story element. Most of the writers mentioned in this section have used allegory, particularly Warner and Upward. The example of Franz Kafka, the greatest of modern allegorists, encouraged the tendency. Another younger novelist, **Henry Green**, used allegory successfully in *Party Going* (1939).

Prose style in the twenties had been varied, experimental, and often elaborate; in the thirties and forties it was generally simple, modelled on Defoe and Swift and on American 'straight writing'. This simple style is at its best in Isherwood, who for transparency and apparent ease can be compared with Swift.

**252.** There are three older novelists who must be included here. **Ivy Compton-Burnett** (b.1885) is the greatest English woman novelist now living. To a higher degree than anyone else she has succeeded in transmuting her material, the English upper-middle-class family, into art, giving it freshness and autonomy *vis-a-vis* life. She is strikingly and successfully original. Her novels are written almost entirely in dialogue, and it is dialogue of vitriolic incisiveness. She is unnaturalistic: for instance her characters have no hesitation in saying what they are thinking to the person about whom they are thinking it. The atmosphere of family tyranny which she builds up is suffocating and they have fearful things to say. The result is a fascinating mixture of horror and comedy charged with deadly insight into human motives. Formally her work is impeccable; she has great artistic economy and concentration of purpose<sup>1</sup>. Another older novelist, **T. F. Powys** (b. 1875), writes fantastic, grimly humorous, allegorical novels and short stories about good and evil as embodied in the remote country places of his imagination; his best novel is *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* (1928). **Forrest Reid** (1876-1946) wrote in scrupulous prose novels about boys, for whom he had deep affectionate understanding. His novels are set in his own Northern Ireland. One of the best is *The Retreat* (1936).

**253. MODERN POETRY AND T. S. ELIOT.** At the beginning of the century the pulse of English poetry was beating feebly in the after-glow of the nineteenth-century

---

<sup>1</sup> She publishes every two years and always manages to find another title of the same kind. E.g.: *Brothers and Sisters*, 1929; *Men and Wives*, 1931; *More Women than Men*, 1933; *A House and its Head*, 1935; *Daughters and Sons*, 1937; *A Family and a Fortune*, 1939; *Parents and Children*, 1941; *Elders and Betters*, 1944; *Manservant and Maidervant*, 1947; *Two Worlds and their Ways*, 1949.

romanticism. Of the poets who grew up before 1900, **W. B. Yeats** (§ 225) and **Thomas Hardy** (§ 221) have survived best, although Walter de la Mare, A.E. Housman, and Robert Bridges should also be mentioned.

The modern renaissance in poetry began just before and during the 1914-1918 war with the first appearance of volumes by the Americans **Ezra Pound** (§ 244) and **T. S. Eliot**. (Eliot became a British subject in 1927.) The change of direction was consolidated by the publication in 1918 of the vigorous speech-rhythm poetry of the English Jesuit priest **G. M. Hopkins** (§ 209) and by the development of **W. B. Yeats**, who in the twenties repudiated his earlier merely sensuous manner and began to write an austere, deeply-satisfying verse which appeals as much to the intellect as the feelings. That, briefly, was the main characteristic of the new poetry: it appealed as much to the head as to the heart, or more – when the pendulum swung over too far in the reaction against Tennysonian romance, as it did in the cross-word-puzzle verse of **William Empson** (b. 1907).

Eliot was the chief pioneer of the movement and is the greatest modern English poet. His poetry aims at that equal mixture of thought and feeling which is one of the special qualities of poetry as distinct from prose, and which, salted with wit, is the peculiar excellence of Shakespeare, Webster, Donne, and Marvell, perhaps of all English poets the most immediately pleasing to Eliot and his generation<sup>1</sup>. Like theirs, the basic rhythms of Eliot's verse are those of colloquial English; like theirs, his 'intellect is at the tips of his senses'; and, like them, he exploits the associations of words and phrases, thus reaching deep into the rich subsoil of the emotive contexts of language.

Like his fellow exile, James, he is deeply aware of European tradition and this has affected his poetry in two ways. First, it means that he is frequently allusive, and this increases the 'difficulty' of his poems, which in any case are not of the kind that can be 'understood' at a first reading. Like all highly charged verse, they reveal additional significance every time they are read and so grow with the reader. Secondly, his sense of the past has made him painfully conscious of the cultural disintegration of the modern world. Accordingly, in *The Waste Land* (1922) and other early poems he was pessimistic, seeing our civilization as 'a heap of broken images'. Since then, however, he has joined the Anglican Church, the 'waste land' has been fertilized by faith and he has found an anchorage in Christian resignation. His new attitude, which began to take shape in the late twenties, is most fully expressed in *Four Quartets* (1944). In these last poems his verse has changed, becoming more reflective and less concise.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the modern poet's supposed cry: *Eliot, Dryden, Webster, Donne, Bless the bed that I lie on.*

Eliot tries to be as clear as he can about the prevailing chaos of ideas. He is the most sensitive and the most accurate instrument that we have to register our age.

**254. YOUNGER POETS.** Like the novel, the typical poetry of the thirties shows a change of direction away from detachment and the esoteric towards either social reform or religion; and on the whole, poets, like the novelists, were less concerned with technique than with the problem of communication: in poetry there was an even more deliberate, though even less successful, attempt to bridge the split between the reading publics, which is still more marked in poetry than in prose. Social reform was the declared purpose of the 'New Country' poets, led by **W. H. Auden** (b.1907), **C. Day Lewis** (b.1904), and **Stephen Spender** (b.1909). This political poetry movement, one of the few clearly defined schools in English literature, was short-lived. It came to an end, practically speaking, with the end of the 1930's. The programme and the theory of the movement is stated in the introductions to the two anthologies that introduced it, *New Signatures* (1932) and *New Country* (1933), and in Spender's *The Destructive Element* (1936) and Day Lewis's *A Hope for Poetry* (1934). The most talented member of the group, W. H. Auden, has emigrated to America, thus reversing the procedure of James and Eliot, and during the forties, while developing as a craftsman, has been moving towards a religious position.

A few years after the launching of the New Country movement in the early thirties, another current set in and is still apparently the main one, although a great deal of poetry has been written in the last ten years which it is still too early to classify. This most recent wave of verse is incandescent, vigorous, surrealist, romantic, and coloured by religion. Its most outstanding representatives are **Dylan Thomas** (b. 1914) and **George Barker** (b. 1915), both of whom conform to the Eliot-Hopkins revival of the speaking voice in their basic rhythms. They are deeply passionate and give free rein to the imagination, encouraging a redirection of wonder out of the destructive blind alley of the natural sciences into more fruitful channels, in fact encouraging a renaissance of wonder. T. S. Eliot relit the fire of the mind, and that is the special achievement in the verse of the twentieth century so far. This new poetry may perhaps succeed in relighting the fire – and not merely the Tennysonian glow – of the heart.



## XXII. ENGLISH SYLLABIC VERSIFICATION.

**255. THE PRINCIPAL METRES IN ENGLISH.** Verse-rhythm poetry is distinguished by its regular rhythm. This rhythm depends on the regular recurrence after the same number of syllables of the *stress* or accent. An unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable gives a rising or *iambic* stress, as *agáin awáy*; this is marked by the formula  $x a$  or  $\text{—} \text{—}$ . An accented followed by an unaccented syllable gives falling or trochaic stress, e.g., *súnny, Lón-don*. (Formula:  $a x$  or  $\text{—} \text{—}$ ).

Thus the line

How swéet | the móon- | light sléeps | upón | this bánk  
 consists of five groups of iambic stresses ( $5 x a$ ), each group foot of two syllables being called a foot.

The following verse is trochaic ( $3 ax$ ); each two-syllable foot in it is a trochee:

Nów the | dáy is | óver | = — — | — — | — —

Níght is | dráwing | níght | = — — | — — | —

The Anapaest ( $\text{—} \text{—} \text{—}$ ):

Not a drúm | was héard | not a fú | neral nóte

As his corse | to the rám | parts we húr | ried.

The last syllable, *-ried*, is what is called an extrametrical syllable. The phonetic break or pause in the first line after 'heard' and in the second after 'corse' is called the *caesura*.

The Dactyl ( $\text{—} \text{—} \text{—}$ ):

Cánnon to | ríght of them

Cánnon to | léft of them

Vólley'd and | thúndered<sup>1</sup>

The Spondee ( $\text{—} \text{—}$ ) occurs when two stressed syllables come together. The foot is the unit of measurement for syllabic metre.

<sup>1</sup> This metre was suggested to Tennyson by Drayton's song on the Battle of Agincourt.

A line which contains one foot is called a monometer; two feet a dimeter; three feet a trimeter; four feet a tetrameter; five feet a pentameter; six feet a hexameter; seven feet a heptameter.

It must of course be realized in reading this chapter that exact uniformity in the use of these metres is virtually unobtainable and wholly undesirable. If we assume uniformity, we soon find ourselves making the absurd mistake of giving stress to syllables (e.g. prepositions) unstressed in speech. The bad poet and the bad reader have often made this mistake in the centuries since syllabic versification was introduced by Chaucer (§ 27).

**256. THE IAMBIC METRE** is by far the most common of all iambic lines is that of five stresses or ten syllables. This line is called an iambic pentameter or decasyllabic. Its formula is

— — | — — | — — | — — | — —

The cúr | few tólls | the kúell | of párt | ing day.

When two iambic pentameters are coupled together by a rhyme, we have a **heroic couplet**, the favourite metre of Pope and the 18<sup>th</sup> century poets.

When a number of iambic pentameters succeed each other without rhyme, we get the metre called **blank verse**, the metre of English drama.

**Iambic tetrameters.** Another important metre for long poems is the iambic tetrameter. It is employed by Butler in his *Hudibras*, by Burns in *Tam O'Shanter*, by Tennyson in *In Memoriam* (with variation of rhyme), and by Sir Walter Scott in e.g.,

The wáy | was lóng, | the wínd | was cóld, |  
The mín | strel was | infírm | and óld. |

The iambic tetrameter when alternated with trimeters is called the ballad-measure. It is seen in the following two stanzas from Chevy Chase:

God próspér lóng our nóble king,  
Our líves and sáfeties áll;  
A wóeful húnting ónce there did  
In Chévy Cháse befáll.

Other well-known poems in the same metre are *The Comic History of John Gilpin* and *The Ancient Mariner*.

If the two alternating lines of the ballad measure are printed as one we get a line of fourteen syllables called a fourteener. Chapman's famous *Translations of Homer* and



Tennyson's *May Queen* are in fourteeners.

**257. THE TROCHAIC MEASURE** is less frequently found in long poems. The best example of a long poem in this measure is *Hiawatha*, which (like Herder's *Cid*) is in trochaic tetrameters.

At the dóor on súmmer év'nings  
 Sát the líttle Híawátha,  
 Héard the whisp'ring of the píne-trees,  
 Héard the lápping óf the wáter. (*Longfellow*)

Tennyson's *Locksley Hall* and Poe's *Raven* are variations of this metre, made by running two trochaic tetrameters into one line and dropping the weak syllable of the last foot:

Mány a | níght from | yónder | ívied | cásement | ére I | wént to | rést

There are two kinds of hexameters, both of which have aroused controversy about their place in English verse:

1. **The Alexandrine** is an iambic hexameter or line of six feet with the cæsura after the third foot.

Formula: | — — | — — | — — || — — | — — | — — ||  
 | — — | — — | — — | — — | — — | — — ||

Some say that it is so called because it first occurs in an old French poem on Alexander.

Drayton, in his *Polyolbion*, wrote an entire poem in Alexandrines; but this metre is generally used only to conclude a long stanza of shorter lines, as by Milton in the *Ode to the Nativity* or by Dryden in his *Odes*. Pope parodies it in:

A needless Alexandrine ends the Song,  
 Which like | a wound | ed snake || drags its | slow length | along. ||

2. **The dactylic hexameter** is an imitation of the metre of Greek and Latin epic verse.

Formula: — — — | — — — | — — — || — — — | — — — | — — |

How art thou | fallen from | Heaven, O | Lucifer, | son of the | morning.

Longfellow's *Evangeline* is in this metre, as well as long poems by Clough, Kingsley and Swinburne.



**258. THE MOST NOTABLE STANZA FORMS.** A stanza (sometimes called a verse) is a combination or group of lines constituting a division of a poem.

A stanza of two lines is called a *couplet* or *distich*,<sup>1</sup> a stanza of three lines a *tercet*, or when rhyming, a *triplet*; of four lines a *quatrain*. Four heroic lines rhyming alternately, as for instance in Gray's *Elegy*, form an *Elegiac Stanza*. When the lines end in stressed syllables the rhymes are called masculine; when the last two syllables of a line rhyme with the last two of the next and the second syllable in each case is unstressed (e.g. *moring, adorning*), the rhyme is feminine.

**Rhyme royal** is a **stanza** of seven decasyllabic lines or iambic pentameters, rhyming a b a b b c c. It was introduced into English by Chaucer, and sometimes called the Chaucerian stanza (see § 30). It was used by Chaucer in his *Troilus and Creseide* and is found in many other poems.

**Ottava rima** is made up of eight iambic pentameters rhyming ab ab ab cc; a good example of its use is Byron's translation of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*.

**The Spenserian stanza**, adapted by Spenser from the Italian, consists of eight iambic pentameters followed by an Alexandrine, and rhyming a b a b b c b c c. Since Spenser's *Faery Queen*, it has been one of the favourite stanzas of English poets. It is used in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, Byron's *Childe Harold*, Shelley's *Adonais* and *Laon and Cynthia*, Burns' *Cotter's Saturday Night* and in Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*.

**The Sonnet** in its strict form, as used, for instance, by Petrarch, consists of 14 lines rhyming *abba abba cde cde*. (Altered by Wyatt (§ 45) to *abba abba cddc ee*.) The Shakespearean sonnet form is 3 quatrains + an heroic couplet.

The orthodox Italian sonnet consists of the octave, developing the subordinate thought in 8 lines, and the sestet the main thought in 6 lines. This has been called the 'ebb and flow' of the sonnet. Milton on the other hand followed the freer sonnet form of della Casa.

---

<sup>1</sup> *distich*, pronounced ['distik].

## SYNOPSES

### BEOWULF (AUTHOR UNKNOWN).

**259. Subject.** The adventures and brave deeds of a great hero named Beowulf.

**Divisions of the Poem.** The poem consists of 6357 short lines and falls into two parts. Part I describes the beautiful palace of King Hrothgar, the ravages of the fiend Grendel and his mother, and the deliverance of the land by the young hero Beowulf from a fire-drake which had been wasting the country of the Geats.

**Argument.** A certain King of the Danes, named Hrothgar, built himself a feasting hall. This hall was called Heorot, because its walls were hung with the antlers of the hart.<sup>1</sup> Here he drank and feasted with his companions, listening to the minstrels as they sang to their harps. But after a while a terrible man-eating monster named Grendel started stealing up to the hall under cover of darkness every night and seizing a number of the warriors sleeping there. For twelve years this went on, and no man was strong enough to confront the ogre. At last Beowulf heard of King Hrothgar's plight and came from over the sea with fourteen companions to deliver the land. In spite of the evil reputation of the hall, he determined to keep watch all night in Heorot. No sooner was it dark than Grendel came striding over the moors. He burst open the door and seized one of Beowulf's men. But Beowulf was upon him. In the furious struggle that followed, Beowulf wrenched off one of the monster's arms. Shrieking with pain, Grendel fled home to die.

Beowulf next attacked and vanquished the horrid witch, Grendel's dam, who had her cave at the bottom of a dark mere, bringing her son Grendel's head back with him as a trophy. Then Beowulf and his Geats returned home to the land of King Hygelac, loaded with presents and honours.

---

<sup>1</sup> A S. heorot = heort > M. E. hert = hart (cf. Hirsch).

In Part II. the poet describes Beowulf's terrible fight with a fire-drake or dragon. Long years have passed since the deeds recorded in the first part. Beowulf is now an old man. For fifty years he has been King of the Geats, having been chosen king after Hygelac's death. Now, at the end of his long and happy reign, he sets out with eleven warriors to deliver his people from a terrible dragon. In the fight that ensues, Wigláf alone stands valiantly by him. Beowulf is mortally wounded but manages before he falls to deal the dragon its death-blow. The hero dies rejoicing to give his life for his people. After his body has been burned on a great pile, his ashes, together with his armour and kingly jewels, are reverently buried by the sea in a great mound which can be seen far and wide.

Criticism. The deeds and personages of this poem are partly historical and partly mythical. Hygelac, King of the Geats in Southern Sweden, was a real man who fought against the Franks at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Beowulf, on the other hand, cannot be traced in history.

The manuscript is in W. Saxon of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars think it is based upon an original in the Northumbrian language of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Although written in the old metre and style used by the minstrels, this epic is not what is called popular poetry. Its highly developed art shows it to be the work of a literary poet..

Splendid as a specimen of old Germanic epic poetry, it cannot in construction or character-drawing be compared with the ancient epics of the Greeks and Romans.

But it gives us a vivid picture of the life and character of the old Northmen – their love of war, and song, and the sea; their strong feeling for nature; the loyal affection between king and subjects; their reverence for women; their manliness, courage, and sense of duty.

Interwoven with the pagan story we find many Christian ideas. Grendel, for instance, is said to be descended from Cain. The hero Beowulf, too, is more than a Hercules, he is the representative of a moral idea. He is the type of the king who is 'the highest servant of his state' and who spends his life in his people's cause.

### SPENSER: THE FAERIE QUEENE. 1590

260. This great epic describes the adventures which Prince Arthur and a number of Knights go through as a training in chivalry and virtue.

#### **Argument of Book I.**

One summer morning a mailed Knight is seen riding across the downs. A blood-red Cross on his breast-plate is the token of his holy mission. He is on his way to seek out the fiery dragon that has for years laid all that region waste.

Riding by his side on a white ass is the Lady Una, the daughter of the King of the land. At her request the Faerie Queene has entrusted the Red Cross Knight with this dangerous task. Her page, a lazy dwarf, follows hard at her heels. But before they come to the Dragon's cave they have many adventures. First a great storm overtakes them and they seek refuge in a wood, alas! only to lose themselves in its labyrinthine paths. For in this Forest the foul monster Error, half serpent, half woman, has its den. A desperate fight between the monster and the Knight takes place. After throttling the vile creature and cutting its head off, the Knight pursues his way. Next they encounter an arch-wizard named Archimago. He is disguised as a pious Friar, and woefully deceives the Knight and makes him desert Una. After many more adventures the Knight falls into the power of the giant Orgogli (i.e., Pride) and seems to be lost for ever. But Una appeals to Prince Arthur who fortunately at this moment comes riding by, on his way to the court of the Faerie Queene. After a furious fight Arthur kills the giant and liberates the Knight from his dungeon, and Una and the Knight go on their way once more. Finally, the dragon, too, is slain, and Una's parents are released from the brazen tower. After his marriage with Una, the Red Cross Knight returns to Gloriana's Court to report the success of his expedition.



**MARLOWE: THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DR. FAUSTUS.  
A DRAMA. 1587**

**261. Subject.** The life of a great man who barter his soul and his salvation for the possession of knowledge, power, and pleasure here on earth.

**The Contents of the Play.** Dr. Faustus, a medieval scholar, has studied all branches of learning, but his ambition for superhuman power still remains unsatisfied. At last he turns to the Black Art to aid him. Good angels try to dissuade him from his design, but he prefers the advice of their opponents, the bad angels, who encourage him to persist. At the instigation of two magicians, Valdes and Cornelius, he enters into a dreadful compact with Mephistopheles, the emissary of Lucifer. Faustus is to have twenty-four years of pleasure and power, and at the end of that time is to forfeit his soul everlastingly to Hell. The agreement is written in his blood.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Acts relate some of the rather grotesque and childish amusements of those twenty-four years. Faustus travels, he enjoys forbidden knowledge, he plays tricks in the Vatican, he raises the spirits of Alexander and Darius, and calls up Helen of Troy.

When his last hour approaches he realizes his folly and madness, but it is too late either to repent or pray or hope. In nameless despair he curses himself and the day he was born. As the clock strikes midnight, a storm breaks over the earth, and devils rush in and carry the wretched man away to Hell.

**THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE: THE FIRST PERIOD.  
(1591-1596)**

**262. Shakespeare's First or Rhyming Period** is a period of experiments.

**Henry VI. Part I.** deals with the campaigns of the popular hero, Talbot, against the French heroine, Joan of Arc. The latter, from motives of patriotic bias, is slandered as a witch and a woman of ill repute.

**Titus Andronicus** is a bombastic play in the style of Marlowe.

**The Comedy of Errors** is a 'comedy of incredible imbroglio.' Two twin brothers are repeatedly mistaken for each other. So are the two Dromios, their slaves. Source: A comedy by Plautus.

**Love's Labour's Lost** has a Euphuistic title and deals with a Euphuistic theme, *viz.*, Platonic friendship and love. In Act I. 3, where a fantastical Spaniard and his page Moth are discussing the signs of love, and elsewhere in the play, there is a delicious caricature of Lyly's fashionable court style.

**Henry VI. Pt. 2** begins the dramatization of the Wars of the Roses. A weak king is shown in conflict with his unruly barons. Like all the English historical plays of Shakespeare, its source is *Holinshed's Chronicle*.

**Henry VI. Pt. 3** (founded on an old play) shows traces of Marlowe's turbulent style.

**Two Gentlemen of Verona** is a romantic comedy, of weak construction. "The shadowy desert, unfrequented woods" in it give a hint of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**Venus and Adonis** is a narrative love poem in imitation of Ovid.

**Richard III.** is a continuation of Henry VI. The hero is in the style of Marlowe and the "murderous Macchiavel," he is a man of Titanic will, courage and ferocity, a hunchback monster of iniquity. The tragic conflict is between his will and his guilty conscience. Haunted by the ghosts of those he has murdered, his arm is weakened at the decisive moment and he falls before Henry Tudor at the Battle of Bosworth Field.

Shakespeare here gives the distorted Tudor view of Richard's character.

**Romeo and Juliet** is the tragedy of Love in conflict with Fate.

The story originally comes from an Italian tale. Two noble families of Verona, the Montagues and the Capulets, have long been in feud. Young Romeo (the only son of Lord Montague) and the young and lovely Juliet Capulet fall in love with each other, and are secretly married by Friar Lawrence. But fate is too strong for the lovers. Against his will, Romeo kills Juliet's cousin in a duel, and has to flee. Juliet, to escape marriage with Count Paris, takes a potion which is to enable her to feign death. Romeo, finding her in a trance, thinks her really dead and poisons himself. Juliet on awaking finds Romeo at her side, and in despair at his mistake stabs herself. Over the dead bodies of their children the wretched parents, all too late, are reconciled.

This 'Fate drama' is more lyric than dramatic in parts.

**A Midsummer Night's Dream** is a lyrical romantic drama. Two pairs of Athenian lovers flee into a wood near Athens. Here dwells Oberon, the king of the Fairies, with his

tiny messenger Puck, and Titania, the Fairy Queen. The latter, under a spell, becomes enamoured of Dick Bottom the Weaver, whose head Oberon has changed into that of a donkey. In the comic interlude, *Pyramus and Thisbe*, played by Dick Bottom and the clowns, the critics see a caricature of *Romeo and Juliet*. Eventually Titania and Oberon are reconciled, and Dick Bottom is restored to his human shape. The Athenian lovers, too, return to Athens to be married.

**King Richard II.** depicts the fate of a King too weak of will to face the difficulties of his position. Bolingbroke overthrows him and takes his place as Henry IV.

**King John** is a drama of episodes showing John's struggle with his barons and with the Pope, John's surrender and England's degradation. The blunt soldier Faulconbridge is not found in the old play which is Shakespeare's source. Nor is the pathetic scene in which little Arthur pleads with Hubert not to put his eyes out.

### SHAKESPEARE'S SECOND PERIOD. (1596-1601)

#### 263. This is the period of the Great Comedies.

**The Merchant of Venice** is the first of the great comedies but it borders on tragedy. It skilfully weaves together two distinct plots (1.) *The story of the caskets* (the moral of which is: Don't go by appearances); (2.) *The story of Shylock*, the revengeful usurer. Shylock, Jewish money-lender, determines to wreak vengeance on **Antonio, a Venetian merchant**, for the insults the latter has heaped upon him. He lends Antonio a thousand ducats. But Antonio's ships are unexpectedly wrecked, and Shylock swears that the bankrupt Venetian shall pay the stipulated forfeit – a pound of his own flesh. Shylock takes the knife and is about to cut off the flesh when Antonio is saved by the intervention of a clever young lawyer who completely turns the tables on Shylock. The lawyer proves to be none other than Portia, the betrothed of Bassanio, the very man for whose sake Antonio had borrowed the money from Shylock.

The underplot shows the elopement of Lorenzo with pretty Jessica, Shylock's daughter.

**The Taming of the Shrew** shows how Petruchio by all sorts of banter and bullying makes a somewhat ill-tempered lady (Katherine) into a loving and obedient wife.



**Henry IV.** gives us English history mixed with scenes of humour. The play might be called the Comedy of Falstaff. Falstaff's sayings and doings and the wild pranks of Prince Hal and his boon companions take up two thirds of the "history."

**Henry V.** shows a strong, patriotic, heroic king in action. The centre of the piece is the battle of Agincourt. The Welshman, Fluellen, takes Falstaff's place as the humorous character.

**The Merry Wives of Windsor** is a farcical comedy containing the practical jokes and tricks which certain dames of Windsor play on the amorous Sir John Falstaff in order to make him ridiculous.

**Much Ado about Nothing** is a comedy. It contains three elements: the love tragedy of Hero and Claudio; the love comedy of Beatrice and Benedict; and the humorous low comedy of Dogberry, the pompous, conceited but kind-hearted chief constable of Messina. In the sprightly prose dialogue, Shakespeare here copies and far surpasses the style of Lyly's dramas.

**As You Like It** is a delightful comedy of Arcadian life in the forest of Arden. Banished by the over-suspicious Duke, Rosalind, disguised as a young squire and escorted by her maid Celia and Touchstone the jester, goes into the forest. There she meets the pensive Jacques and her unjustly banished lover Orlando (the Gamelyn of the old story, see (§ 24). After many frights and adventures, she is at last reconciled to the Duke and weds Orlando.

**Twelfth Night or What You Will** is a comedy on the verge of tragedy. The centre of the play is the strait-laced Puritanic Malvolio, who is tricked into believing that the Countess is in love with him and is cruelly befooled.

### SHAKESPEARE'S THIRD PERIOD. (1601-1608)

**264. This is the period of the great Tragedies**, the masterpieces of his dramatic and imaginative power.

**Julius Caesar** (§ 71) expresses through the death of Brutus the tragedy of disappointed republican idealism.

**Hamlet** (1602) is the tragedy of the irresolution of an idealist.

Two months after the death of King Hamlet, his widow, Queen Gertrude, had married his brother Claudius. Prince Hamlet, her son, keenly feels the dishonour to his

father's memory and falls into deep melancholy. To Hamlet's horror his father's ghost now reveals to him that he has been murdered and calls upon him to revenge the murder. Deeply moved but irresolute, Hamlet tries to test his stepfather's guilt by reconstructing the crime. A troop of actors perform a scene in which a king is murdered in the way described by the ghost. Hamlet is convinced, but also does nothing. Shortly afterwards, in mistake for Claudius, Hamlet kills Polonius, an old counselor, the father of Ophelia. Claudius thus discovers Hamlet's designs on his life and banishes him to England, intending to have him murdered there. On the way thither, the young prince discovers the plot, and returns to Denmark. In a fencing match as arranged by the king between Laertes and Hamlet, Hamlet is mortally wounded by a poisoned foil. Laertes confesses his own and the king's treachery; just before he dies in his friend Horatio's arms, Hamlet, in sudden rage, turns and runs the king through, thus at last fulfilling his father's behest.

**Measure for Measure** (1603) is a dark and grave comedy.

**Othello, the Moor of Venice** (1604). Source: an Italian novel by Giraldi Cinthio.

Desdemona, a young and beautiful Venetian lady, is charmed with the romantic story of Othello's adventures and marries him in spite of his colour and in spite of the fact that her father, Brabantio, will hear nothing of the match. In the next ship she follows her brave general to the wars in Cyprus, travelling in the charge of a trusty young officer named Cassio. Cassio has just been promoted over the head of one of his senior officers named Iago. This insidious villain, to revenge himself, whispers in Othello's ear that Desdemona and Cassio love each other. He convinces Othello by letting him see in Cassio's possession a handkerchief which he, Iago, has stolen from Desdemona. Othello despite his wife's piteous protestations of innocence, kills her by smothering her. Too late the wretched man discovers his mistake and in nameless despair and remorse stabs himself, and dies, by Desdemona's side. Iago is handed over for punishment to Cassio, now the governor of the island.

**King Lear** (1606). Sources: Holinshed and Sidney's *Arcadia*.

King Lear, a king of ancient Britain, feeling himself old, determines to divide his kingdom among his three daughters and abdicate. At the distribution of the gifts, the youngest, Cordelia, offends him by refusing to flatter him. Despite the advice of the Earl of Kent, her share is given to Goneril and Regan, and she is banished. No sooner have her two cruel-hearted sisters the power in their hands than they turn their father out into the storm. He goes mad and wanders about the country. Cordelia returns from France with an army, but she is captured and while in prison is strangled. At last Lear's champions



are victorious and he is brought to her. Holding her dead body in his arms, the old king dies broken-hearted.

**Macbeth** (1607) is the tragedy of criminal ambition. One dusky night as he rides across a moor, Macbeth, a Scottish thane and general, is stopped by three witches. They tempt him to unlawful ambition by prophesying that he shall be king. He confides this secret to Lady Macbeth, who now urges him to murder King Duncan. The crime is committed one night when Duncan sought shelter in their castle. Macbeth becomes king, but his peace of mind is gone for ever. To hide his crime he is driven to other murders. He tries to have his friend Banquo murdered, Banquo being the only one who guesses his dreadful secret. Thus he sinks deeper and deeper into guilt.

Macbeth and his wife are now haunted by the remembrance of their crimes. Lady Macbeth goes mad, and Macbeth himself at last welcomes death in battle at the hands of Macduff, a noble whose family he had also murdered. Duncan's son Malcom becomes king.

**Troilus and Cressida.** Source: Chaucer, etc. This play is Shakespeare's great satiric comedy.

**Antony and Cleopatra** (1606). Source: North's translation of Plutarch. Shakespeare's great tragedy of passion.

**Coriolanus** (1607). During the democratic rising in Rome, the city is threatened by a Volscian army under Aufidius. By the gallantry of Marcius, one of the haughtiest and most able of the Patricians, the enemy is driven off, and their capital Corioli is taken. The hero receives the title Coriolanus and is elected Consul by the Senate. But the fickle mob turns against him, he flees and takes refuge with the Volscians, whom he now in revenge leads against Rome. When before its very gates, he turns back at the intercession of his mother and wife, who have been sent out to plead for the city. "Mother," he exclaims, "you have saved Rome but ruined your son." On his return the Volscians put him to death for turning back.

### SHAKESPEARE'S FOURTH OR ROMANCE PERIOD. (1608-1613)

**265. A Winter's Tale** (1609). Source Greene's *Pandosto*. The play gives the romantic love stories of Hermione and Leontes, of Perdita and Prince Florizel, and the humorous tricks of the witty rogue Autolycus.



**Cymbeline** (1610). Sources: Holinshed and Boccaccio. An incoherent and carelessly composed play.

**The Tempest** (1611). On a remote and lonely island of the sea dwelt an old and venerable man named Prospero, with his only daughter Miranda. One day he descried the King of Naples' fleet passing. On board was Prospero's treacherous brother, the Duke Antonio, the very man who, long years before, had set Prospero and Miranda adrift on the open sea to perish and had thus gained the Dukedom. Prospero by his magic power now raises a tempest which wrecks the King's ship. At Prospero's bidding his clever spirit Ariel sees that no one on the board is drowned. One of the rescued passengers, King Alonso's son Ferdinand, as a test of his character, has to pile logs for Prospero. He and Miranda fall in love with each other. Finally all are reconciled. Prospero forgives his treacherous brother and they all sail for Naples, there to celebrate Miranda's wedding. Caliban, Prospero's brutish servant, is the only being left behind on the Island.

**Henry VIII** (1613) dramatizes the fall of Wolsey.

### MILTON: PARADISE LOST. 1667

**267. The Subject.** The Creation and Fall of Man and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise is related in twelve books. Michael Angelo had taken this subject, long before Milton's time, for the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel.

**Argument.** The scene of the tragedy opens in Hell where the hosts of Satan are still lying stupefied by their fall. For a great battle has taken place in Heaven, and the rebellious angels, led by Satan, have been defeated and flung into a great burning lake. Satan awakens them and summons them to a great council to be held in his vast palace, Pandemonium, which now arises out of the deep (Book I).

Satan and his peers debate whether another battle is to be hazarded for the recovery of Heaven, but they deem it safer to revenge themselves on God in another way. They determine to wreck the happiness of certain new beings God is rumoured to have created in some new world. Satan himself sets forth on his wonderful journey through space to reconnoitre the position of this new-created orb. With much difficulty he passes out through the great gates of Hell, which are guarded by the monsters Sin and Death, and after a dangerous voyage through the gulf of Chaos, at last catches sight of the newly-created universe far off in space (Book II).

After a dialogue in Heaven between God the Father and His Son, in which the Divine scheme of Redemption is set forth, we suddenly see Satan, disguised as a young angel, passing through space towards the orb of the sun. There Uriel, the Spirit of the Sun, directs him to the Earth (Book III).

Satan enters Paradise, and, changing himself into a Cormorant, sits upon a branch of the Tree of Life, the highest in the garden. He surveys the beautiful Garden of Eden and the innocent beings that inhabit it. He hears the evening worship of Adam and Eve and beholding them in their innocence retire to rest, he is touched with momentary remorse (Book IV).

In the night he tempts Eve in a dream, and in the morning Adam comforts and strengthens her. Both go through their morning devotions and go to their work in the garden.

Books V, VI, VII, VIII consist of conversations between Adam and the archangel Raphael, who has been sent by God to warn him of Satan's wicked projects. Adam thus hears the story of the rebellion in heaven and of Satan's fall (Book VI), of the creation of

the earth (Book VII). In Book VIII Adam describes his own awakening to conscious life and the divine provision of a helpmate for him.

Satan returns to Paradise and approaches Eve, who is working at some distance away from Adam. He begins to flatter her; Eve is much surprised to hear the serpent speaking, but he tells her that he has attained the gifts of speech and reason by tasting of the Tree of Knowledge. After some hesitation she eats of its forbidden fruit and induces Adam, too, to taste it (Book IX).

The results of their disobedience now become manifest. Sin and Death sweep through the Universe, the course of nature changes, strife and discord break out among beasts and fowl – all telling of forfeited Paradise.

God foretells the final victory of His Son. Adam and Eve vow to seek forgiveness by repentance and supplication (Book X).

Michael descends to reveal to Adam the course of human history – the coming of the Saviour and man's redemption. Then he leads them out of the Paradise they have lost, and the Cherubim with flaming swords take their station before the Gate (Book XI and XII).



**POPE: THE RAPE OF THE LOCK. 1711**  
**(= THE CAPTURE AND CARRYING AWAY OF A CURL OF HAIR)**

**268. Subject.** One of the gentlemen at the court of Queen Anne, a certain Lord Petre, had cut off a lock (or curl) from the head of Arabella Fermor, a beautiful maid of honour. Pope made this incident the subject of a mock heroic poem describing the frivolous gaiety of social life in Queen Anne's time.

**Argument.** Canto I describes the awakening of Belinda in her chamber, hovered over by her guardian Sylph, Ariel. The latter has warned her in a dream of some danger coming. It is noonday, - the hour for lap-dogs and the court to awake. The canto closes with a description of the young lady's toilet-table.

Canto II. Belinda is on boating trip on the Thames, surrounded by handsome gentlemen and fair ladies. Ariel warns the hosts of attending elves and spirits to be extra watchful.

Canto III. On returning to Hampton Court the ladies and gentlemen play cards. After the "battle" at ombre, they refresh themselves with cups of coffee. But now the catastrophe takes place. A certain Peer, in spite of all the efforts of the Sylphs, with a pair of scissors cuts off the lock and raises a song of triumph.

Canto IV. Then follow negotiations for the return of the Lock, but alas! they are of no avail, and Belinda is in despair. The Peer will not yield. War becomes inevitable.

Canto V. A tremendous mock-heroic battle takes place between the ladies and gentlemen for the recovery of the Lock. Many of the gentlemen fall shot through the heart by the glances of their fair opponents. At last, however, Zeus in pity interferes and stops the fight by changing the curl into a star.

**Criticism.** The classical school which Pope represents was, like its French model, social in its tendency and not 'personal'. In this poem, as in Boileau's *Lutrin*, a trivial quarrel is humorously treated as of epic importance. The whole poem, in fact, is French rather than English in its tone.

It gives a most dainty and yet satirical picture of the gallantry and the frivolous court manners of the rococo time.

With its polished wit, elegance, wantonness, and in the lightness of its satire, *The Rape of the Lock* well represents the age of Pope.

### SWIFT: GULLIVER'S TRAVELS 1720-1726

**269.** The **Subject** is given in the title of the book: *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver, first a Surgeon and then a Captain of Several Ships*. On these voyages Gulliver gets an opportunity of comparing other nations with his own. The author's purpose in making this comparison is to expose the vanity and foolishness of civilisation in England.

**Argument.** On a voyage in the Indian Ocean, Gulliver's ship is wrecked and he himself is cast away on a great uncharted island called Lilliput. He is the sole survivor of the crew and falls asleep in a field near the shore. When he awakes he finds he cannot stir. The tiny islanders, men six inches in height, have pinned his arms and legs fast to the ground. When he tries to get loose, they shoot arrows at his face. They conduct the captured and good-humoured giant to their town and he helps them in all sorts of ways. He is vastly amused to find that these little creatures, tiny as they are, have an organized government with a king, ministers, parliament, intriguing factions, and squabbling religious sects, and that, in fact, they behave just as ridiculously as his countrymen at home do under King George I. They even wage war, and Gulliver helps them in their war with the neighbouring state of Blefuscu (France) by wading out into the water and dragging the whole of the enemy's fleet on shore. At last Gulliver escapes and gets back to England.

Book II, in contrast to the commonwealth of the pygmies described in Book I, gives an account of a voyage to Brobdingnag, a land inhabited by giants sixty feet in height. Here Gulliver is sold as a dwarf to be a puppet in the King's household. He thus gets an opportunity to observe unheeded the coarse manners prevailing in court circles in that country. This book is a satire on the haughty and arrogant courtiers of George I.

Book III is a satire on the follies and eccentricities of the men of science of Swift's day.

Book IV. Gulliver reaches the land of the Houyhnhnms, a race of learned and philosophic horses. These horses look down on Gulliver, whom they take to be a kind of ape or *yahoo*. At first he is indignant at being ranked with these brutes, but on his return home, when he sees how his fellow-men behave, he comes to the conclusion that these horses have formed a just conception of the viciousness of humanity.

**Criticism.** The story itself is a very preposterous one, but it is told with such art, and so much minute and consistent detail, that we are interested and even fascinated. Even children are delighted with the story. Beneath its assumed simplicity, however, the allegory hides the bitterest satire on humanity ever written. In Lilliput, the land of the pygmies, Swift laughs at man's contemptible pettiness. In Brobdingnag, the land of the giants, he satirizes their monstrous pride and stupidity. In describing the Houyhnhnms, a word that suggests the whinnying of horses, he tries to show that all mankind are lower than the brutes.

By its savage, anti-social ending, this story goes beyond the allowable bounds of satire. Swift has neither love nor hope for humanity, but only hatred and contempt. This prevents him from being ranked among the world's greatest satirists like Aristophanes and Rabelais.



## DEFOE: ROBINSON CRUSOE 1719

**270. The Subject.** *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner*, is the story of a castaway who cultivates and civilizes a desert island.

**The Story.** Robinson Crusoe, out of sheer love of adventure, ran away to sea when a youth. He made several voyages; on one of these he was captured by pirates and spent some years in slavery in Algiers; afterwards he escaped, and lived as a planter in the Brazils. On a voyage to Africa to purchase more slaves, his ship was wrecked on an island; he alone of the crew escaped drowning, the waves throwing him ashore on the beach. With infinite labour and ingenuity, he managed to build himself a house, and supply himself with clothes, fire, food, a lamp and other necessaries. From the wreck he was fortunately able to provide himself with arms and ammunition. In time he was able to bake bread. He also caught and tamed wild goats and parrots. After years of solitude, he one day got a great shock from seeing the track of a naked foot on the beach. It turned out that cannibals from the mainland visited the island in their canoes, bringing with them prisoners for their horrid feasts of human flesh.

With the aid of fire-arms, Robinson was able to liberate one of their wretched captives, and the young savage, whom he called Man Friday, became his servant. Robinson taught him English, and told him about God and the Bible.

On another occasion, he rescued a Spaniard, and also Friday's father. A social contract thus became necessary, and Robinson's authority as ruler of the island was recognized.

His material difficulties having been overcome, the intellectual and spiritual life begins. He keeps a record of the time, and begins to keep a journal. In his solitude he has forgotten God till an earthquake frightens him and he learns to pray once more.

Finally an English ship touches at the island and takes him back to England.

Thus we see how Robinson by self-help and common sense triumphed over all his difficulties.

**Remarks.** The second part, or sequel, is much less valuable, having neither the coherence nor the direction, the unity nor the fascination of the first part.

That this story is an allegory has already been pointed out (§ 114). It seems even to be a double allegory. It alludes not only to the shipwreck of Defoe's own life, but presents a picture in miniature of the work of civilization – the overcoming of material difficulties

by common sense, the awakening of the religious sense in man, the duty of teaching and civilizing the savage, the use of English as a civilizing medium, the necessity of a moral law and of a social contract and a fixed state authority, if men are to live together in an organised community.

But the story itself is told so simply and convincingly that people enjoy it *and learn its lessons*, without ever dreaming of a hidden meaning in it.



## GOLDSMITH: THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD 1766

**271. Subject.** This story describes the domestic life, trials, and misfortunes of a country clergyman's family in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It shows how by his faith and goodness the Vicar at last triumphs.

**The Plot.** The good Vicar of Wakefield, Dr. Primrose,<sup>1</sup> relates how happily he and his wife lived at the peasant vicarage with their family of eight children, till the sudden loss of the Vicar's fortune brings about a complete change in his circumstances. The family has now to withdraw to a small living in a neighbouring county, on the estate of a certain Squire Thornhill. Misfortune dogs their steps. Young Mr. Thornhill induces the Vicar's eldest daughter, Olivia, to run away with him, in spite of all the efforts of the kind-hearted Mr. Burchell, the good angel of the family, to prevent the elopement. The wretched and cruelly deceived Olivia is sought and found by the old father, who returns home from his search only to find his house in flames. The villainous Mr. Thornhill now persecutes the Vicar and has him thrown into gaol for debt in order that he may get hold of Sophy, the second daughter. But this nefarious plan is thwarted by the good Mr. Burchell, who turns out to be Sir William Thornhill, the real owner of all these estates. He releases the Vicar from gaol, marries Sophy and restores the worthy family to comfort and happiness.

**Remarks.** This English prose idyll, as Goethe called it, is the first domestic novel in English literature.

Herder read it aloud to Goethe and it was Goethe who first drew the attention of the world to its real greatness. This simple life set in the midst of cornfields and hedgerows he called a "prose idyll." In his *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe imitates it in the setting he gives to the Friderike episode. "Its sane, cheerful philosophy," he says in a letter to Zelter, Dec. 25, 1829, leads us back from all the mistaken paths of life." In other parts of European literature, e.g., in Auerbach's *Tales* and George Sand's beautiful rustic idyll *La mare au Diable*, we can also trace its influence.

---

<sup>1</sup> It was the custom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to call clergymen 'Doctor' as a courtesy title, cf. Dr. Tusher in Thackeray's *Esmond*.

**SCOTT'S PRINCIPAL NOVELS.**  
**GROUP I: SCOTLAND IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.**

**272. Waverley** (1814). *Waverley* gives the adventures in the Highlands of Captain Waverley, a young English officer, who gets mixed up in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. The execution of Waverley's friends, the Highland chieftain Fergus Mc Ivor and his brave follower Evan at Carlisle, closes the tragic story of their devotion to Bonnie Prince Charlie.

**Guy Mannering** tells the story of the eviction of a band of gipsies, and how the curse of the gipsy queen, Meg Merrilees, is fulfilled by the kidnapping of the Laird's young son.

**The Antiquary** has for its central figure Jonathan Oldbuck, an eccentric Scottish Laird who (like Scott himself) takes a great interest in antiquities and loves to quote Latin. There is almost no plot.

**Rob Roy**, a tale of 1715, contains a love story, Jacobite plots and a traitor, and describes the many attempts to capture the Highland robber chief. But Rob Roy, after several hairbreadth escapes, dies peacefully at a good old age, remembered by his countrymen as the dread of the wealthy and the friend of the poor. The humorous element is supplied by Andrew Fairservice, the Presbyterian gardener in a Jacobite's service.

**The Heart of Midlothian** is perhaps Scott's masterpiece. It opens with an account of the Porteous Riots in Edinburgh, and describes the attack made by the mob on the Tolbooth Gaol to release the prisoners. The second part of the book tells how Jeanie Deans, a poor Scotch girl, makes her way on foot to London, to beg Queen Caroline to pardon her sister Effie, who is lying in prison under sentence of death. Jeanie's unwavering truthfulness at the trial had led to her sister's conviction.

**The Bride of Lammermoor** is the tragic story of a Scottish Romeo and Juliet.

**Redgauntlet** (1824) describes the end of the Jacobite movement (about 1763), and the final departure of the Young Pretender for France, accompanied by his loyal supporter, the Laird of Redgauntlet.

**GROUP II: OLDER SCOTLAND.**

**Old Mortality** (1816) is a tale of the Covenanters.

**The Legend of Montrose** has for its background the career of the Earl of Montrose, at the head of his Highlanders fighting for King Charles. Period 1645.

**The Abbot** deals with the adventures of Mary Queen of Scots, her escape from prison in Loch Leven Castle and her flight to England.

**The Fair Maid of Perth** gives a picture of Scotland in 1402, in the wild times of King Robert III, and the fights between the clans.

### GROUP III: OLDER ENGLAND.

**Ivanhoe** (1819) gives a picture of England in 1194. It is a great favourite among readers south of the Border.

The story reaches its climax in the siege of Torquilstone. The English Knight Ivanhoe, who has been wounded in a tournament on his return from the Crusades, is at this time a prisoner in Torquilstone, the castle of Reginald Front de Boeuf, a villainous Norman. The castle is taken by the valiant Black Knight (who is Richard Coeur de Lion in disguise), aided by Locksley (Robin Hood) and his men. Ivanhoe is tended in his sickness by the beautiful Jewess Rebecca. At the end of the book, she and her father return to Granada, and Ivanhoe marries Rowena, his English bride. Period, 1194.

**Kenilworth** gives the court of Elizabeth, the intrigues of Leicester and Essex, and the unhappy fate of poor Amy Robsart whose husband, Leicester, denies her, in order not to displease Elizabeth.

**The Fortunes of Nigel** gives us London under James I., the first of the Stuart kings of England.

**The Talisman**, although wildly unhistorical, presents a brilliant picture of the Christian wars with the Moslem in Syria. Saladin and Richard the First of England are the opposing champions. The scene is laid in Palestine. The period is the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

**Criticism:** The construction of all Scott's novels with the exception of the *Bride of Lammermoor* is notoriously loose. They are full of padding and superfluous episodes. But when the great dramatic moment arrives Scott rises to it with the ease of genius. On the other hand his heroes and heroines are often more stock figures.



**BURNS: TAM O'SHANTER: A TALE 1781**

**273. Subject.** In this humorous verse tale Burns describes an adventure that a farmer named Tam O'Shanter met with one market night on his way home from Ayr.

**Argument:** Tam at the end of the day, instead of starting for home in good time as his wife had warned him to do, sat gossiping and drinking in the village inn.

So happy was he that he quite forgot how late it was getting. At last when he did turn out and saddle his mare Meg, he found it was pitch dark and a storm raging. But storm or no storm, home he had to go. On approaching Alloway Kirk he saw through the storm-tossed trees that the church was all in a blaze and full of devils and witches were dancing in it. He had, however, drunk so much whiskey that he did not care a pin for such dangers, and rode Meg right up to the building and peeped in through the window. What a sight he saw! Fiddles were going and bagpipes squirling, and the witches' reel was at its maddest when Tam, thoroughly enjoying the sight, cried to a young witch in a shorter smock than the others, "*Weel loupit, Cuttie Sark,*" i.e., "well danced, you in the short shift."

Immediately all the lights went out, and Tam fled helter-skelter with the whole troop of witches at his heels. He just managed to get across Alloway Bridge, and then was safe, for witches cannot cross water. Such a narrow escape did he have that the foremost of the witches grabbed his horse's tail and pulled it off just as he crossed the bridge.

**Criticism.** The poem gives an admirable picture of Scottish life and legend. It is written mostly in Scots dialect. This heightens the realistic effect.



### BYRON: CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE. 1812-1817

**274. Subject.** In four long cantos, written in Spenserian stanzas, the poem describes the travels and reflections of a young English nobleman who, in disgust with mankind after a life of dissipation at home, is seeking diversion in foreign lands.

What the poet calls a 'pilgrimage' is merely a romantic name for a 'foreign tour,' and the poem is a series of travel sketches in verse.

**Contents.** In the first Canto, the poet gives the pilgrim's impressions of Portugal and Spain. These countries were at this time full of English troops and in the throes of a struggle with Napoleon for their national liberty. The battle of Talavera is described. Later on, the poet dwells on the picturesque manners and customs of the Spaniards and depicts a bull-fight at Cadiz.

In the second Canto the Pilgrim proceeds to Mahometan lands – Greece, Albania and the Grecian Archipelago – and meditates on their past and their future.

In the third Canto, the poet-tourist leaves England once more and travels to Switzerland by way of Belgium and the Rhine. This gives him a chance for a splendid description of Waterloo, and the battle that took place at Brussels on the eve of the battle. After describing the Rhine and its castled banks, he passes on to Lake Geneva, and speaks of the great men who have lived on its shores – Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, etc. In the fourth Canto, the reader is conducted through the most romantic cities of Italy, - Venice, Ferrara, Florence, Rome, and the great works of art and the history of each of these places are described.

**Remarks.** The poem opens as if it were a tale of ancient times. But the poet soon forgets this fiction and drops the affected Spenserian diction as well as the romantic figures of the yeoman and the page who accompany the pilgrim Knight.<sup>1</sup>

The composition of the whole poem shows similar marks of carelessness and lack of unity.

The poet sometimes, for instance, speaks of Childe Harold in the third person and sometimes drops his disguise, and speaks of himself in the first person. His habit of 'apostrophe', that is, of speaking of things as if he were addressing them, is also tiresomely frequent. The lines in *Childe Harold* beginning "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!" afford a familiar instance of this characteristic 18<sup>th</sup> century mannerism.

---

<sup>1</sup> Childe = Knight; cf. Childe Roland, the romantic name for Orlando, the chief of Charlemagne's paladins.

Only four cantos of the poem were written, but it is evident that such a story has no logical end. It might go on until all the countries of the world had been described. The public, however, devoured it eagerly, for it dealt with countries they were deeply interested in just at that time.

Byron shows himself in this poem, as elsewhere, to be a rapid and brilliant writer but not a profound thinker. Nor he has an imaginative master of the art of words. His words always have their face value and no more, while the words of Shakespeare often have a deeper meaning underlying the surface meaning.



### COLERIDGE: THE ANCIENT MARINER. 1798

**275. Subject.** The voyage and adventures of a mariner in the South Seas in the times of Queen Elizabeth and how he brought a curse on his ship by shooting a bird.

The poem describes how the mariner, now a haggard, grey bearded old man, stops a guest who is on his way to a wedding and forces him to hear the story of the crime.

“The ship I sailed on,” the old mariner said, “had a prosperous voyage until we reached the Antarctic seas. Here we were frozen fast. But after many days a bird of good omen, an albatross, came and the ice split and let us through. The albatross followed our ship till one day in an evil hour I took my cross-bow and shot the bird. Thenceforth a curse was on the ship. We rounded the Cape and sailed into a great unknown, silent sea. After sailing northwards many days, we were becalmed. The sky was like brass, the sun a ball of fire, and the water, green like oil, lay rotting round the ship and full of slimy things with legs.”

“The sailors, dying with thirst, now hung round my neck the bird I had shot. Suddenly a phantom ship drew near, on the deck of which Death and a Woman were sitting, playing dice for the souls of our ship’s crew. This spectre-bark vanished and in the terrible darkness that now fell, one by one the crew died, cursing me with their eyes. I alone could not die. After seven days and seven nights the sight of the water-snakes made love for God’s creatures fill my heart once more, and once more I could pray.”

The Ancient Mariner then tells how angelic spirits, seeing his repentance and pitying him, make the bodies of the sailors who were dead rise and trim the sails; so, although there is no wind, the ship moves on out of the bewitched region of calms, and at last nears the mariner’s native land. A pilot puts off, but before he can come on board, the ship splits up and is engulfed. The pilot rescues the mariner from the waves.

The memory of all the agony he has gone through now drives the old mariner, like the Wandering Jew, from land to land, and from time to time he must tell this story again and unburden his soul of his crime. After charging the wedding guest to love God and all God’s creatures, he goes on his way.

*The Ancient Mariner* is a mystic and, in some respects, a humanitarian poem. It shows the terrible punishment that came to a man for wanton cruelty. It teaches the duty of love for all God’s creatures. By its old-fashioned words and the ballad metre in which

it is written, Coleridge obtains a very wonderful and unworldly atmosphere. The poem is one of the masterpieces of romanticism.



## The Regional Development of English Literature

1. The Northern Monasteries. 2. Winchester. 3. London.

	A. D.	Northern	Midland	Southern
Old English	507	—	—	—
	675	Caedmon's Paraphrases	—	<i>Laws of Ine</i>
	730	Bede	—	—
	793	Beowulf	—	—
	800	Cynewulf	—	—
	800	—	Psalter	—
	900	—	—	Alfred (871) <i>English Chronicle begins</i>
	1000	Durham Glosses	—	Aelfric
Middle English	1100	—	—	<i>Worcester Chronicle</i>
	1200	—	Chronicle	—
	1200	—	—	<i>Ancoren Riwele</i>
	1200	—	Layamon	—
	1300	Cursor Mundi	—	—
	1400	Barbour	Chaucer	—
Modern English	1400	—	Wyclif	—
	1500	Dunbar	Caxton	—
	1600	—	Tyndal	—
	1600	James IV	Shakespeare	—
	1700	Ramsay	Milton	—
Modern English	1700	—	Dryden	—
	1800	Burns	Swift	—
	1800	Scott	Johnson	—
	1800	Kailyard School	Coleridge Macaulay Dickens; Shaw	—

Vertical annotations in the table:  
 - "Northern English leads." (vertical bar on the left of the Old English section)  
 - "Leadership of Winchester" (vertical bar on the right of the Old English section)  
 - "Scottish revival" (vertical bar on the left of the Middle English section)  
 - "The Leadership of London" (vertical bar on the right of the Middle and Modern English sections)



**A Summary of the Chief Events  
in English History  
Bearing on English Literature.**

- 55 B. C. Julius Caesar invades Britain.  
404 A. D. The Goths under Alarich threaten Rome, and the Romans begin the withdrawal of troops from Britain.  
410 The last Roman legions are withdrawn.  
449 Settlement of the Jutes in Kent.  
477 The arrival of the South Saxons  
495 The West Saxons come over.  
520 The Angles settle in England.  
597 The landing of St. Augustine.  
735 The death of the Venerable Bede.  
787 The Danish raids begin.  
871-901 Alfred the Great's reign.  
994-1013 The Danish King Sweyn levies Danegeld and conquers England.  
1017 Canute King of England and Danemark.  
1042 Edward the Confessor. English Kings restored.  
1066 King Harold is defeated at Hastings. William of Normandy is crowned King.  
1071 Hereward the Wake holds out against William in the Isle of Ely.  
1086 The Domesday Book, a survey (*descriptio*) of England with lists of all the landholders, is completed.  
1096 The First Crusade.  
1100 Accession of Henry I surnamed Beauclerc.  
1120 The wreck of the White Ship.  
1135 King Stephen, a weak King. Anarchy.  
1154 Accession of Henry II surnamed Plantagenet.  
1154 Thomas à Becket, Chancellor; afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. The struggle between the church and the monarchy for supremacy begins.  
1170 Murder of à Becket.  
1187 Capture of Jerusalem by Saladin.



- 1189 Richard Coeur-de-Lion becomes King, and starts to join the Third Crusade.
- 1192 Richard is captured on his way home from Palestine.
- 1199 King John succeeds his brother Richard.
- 1203 The murder of Prince Arthur, the rightful heir to the throne. King Philip of France is ordered by the Pope to dethrone King John.
- 1213 John submits to the Pope.
- 1215 **The barons in arms force John to sign Magna Charta.**
- 1216 War with the Barons. John dies.
- 1216 Henry III is proclaimed King, aged 9.
- 1258-1272 Misgovernment; The Barons' War.
- 1272 Edward I, one of the greatest of the English Kings, succeeds. A nation-builder.
- 1282 Welsh war. Death of Llewellyn. Wales annexed.
- 1298 Edward invades Scotland. Wallace is defeated.
- 1307 Edward leads an army against Robert Bruce, but dies on the Borders.
- 1307 Edward II, a weak-willed man, succeeds.
- 1314 At Bannockburn the English are defeated by Bruce.
- 1327 Edward is forced to abdicate and is murdered.
- 1327 Edward III is proclaimed King.
- 1337 Beginning of the Hundred Years' War against France. Cressy 1346.
- 1349 The Black Death.
- 1356 The Black Prince wins the Battle of Poitiers.
- 1360 The Treaty of Bretigny.
- 1369 The French war is renewed.
- 1374 John of Gaunt protects John Wyclif.
- 1377 Accession of Richard II.
- 1381 Wat Tyler's Revolt.
- 1399 Richard II is deposed by Henry of Lancaster (Bolingbroke).
- 1399 Bolingbroke becomes King Henry IV by parliamentary title.
- 1403 Revolt of the Percies, of Northumberland. They are defeated at the Battle of Shrewsbury.
- 1413 Henry V succeeds and revives the claim to the French crown.
- 1415 The English win a great victory at Agincourt.
- 1422 Henry V dies in France and is succeeded by his infant son, Henry VI.
- 1429 The siege of Orleans is raised by Joan of Arc.

- 1431 Joan of Arc is captured, tried, and burned as a witch at Rouen.
- 1450 Normandy is lost. Jack Cade's rebellion.
- 1455 The Wars of the Roses begin.
- 1461 Edward VI, of York, is proclaimed King.
- 1471 Battle of Barnet. Death of Warwick "the Kingmaker".
- 1477 Caxton sets up his printing press.
- 1483 Edward IV, of York, dies.
- 1483 Edward V succeeds, aged 12. Richard of York, first protector, then King. The murder of the Princes in the Tower.
- 1485 Henry Tudor defeats and kills Richard III at Bosworth Field.
- 1485 Henry VII, the first of the Tudors.
- 1503 Henry VII's daughter Margaret marries James IV of Scotland.
- 1509 Henry VIII succeeds of the throne.
- 1513 The Scots invade England and are defeated at Flodden Field.
- 1530 Cardinal Wolsey's fall.
- 1531 **Henry VIII is declared supreme head of the Church of England.** The breach with the Papacy.
- 1535 Execution of Sir Thomas More.
- 1536-9 Dissolution of the Monasteries.
- 1547 Accession of Edward VI.
- 1553 Accession of Mary.
- 1554 Lady Jane Grey is executed.
- 1555 Religious persecution.
- 1558 Queen Elizabeth. Toleration.
- 1570 Papal Bull deposing Elizabeth.
- 1580 The Desmond Rebellion in Ireland. Drake sails round the globe.
- 1585 Raleigh's first Virginian Colony.
- 1587 Execution of Mary Stuart.
- 1588 The Spanish Armada is defeated.
- 1591 Grenville in the *Revenge* fights the Spanish fleet.
- 1603 James I, a Scotchman, becomes King. The English and Scottish crowns are thus united.
- 1605 Gunpowder Plot.

- 1620 The Pilgrim Fathers sail in the *Mayflower* and found (= gründen) the first New England colony.
- 1621 James **forbids Parliament to discuss** questions of policy. This struggle between royal power and Parliament was to end in the Great Rebellion.
- 1625 Accession of Charles I.
- 1629-40 Charles governs without a Parliament.
- 1640 The Long Parliament meets. Strafford is impeached and executed.
- 1642 Civil War begins.
- 1645 Cromwell's Ironsides win the Battle of Naseby.
- 1649 Charles I is beheaded. The Puritan Commonwealth.
- 1658 Death of Oliver Cromwell.
- 1660 Charles II returns to England as King.
- 1665 The Plague in London.
- 1666 The Great Fire of London.
- 1677 Shaftesbury is sent to the Tower.
- 1685 James II, a Catholic King.
- 1688 **William of Oranges is invited over.**
- 1689 William III and Mary.
- 1690 Battle of the Boyne, (Ireland).
- 1692 French fleet is defeated at La Hogue.
- 1703 Queen Anne.
- 1704 Marlborough at Blenheim.
- 1707 England and Scotland are united under one Parliament.
- 1715 Accession of George I. Jacobite Rebellion.
- 1727 George II. Walpole his Minister.
- 1740 War of the Austrian Succession.
- 1745 Second Jacobite Rebellion.
- 1746 Prince Charles is defeated at Culloden.
- 1756 Seven Years' War begins.
- 1759 Capture of Quebec. India won.
- 1770 The New England colonies object to being taxed.
- 1773 Tea is thrown overboard in Boston Harbour.
- 1775 War of American Independence.
- 1789 The French Revolution breaks out.

- 1793 Louis XVI is beheaded. War with France. Pitt Prime Minister.  
1798 Irish Rebellion.  
1801 The Irish Parliament is transferred to London.  
1805 Nelson's death at Trafalgar.  
1808 Beginning of the Peninsular War.  
1813 Wellington's victory at Vittoria.  
1813 Napoleon defeated at Leipzig.  
1815 Battle of Waterloo.  
1829 Catholic Emancipation Act.  
1830 Accession of William IV.  
1832 **The Reform Bill is passed.**  
1837 Accession of Queen Victoria.  
1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws.  
1848 The Chartist Demonstrations.  
1850 Gold is discovered in Australia.  
1854 Crimean War.  
1857 The Indian Mutiny leads to a consolidation of the English power in India.  
1861 American Civil War breaks out.  
1862 Cotton famine in Lancashire.  
1868 Gladstone succeeds Disraeli.  
1882 British control established in Egypt.  
1885 The Fall of Khartoum.  
1899 Outbreak of the Great Boer War.  
1900 The Siege and Relief of Ladysmith.  
1902 The Peace of Vereeniging; end of the war.  
1911 The South African colonies federate.  
1914-18 The Great War.

## INDEX

Addison, Joseph (1672-1719) [ˈædisn]  
Ælfric (d.c. 1020) [ˈælfrik]  
Alcuin (735?-804) [ˈælkwin]  
Alfred, King (849-901) [ˈælfrið]  
Alliterative Verse  
Arnold, Matthew (1822-88) [ˈaːnld]  
Ascham, Roger (1515-68) [ˈæskəm]  
Auden, W. H. (1907- ) [ˈɔːdn]  
Austen, Jane (1775-1817) [ˈɔːstin, ˈɔstɪn]  
Bacon, Sir Francis (1561-1626) [ˈbeikən]  
Bale, John (1495-1563) [ˈbeil]  
Ballads  
Barbour, John (1316?-95) [ˈba:bə]  
Barclay, Alexander (1475-1552) [ˈba:kli]  
Barker, George (1915- ) [ˈba:kə]  
Barrie, Sir James Matthew (1860-1937) [ˈbæri]  
Beaumont, Francis (1584-1616) [ˈboumənt]  
Beckford, William (1759-1844) [ˈbekfəd]  
Bede, the 'Venerable' (673-735) [ˈbi:d]  
Beerbohm, Max (1872- ) [ˈbiəboum]  
Bennett, Arnold (1867-1931) [ˈbenit]  
Bentham, Jeremy (1748-1832) [ˈbenθəm]  
Beowulf (8<sup>th</sup> cent.) [ˈbeiwulf]  
Berkley, George (1685-1753) [ˈba:kli]  
Besant, Sir Walter (1836-1901) [bəˈzænt]  
Bible, the Authorised Version of  
Blake, William (1757-1827) [bleik]  
Boswell, James (1740-95) [ˈbɔzwəl]



Brontë, Emily (1818-48) ['brɒnti]  
 Browne, Sir Thomas (1605-82) [braun]  
 Browning, Elizabeth Barrett (1806-61) ['brauniŋ]  
 Browning, Robert (1812-89)  
 Bunyan, John (1628-88) ['bʌnjən]  
 Burke, Edmund (1729-97) ['bɜ:k]  
 Burns, Robert (1759-96) [bɜ:nz]  
 Butler, Samuel (1612-80) ['bʌtlə]  
 Butler, Samuel (1835-1902)  
 Byron, Lord (1788-1824) ['baɪərən]  
 Caedmon (fl. 670) ['kædmən]  
 Caldwell, Erskine (1903- ) ['kɔ:ldwəl]  
 Carew, Thomas (1598-1639) [kə'ru:]  
 Carlyle, Thomas (1795-1881) [ka:'laɪl]  
 Cary, Joyce (1888- ) ['kɛəri]  
 Caxton, William (1422-91) ['kækstən]  
 Chapman, George (c. 1559-1634) ['tʃæpmən]  
 Chatterton, Thomas (1752-70) ['tʃætətən]  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey (1340?-1400) ['tʃɔ:sə]  
 Chesterston, Gilbert K. (1874-1936) ['tʃestətən]  
 Chronicle, the Anglo-Saxon  
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834) ['koulrɪdʒ]  
 Collier, Jeremy (1650-1726) ['kɒliə]  
 Collins, Wilkie (1842-89) ['kɒlɪnz]  
 Collins, William (1721-59)  
 Compton-Burnett, Ivy (1885- ) ['kɒmptən 'bɜ:nɪt]  
 Connotation and denotation  
 Conrad, Joseph (1856-1924) ['kɒnræd]  
 Cooper, Fenimore (1789-1851) ['ku:pə]  
 Coverdale, Miles (1488-1568) ['kɒvədeɪl]  
 Cowley, Abraham (1618-67) ['kaʊli]  
 Cowper, William (1731-1800) ['ku:pə]  
 Crabbe, George (1754-1832) ['kræb]  
 Crashaw, Richard (1612-49) ['kræʃɔ:]



## Critics

Cursor Mundi (early 14<sup>th</sup> cent.)

Cynewulf (fl. 800) ['kiniwulf]

Daniel, Samuel (1562-1619) ['dænjəl]

Darwin, Charles (1809-82) ['da:win]

Defoe, Daniel (1659-1731) [də'fou]

Dekker, Thomas (1570?-1632) ['dekə]

Dickens, Charles (1812-70) ['dikinz]

Dickinson, Emily (1830-86) ['dikinsn]

Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield (1804-81) [diz'reili]

Donne, John (1573-1631) [dʌn, dɒn]

Dos Passos, John (1896- ) [dɒs'pæsɒs]

Douglas, Gavin (1475?-1522) ['dʌgləs]

Douglas, Norman (1868- )

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan (1859-1930) [dɔil]

## Drama

Dream of the Rood, The (8<sup>th</sup> cent.)

Dryden, John (1631-1700) ['draidn]

Dunbar, William (1463?-1550) [dʌn'ba:]

Earle, John (1601?-65) [ə:l]

Edgeworth, Maria (1767-1849) ['edʒwə:θ]

Edinburgh Review, The (started 1802)

Eliot, George (Mary Ann Evans) (1819-80) ['eljət]

Eliot, Thomas Stearns (1888- )

Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1803-82) ['eməsn]

Empson, William (1907- ) ['empsn]

Erasmus, Desiderius (1466-1536) [i'ræzməs]

Evelyn, John (1620-1706) ['i:vlin]

Farrell, James (1904- ) ['færəl]

Faulkner, William (1897- ) ['fɔ:knə]

Fielding, Henry (1707-54) ['fi:ldɪŋ]

Firbank, Ronald (1886-1926) ['fə:bænk]

Fletcher, John (1579-1625) ['fletfə]

Ford, John (1586-1639?) [fɔ:d]



Forster, Edward Morgan (1879- ) ['fɔ:stə]  
 Franklin, Benjamin (1706-90) ['fræŋklin]  
 Fry, Christopher (1907- ) [frai]  
 Galsworthy, John (1867-1933) ['gɔ:lzwə:ði]  
 Geoffrey of Monmouth (1100?-54) ['mʌnməθ]  
 Gibbon, Edward (1737-94) ['gibən]  
 Gissing, George (1857-1903) ['gisɪŋ]  
 Goldsmith, Oliver (1728?-74) ['gouldsmiθ]  
 Gower, John (1325?-1408) ['gauə]  
 Gray, Thomas (1716-71) [grei]  
 Green, Henry (1905- ) [gri:n]  
 Greene, Graham (1904- ) [gri:n]  
 Hardy, Thomas (1840-1928) ['ha:di]  
 Harte, Bret (1839-1902) [ha:t]  
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel (1804-64) ['hɔ:θɔ:n]  
 Hemingway, Ernest (1898- ) ['hemiŋwei]  
 Henryson, Robert (1425?-1506?) ['henrisn]  
 Herbert, George (1593-1633) ['hə:bət]  
 Herrick, Robert (1591-1674) ['herik]  
 Heywood, Thomas (1575? 1650) ['heiwud]  
 Hillary, Richard (1919-43) ['hiləri]  
 Hobbes, Thomas (1588-1679) [hɔbz]  
 (H)Occleve, Thomas (1370?-1450?) ['(h)ɔkli:v]  
 Holinshed, Raphael (d. 1580?) ['hɔlinfed]  
 Hood, Thomas (1799-1845) [hud]  
 Hooker, Richard (1554?-1600) ['hukə]  
 Hopkins, G. M. (1844-89) ['hɔpkinz]  
 Hulme, T. E. (1883-1917) [hju:m]  
 Hume, David (1711-76) [hju:m]  
 Huxley, Aldous (1894- ) ['ɔ:ldəs 'hʌksli]  
 Huxley, Thomas (1825-95)  
 Ideas, background of  
 Irving, Washington (1783-1859) ['əviŋ]  
 Isherwood, Christopher (1904- ) ['ifə:wud]



Jacobs, W. W. (1863-1943) ['dʒeɪkəbz]  
 James, Henry (1843-1916) [dʒeɪmz]  
 James I, King of Scotland (1394-1437)  
 Jerome, Jerome K. [dʒə'roum]  
 Johnson, Samuel (1709-84) ['dʒɔnsn]  
 Jones, Henry Arthur (1851-1929) [dʒounz]  
 Jonson, Ben (1573?-1637) ['dʒɔnsn]  
 Joyce, James (1882-1941) [dʒɔɪs]  
 Keats, John (1795-1821) [ki:ts]  
 Keble, John (1792-1866) [ki:bl]  
 Kingsley, Charles (1819-75) ['kɪŋzli]  
 Kipling, Rudyard (1865-1936) ['kipliŋ]  
 Kyd, Thomas (1558-94) [kid]  
 Lamb, Charles (1775-1834) [læm]  
 Landor, W. S. (1775-1864) ['lændɔ:]  
 Langland, William (1330?-1400?) ['læŋlənd]  
 Lawrence, D. H. (1885-1930) ['lɔrəns]  
 Layamon (fl. 1200) ['leiəmən]  
 Leavis, F. R. (1895- ) ['li:vis]  
 Lever, Charles (1806-72) ['li:və]  
 Lewis, C. Day (1904- ) ['lu:is, 'lju:is]  
 Lewis, Matthew Gregory (1775-1818)  
 Lewis, Wyndham (1884- )  
 Lillo, George (1693-1739) ['lilou]  
 Locke, John (1632-1704) [lɒk]  
 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth (1807-82) ['lɒŋ.felou]  
 Lovelace, Richard (1618-58) ['lʌvleɪs]  
 Lydgate, John (1370?-1451?) ['lɪdʒeɪt]  
 Lyly, John (1554?-1606) ['lɪli]  
 Lyndsay, Sir David (c. 1490-1555) ['lɪndzi]  
 Lytton, Edward Bulwer (1803-73) ['bulwə 'lɪtn]  
 Macaulay, Thomas B. (1800-59) [mə'kɔ:li]  
 Macpherson, James (1736-96) [mæk'fə:sn]  
 Maldon, Battle of (10<sup>th</sup> cent.)

Malory, Sir Thomas (fl. 1470) ['mæləri]  
 Mandeville, Sir John, Travels of (14<sup>th</sup> cent.)  
 Mansfield, Katherine (1888-1923) ['mænsfi:ld]  
 Marlowe, Christopher (1564-93) ['ma:lou]  
 Marryat, Frederick (1792-1848) ['mæriət]  
 Marvell, Andrew (1621-78) ['ma:vəl]  
 Masfield, John (1878- ) ['meisfi:ld]  
 Masques  
 Massinger, Philip (1484-1539) ['mæsindzə]  
 Maugham, William Somerset (1874- ) [mɑ:m]  
 Melville, Herman (1819-91) ['melvil]  
 Meredith, George (1828-1909) ['merədiθ]  
 Middleton, Thomas (1580-1627) ['midltən]  
 Mill, John Stuart (1806-73) [mil]  
 Milton, John (1608-74) ['miltən]  
 Miracle Plays  
 Moore, George (1852-1933) [muə]  
 Moore, Thomas (1779-1852)  
 Morality Plays  
 More, Sir Thomas (1478-1535) [mɔ:, mɔə]  
 Morris, William (1834-96) ['mɔris]  
 Mystery Plays  
 Nashe, Thomas (1567-1601) [næf]  
 Newman, J. H., Cardinal (1801-90) ['nju:mən]  
 O'Casey, Sean (1884- ) [ou'keisi]  
 Occleve, Thomas (see (H) occleve)  
 Orwell, George (1902-50) ['ɔ:wel]  
 Pater, Walter (1839-94) ['peitə]  
 Patmore, Coventry (1823-96) ['pætɪmɔ:]  
 Pearl (14<sup>th</sup> cent.)  
 Pepys, Samuel (1632-1704) [pi:ps]  
 Percy, Thomas (1729-1811) ['pə:si]  
 Pinero, Sir Arthur Wing (1855-1934) [pi'niərou]  
 Plutarch

Poe, Edgar Allen (1809-49) [pou]  
 Pope, Alexander (1688-1744) [poup]  
 Pound, Ezra (1886- ) [paund]  
 Powys, T. F. (1875- ) ['pouis]  
 Prose, development of  
 Quarterly Review  
 Radcliffe, Ann (1764-1822) ['rædklif]  
 Ramsay, Allan (1686-1758) ['ræmzi]  
 Reade, Charles (1814-84) [ri:d]  
 Reid, Forrest (1876-1946) [ri:d]  
 Richards, I. A. (1893- ) ['ritfædz]  
 Richardson, Samuel (1689-1761) ['ritfædsn]  
 Robertson, William (1721-93) ['rɒbətʃn]  
 Robin Hood  
 Romance of the Rose  
 Rossetti, Christina (1830-94) [rɔ'seti]  
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel (1828-82)  
 Rowe, Nicholas (1674-1718) [rou]  
 Ruskin, John (1819-1900) ['rʌskin]  
 Sackville, Thomas, Earl of Dorset (1536-1608) ['sækvil]  
 Scott, Sir Walter (1771-1832) [skɒt]  
 Scrutiny (started 1932)  
 Seafarer, The (9<sup>th</sup> cent.)  
 Shaftesbury, Earl of (1671-1713) ['ʃa:ftsbəri]  
 Shakespeare, William (1564-1616) ['ʃeikspiə]  
 Shaw, George Bernard (1856-1950) [ʃɔ:]  
 Shelly, Percy Bysshe (1792-1822) ['feli]  
 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley (1751-1816) ['feridn]  
 Sidney, Sir Philip (1554-86) ['sidni]  
 Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght (14<sup>th</sup> cent)  
 Skelton, John (1460?-1529) ['skeltn]  
 Smith, Adam (1723-90) [smiθ]  
 Smollett, Tobias (1721-71) ['smɒlit]  
 Spencer, Herbert (1820-1903) ['spensə]

Spender, Stephen (1909- ) ['spendə]  
 Spenser, Edmund (1552?-99) ['spensə]  
 Steele, Richard (1672-1729) [sti:l]  
 Steinbeck, John (1902- ) ['stainbek]  
 Sterne, Laurence (1713-68) [stə:n]  
 Stevenson, Robert Louis (1850-94) ['sti:vnsn]  
 Stowe, Mrs. Beecher (1811-96) [stou]  
 Strachey, Lytton (1880-1932) ['streitfi]  
 Stress and speech rhythm  
 Suckling, Sir John (1609-42) ['sʌkliŋ]  
 Surrey, Earl of (1517?-47) ['sʌri]  
 Swift, Jonathan (1667-1745) [swift]  
 Swinburne, Algernon Charles (1837-1909) ['swinbə:n]  
 Syllabic verse and verse rhythm  
 Synge, J. M. (1871-1909) [sin]  
 Tennyson, Alfred, Lord (1809-92) ['tenisn]  
 Thackeray, William Makepeace (1811-63) ['θækəri]  
 Theatre, Elizabethan  
 Theobald, Lewis (1688-1744) ['tibəld, 'θiəbɔ:ld]  
 Thomas, Dylan (1914- ) ['tɔməs]  
 Thompson, Francis (1859-1907) ['tɔmsn]  
 Thomson, James (1700-48) ['tɔmsn]  
 Tourneur, Cyril (1575?-1626) ['tə:nə]  
 Trollope, Anthony (1815-88) ['trɒləp]  
 Twain, Mark (Samuel Clemens) (1835-1910) [twein]  
 Tyndale, William (1484-1536) ['tindl]  
 Udall, Nicholas (1505-56) ['ju:dəl]  
 Upward, Edward ['ʌpwəd]  
 Vaughan, Henry (1621-95) [vɔ:n]  
 Walpole, Horace (1717-97) ['wɔ:lpoul]  
 Wanderer, The (9<sup>th</sup> cent.)  
 Warner, Rex (1905- ) ['wɔ:nə]  
 Warton, Thomas (1728-90) ['wɔ:tn]  
 Waugh, Evelyn (1903- ) ['i:vlin 'wɔ:]

Webster, John (1575?-1625?) [ˈwebstə]  
Wells, Herbert George (1866-1946) [welz]  
Wesley, John (1702-91) [ˈwezli]  
Whitman, Walt (1819-92) [ˈwitmən]  
Whittier, John Greenleaf [ˈwitiə]  
Wilde, Oscar (1856-1900) [waild]  
Woolf, Virginia (1882-1941) [wulf]  
Wordsworth, William (1770-1850) [ˈwə:dzwə:θ]  
Wulfstan, Archbishop (d. 1023) [ˈwulfstən]  
Wyatt, Sir Thomas (1503-42) [ˈwaiət]  
Wycherly, William (1640-1716) [ˈwitʃəli]  
Wyclif, John (1324-84) [ˈwiklif]  
Yeats, William Butler (1865-1939) [jeits]  
Young, Edward (1683-1765) [jʌŋ]



## Abbreviations

A.D. = *anno Domini*  
A.S. = Anglo-Saxon  
b. = born  
B.C. = before Christ  
cf. = confer = compare  
d. = died  
e.g. = *exempli gratia* = for  
F. = French  
fl. = flourished  
H.G. = High German  
i.e. = *id est* = that is  
M.E. = Middle English  
Mod. = modern  
MS. = manuscript  
MSS. = manuscripts  
O.F. = Old French  
O.E. = Old English = Anglo-Saxon  
v. = *versus*; also *vide* (= see)  
viz. = *videlicet* = namely



If you want to have all the information you need about *Finnegans Wake*, including the full text of *Finnegans Wake* line-numbered, go to the personal site **Sandulescu Online**, at the following internet address:  
<http://sandulescu.perso.monaco.mc/>

