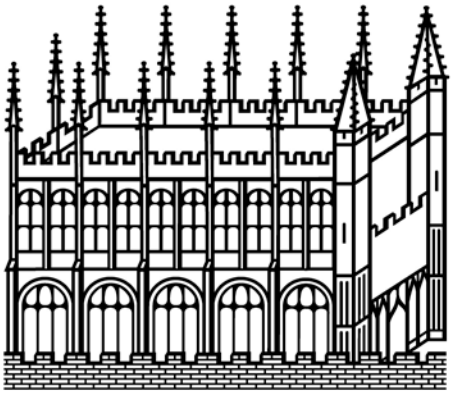

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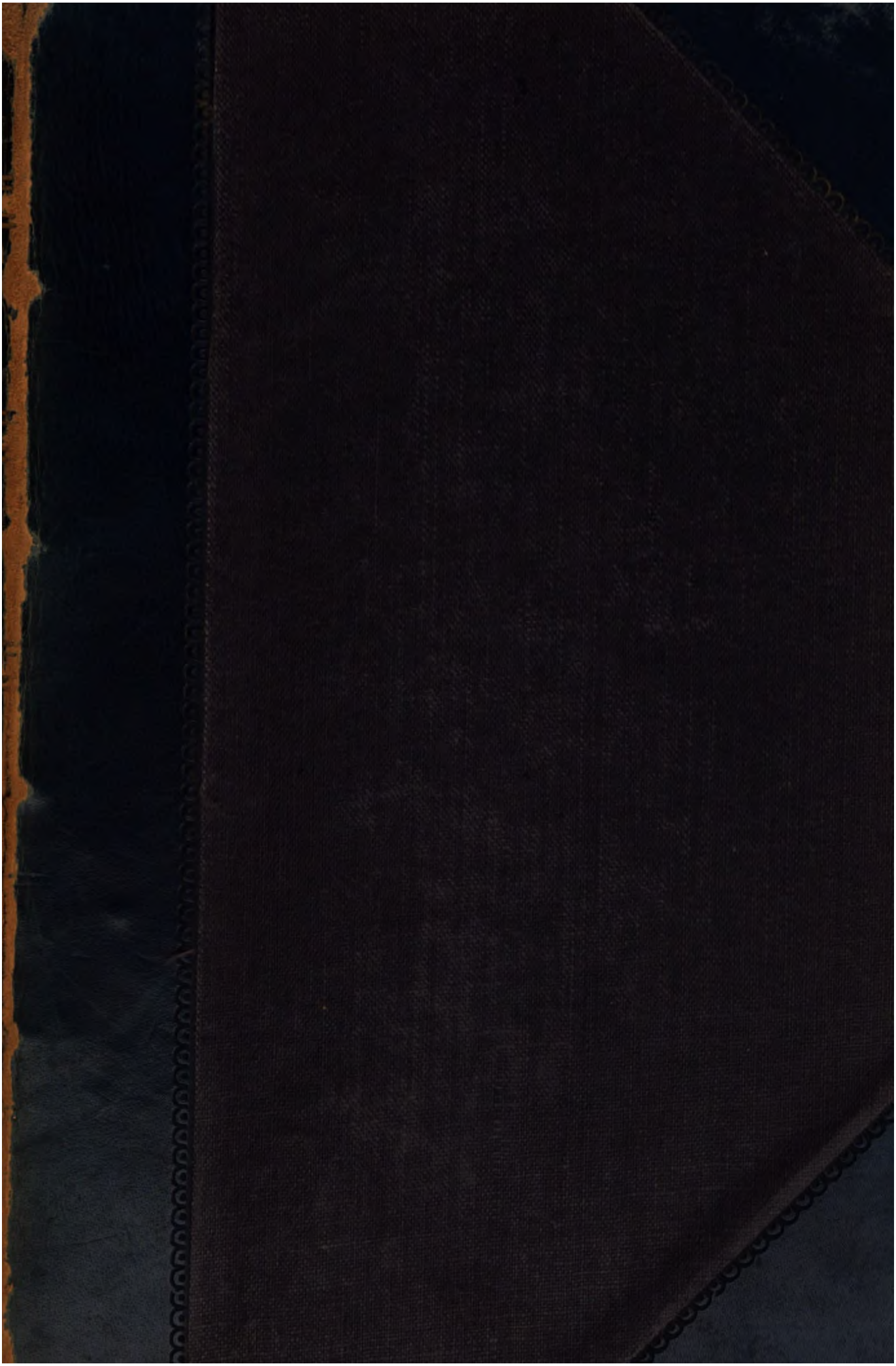

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"... he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there."—P. 331.

ENGLAND'S ANTIPHON

BY

GEORGE. MACDONALD. LL.D.

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"Lift up your hearts."
"We lift them up unto the Lord."

PREFACE.

In this book I have sought to trace the course of our religious poetry from an early period of our literary history.

This could hardly be done without reference to some of the principal phases of the religious history of the nation. To give anything like a full history of the religious feeling of a single county, would require a large book, and—not to mention sermons—would involve a thorough acquaintance with the hymns of the country,—a very wide subject, which I have not considered of sufficient importance from a literary point of view to come within the scope of the volume.

But if its poetry be the cream of a people's thought, some true indications of the history of its religious feeling must be found in its religious verse, and I

hope I have not altogether failed in setting forth these indications.

My chief aim, however, will show itself to have been the mediating towards an intelligent and cordial sympathy betwixt my readers and the writers from whom I have quoted. In this I have some confidence of success.

Heartily do I throw this my small pebble at the head of the great Sabbath-breaker *Schism.*

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England's Antiphon.

ENGLAND'S ANTIPHON.

INTRODUCTION.

IF the act of worship be the highest human condition, it follows that the highest human art must find material in the modes of worship. The first poetry of a nation will not be religious poetry: the nation must have a history at least before it can possess any material capable of being cast into the mould of religious utterance; but, the nation once possessed of this material, poetry is the first form religious utterance will assume.

The earliest form of literature is the ballad, which is the germ of all subsequent forms of poetry, for it has in itself all their elements: the *lyric*, for it was first chanted to some stringed instrument; the *epic*, for it tells a tale, often of solemn and ancient report; the *dramatic*, for its actors are ever ready to start forward into life, snatch the word from the mouth of the narrator, and speak in their own persons. All these forms have been used for the utterance of religious thought and feeling. Of the lyrical poems of England, religion possesses the most; of the epic, the best; of the dramatic, the oldest.

Of each of these I shall have occasion to speak; but, as the title of the book implies,—for *Antiphon* means the responsive song of the parted choir,—I shall have chiefly to do with the lyric or song form.

For song is the speech of feeling. Even the prose of emotion always wanders into the rhythmical. Hence, as well as for other reasons belonging to its nature, it is one chief mode in which men unite to praise God; for in thus praising they hold communion with each other, and the praise expands and grows.

The *individual* heart, however, must first have been uplifted into praiseful song, before the common ground and form of feeling, in virtue of which men might thus meet, could be supplied. But the vocal utterance or the bodily presence is not at all necessary for this communion. When we read rejoicingly the true song-speech of one of our singing brethren, we hold song-worship with him and with all who have thus at any time shared in his feelings, even if he have passed centuries ago into the "high countries" of song.

My object is to erect, as it were, in this book, a little auricle, or spot of concentrated hearing, where the hearts of my readers may listen, and join in the song of their country's singing men and singing women.

I will build it, if I may, like a chapel in the great church of England's worship, gathering the sounds of its never-ceasing choir, heart after heart lifting up itself in the music of speech, heart after heart responding across the ages. Hearing, we worship with them.

For we must not forget that, although the individual song springs from the heart of the individual, the song of a country is not merely cumulative: it is vital in its growth, and therefore composed of historically dependent members. No man could sing as he has sung, had not others sung before him. Deep answereth unto deep, face to face, praise to praise. To the sound of the trumpet the harp returns its own vibrating response—alike, but how different! The religious song of the country, I say again, is a growth, rooted deep in all its story.

Besides the fact that the lyric chiefly will rouse the devotional feeling, there is another reason why I should principally use it: I wish to make my book valuable in its parts as in itself. The value of a thing depends in large measure upon its unity, its wholeness. In a work of these limits, that form of verse alone can be available for its unity which is like the song of the bird—a warble and then a stillness. However valuable an extract may be—and I shall not quite eschew such—an entire lyric, I had almost said *however inferior*, if worthy of a place at all, is of greater value, especially if regarded in relation to the form of setting with which I hope to surround it.

There is a sense in which I may, without presumption, adopt the name of Choragus, or leader of the chorus, in relation to these singers: I must take upon me to order who shall sing, when he shall sing, and which of his songs he shall sing. But I would rather assume the office of master of the hearing, for my aim shall be to cause the song to be truly heard; to

set forth worthy points in form, in matter, and in relation; to say with regard to the singer himself, his time, its modes, its beliefs, such things as may help to set the song in its true light—its relation, namely, to the source whence it sprung, which alone can secure its right reception by the heart of the hearer. For my chief aim will be the heart; seeing that, although there is no dividing of the one from the other, the heart can do far more for the intellect than the intellect can do for the heart.

We must not now attempt to hear the singers of times so old that their language is unintelligible without labour. For this there is not room, even if otherwise it were desirable that such should divide the volume. We must leave Anglo-Saxon behind us. In Early English, I shall give a few valuable lyrics, but they shall not be so far removed from our present speech but that, with a reasonable amount of assistance, the nature and degree of which I shall set forth, they shall not only present themselves to the reader's understanding, but commend themselves to his imagination and judgment.

CHAPTER I.

SACRED LYRICS OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

IN the midst of wars and rumours of wars, the strife of king and barons, and persistent efforts to subdue neighbouring countries, the mere effervescence of the life of the nation, let us think for a moment of that to which the poems I am about to present bear good witness—the true life of the people, growing quietly, slowly, unperceived—the leaven hid in the meal. For what is the true life of a nation? That, I answer, in its modes of thought, its manners and habits, which favours the growth within the individual of that kingdom of heaven for the sake only of which the kingdoms of earth exist. The true life of the people, as distinguished from the nation, is simply the growth in its individuals of those eternal principles of truth, in proportion to whose power in them they take rank in the kingdom of heaven, the only kingdom that can endure, all others being but as the mimicries of children playing at government.

Little as they then knew of the relations of the wonderful story on which their faith was built, to everything human, the same truth was at work then

which is now—poor as the recognition of these relations yet is—slowly setting men free. In the hardest winter the roots are still alive in the frozen ground.

In the silence of the monastery, unnatural as that life was, germinated much of this deeper life. As we must not judge of the life of the nation by its kings and mighty men, so we must not judge of the life in the Church by those who are called Rabbi. The very notion of the kingdom of heaven implies a secret growth, secret from no affectation of mystery, but because its goings-on are in the depths of the human nature where it holds communion with the Divine. In the Church, as in society, we often find that that which shows itself uppermost is but the froth, a sign, it may be, of life beneath, but in itself worthless. When the man arises with a servant's heart and a ruler's brain, then is the summer of the Church's content. But whether the men who wrote the following songs moved in some shining orbit of rank, or only knelt in some dim chapel, and walked in some pale cloister, we cannot tell, for they have left no name behind them.

My reader will observe that there is little of theory and much of love in these lyrics. The recognition of a living Master is far more than any notions about him. In the worship of him a thousand truths are working, unknown and yet active, which, embodied in theory, and dissociated from the living mind that was in Christ, will as certainly breed worms as any omer of hoarded manna. Holding the skirt of his garment in one hand, we shall in the other hold the key to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I think almost all the earliest religious poetry is about him and his mother. Their longing after his humanity made them idolize his mother. If we forget that only through his humanity can we approach his divinity, we shall soon forget likewise that his mother is blessed among women.

I take the poems from one of the Percy Society publications, edited by Mr. Wright from a manuscript in the British Museum. He adjudges them to the reign of Edward I. Perhaps we may find in them a sign or two that in cultivating our intellect we have in some measure neglected our heart.

But first as to the mode in which I present them to my readers: I have followed these rules:—

1. Wherever a word differs from the modern word only in spelling, I have, for the sake of readier comprehension, substituted the modern form, with the following exception:—Where the spelling indicates a different pronunciation, necessary for the rhyme or the measure, I retain such part of the older form, marking with an acute accent any vowel now silent which must be sounded.

2. Where the word used is antique in root, I give the modern synonym in the margin. Antique phrases I explain in foot-notes.

It must be borne in mind that our modern pronunciation can hardly fail in other cases as well to injure the melody of the verses.

The modern reader will often find it difficult to get a rhythm out of some of them. This may arise from any of several causes. In the first place many final *e*'s were

then sounded which are now silent; and it is not easy to tell which of them to sound. Again, some words were pronounced as dissyllables which we treat as monosyllables, and others as monosyllables which we treat as dissyllables. I suspect besides, that some of the old writers were content to allow a prolonged syllable to stand for two short ones, a mode not without great beauty when sparingly and judiciously employed. Short supernumerary syllables were likewise allowed considerable freedom to come and go. A good deal must, however, be put down to the carelessness and presumption of the transcribers, who may very well have been incapable of detecting their own blunders. One of these ancient mechanics of literature caused Chaucer endless annoyance with his corruptions, as a humorous little poem, the last in his works, sufficiently indicates. From the same sources no doubt spring as well most of the variations of text in the manuscripts.

The first of the poems is chiefly a conversation between the Lord on the cross and his mother standing at its foot. A few prefatory remarks in explanation of some of its allusions will help my readers to enjoy it.

It was at one time a common belief, and the notion has not yet, I think, altogether vanished, that the dying are held back from repose by the love that is unwilling to yield them up. Hence, in the third stanza, the Lord prays his mother to let him die.

In the fifth, he reasons against her overwhelming sorrows on the ground of the deliverance his suffer-

ings will bring to the human race. But she can only feel her own misery.

To understand the seventh and eighth, it is necessary to know that, among other strange things accepted by the early Church, it was believed that the mother of Jesus had no suffering at his birth. This of course rendered her incapable of perfect sympathy with other mothers. It is a lovely invention, then, that he should thus commend mothers to his mother, telling her to judge of the pains of motherhood by those which she now endured. Still he fails to turn aside her thoughts. She is thinking still only of her own and her son's suffering, while he continues bent on making her think of others, until, at last, forth comes her prayer for all women. This seems to me a tenderness grand as exquisite.

The outburst of the chorus of the Faithful in the last stanza but one,—

> When he rose, then fell her sorrow,

is as fine as anything I know in the region of the lyric.

> "Stand well, mother, under rood ;[1] *the cross.*
> Behold thy son with gladé mood ; *cheerful.*
> Blithe mother mayst thou be."
> "Son, how should I blithé stand?
> I see thy feet, I see thy hand
> Nailéd to the hard tree."

[1] The rhymes of the first and second and of the fourth and fifth lines throughout the stanzas, are all, I think, what the French call feminine rhymes, as in the words "sleeping," "weeping." This I think it better not to attempt retaining, because the final unaccented syllable is generally one of those *e*'s which, having first become mute, have since been dropped from our spelling altogether.

"Mother, do way thy wepynde :	*give over thy weeping.*
I tholé death for mankind—	*suffer.*
For my guilt thole I none."	
"Son, I feel the dede stounde;	*death-pang.*
The sword is at my heart's ground	*bottom.*
That me byhet Simeon."	*foreshowed.*
"Mother, mercy ! let me die,	
For Adam out of hell buy,	*for to buy Adam.*
And his kin that is forlore."	*lost.*
"Son, what shall me to rede?[1]	
My pain paineth me to dede :	*death.*
Let me die thee before !"	
"Mother, thou rue all of thy bairn ;	*rue thou : all* is only exple-
Thou wash away the bloody tern ;	*wash thou : tears.* [tive.
It doth me worse than my ded."	*hurts me more : death.*
"Son, how may I terés werne?	*turn aside tears.*
I see the bloody streamés erne	*flow.*
From thy heart to my fet."	*feet.*
"Mother, now I may thee seye,	*say to thee.*
Better is that I one deye	*die.*
Than all mankind to hellé go."	
"Son, I see thy body byswongen,	*lashed.*
Feet and hands throughout stongen :	*pierced through and*
No wonder though me be woe."	*woe be to me.* [*through.*
"Mother, now I shall thee tell,	
If I not die, thou goest to hell :	
I thole death for thy sake."	*endure.*
"Son, thou art so meek and mynde,	*thoughtful.*
Ne wyt me not, it is my kind[2]	
That I for thee this sorrow make."	
"Mother, now thou mayst well leren	*learn.*
What sorrow have that children beren,	*they have : bear.*
What sorrow it is with childé gon."	*to go.*

[1] For the grammatical interpretation of this line, I am indebted to Mr. Richard Morris. *Shall* is here used, as it often is, in the sense of *must*, and *rede* is a noun; the paraphrase of the whole being, "*Son, what must be to me for counsel?*" "*What counsel must I follow?*"

[2] "Do not blame me, it is my nature."

"Sorrow, I wis! I can thee tell!
But it be the pain of hell — *except.*
More sorrow wot I none."

"Mother, rue of mother-care, — *take pity upon.*
For now thou wost of mother-fare, — *knowest.*
Though thou be clean maiden mon."[1]
"Soné, help at allé need
Allé those that to me grede, — *cry.*
Maiden, wife, and full wymmon." — *woman with child.*

"Mother, may I no longer dwell;
The time is come I shall to hell;
The third day I rise upon."
"Son, I will with thee founden; — *set out, go.*
I die, I wis, for thy wounden:
So sorrowful death nes never none." — *was not never none.*

When he rose, then fell her sorrow;
Her bliss sprung the third morrow:
Blithe mother wert thou tho! — *then.*
Lady, for that ilké bliss, — *same.*
Beseech thy son of sunnés lisse: — *for sin's release.*
Thou be our shield against our foe. — *Be thou.*

Blessed be thou, full of bliss!
Let us never heaven miss,
Through thy sweeté Sonés might!
Loverd, for that ilké blood, — *Lord.*
That thou sheddest on the rood,
Thou bring us into heaven's light. AMEN.

I think my readers will not be sorry to have another of a similar character.

I sigh when I sing
For sorrow that I see,
When I with weeping
Behold upon the tree,

[1] *Mon* is used for *man* or *woman*: human being. It is so used in Lancashire still: they say *mon* to a woman.

And see Jesus the sweet
His heart's blood for-lete — *yield quite.*
For the love of me.
His woundés waxen wete, — *wet.*
They weepen still and mete :[1]
Mary rueth thee. — *pitieth.*

High upon a down, — *hill.*
Where all folk it see may,
A mile from each town,
About the mid-day,
The rood is up arearéd;
His friendés are afearéd,
And clingeth so the clay ;[2]
The rood stands in stone,
Mary stands her on,
And saith Welaway !

When I thee behold
With eyen brighté bo, — *eyes bright both.*
And thy body cold—
Thy ble waxeth blo, — *colour: livid.*
Thou hangest all of blood — *bloody.*
So high upon the rood
Between thievés tuo— — *two.*
Who may sigh more?
Mary weepeth sore,
And sees all this woe.

The nails be too strong,
The smiths are too sly ; — *skilful.*
Thou bleedest all too long ;
The tree is all too high ;
The stones be all wete ! — *wet.*
Alas, Jesu, the sweet !
For now friend hast thou none,

1 "They weep quietly and *becomingly*." I think there must be in this word something of the sense of *gently*, *uncomplainingly*.

2 "And are shrunken (*clung* with fear) *like* the clay." *So* here is the same as *as*. For this interpretation I am indebted to Mr. Morris.

But Saint John to-mournynde, *mourning greatly.*
And Mary wepynde, *weeping.*
For pain that thee is on.

Oft when I sike *sigh.*
And makie my moan,
Well ill though me like,
Wonder is it none,[1]
When I see hang high
And bitter pains dreye, *dree, endure.*
Jesu, my lemmon! *love.*
His woundés sore smart,
The spear all to his heart
And through his side is gone.

Oft when I syke, *sigh.*
With care I am through-sought; *searched through.*
When I wake I wyke; *languish.*
Of sorrow is all my thought.
Alas! men be wood *mad.*
That swear by the rood *swear by the cross.*
And sell him for nought
That bought us out of sin.
He bring us to wynne, *may he: bliss.*
That hath us dear bought!

I add two stanzas of another of like sort.

Man that is in glory and bliss,
And lieth in shame and sin,
He is more than unwis *unwise.*
That thereof will not blynne. *cease.*
All this world it goeth away,
Me thinketh it nigheth Doomsday;
Now man goes to ground: *perishes.*
Jesus Christ that tholed ded *endured death.*
He may our souls to heaven led *lead.*
Within a little stound. *moment.*

[1] "It is no wonder though it pleases me very ill."

Jesus, that was mild and free,
  Was with spear y-stongen ; *stung* or *pierced.*
He was nailéd to the tree,
  With scourges y-swongen. *lashed.*
All for man he tholed shame, *endured.*
Withouten guilt, withouten blame,
  Bothé day and other.[1]
Man, full muchel he loved thee, *much.*
When he woldé make thee free,
  And become thy brother.

The simplicity, the tenderness, the devotion of these lyrics is to me wonderful. Observe their realism, as, for instance, in the words: "The stones beoth al wete;" a realism as far removed from the coarseness of a Rubens as from the irreverence of too many religious teachers, who will repeat and repeat again the most sacred words for the merest logical ends until the tympanum of the moral ear hears without hearing the sounds that ought to be felt as well as held holiest. They bear strongly, too, upon the outcome of feeling in action, although doubtless there was the same tendency then as there is now to regard the observance of church-ordinances as the service of Christ, instead of as a means of gathering strength wherewith to serve him by being in the world as he was in the world.

From a poem of forty-eight stanzas I choose five, partly in order to manifest that, although there is in it an occasional appearance of what we should

[1] I think the poet, wisely anxious to keep his last line just what it is, was perplexed for a rhyme, and fell on the odd device of saying, for "both day and night," "both day and the other."

consider sentimentality, allied in nature to that worship of the Virgin which is more a sort of French gallantry than a feeling of reverence, the sense of duty to the Master keeps pace with the profession of devotedness to him. There is so little continuity of thought in it, that the stanzas might almost be arranged anyhow.

Jesu, thy love be all my thought ;
Of other thing ne reck I nought ; *reckon.*
I yearn to have thy will y-wrought,
For thou me hast well dear y-bought.

Jesu, well may mine hearté see
That mild and meek he must be,
All unthews and lustés flee, *bad habits.*
That feelen will the bliss of thee. *feel.*

For sinful folk, sweet Jesus,
Thou lightest from the high house ;
Poor and low thou wert for us.
Thine heart's love thou sendest us.

Jesu, therefore beseech I thee
Thy sweet love thou grant me ;
That I thereto worthy be,
Make me worthy that art so free. *thou that art.*

Jesu, thine help at my ending !
And in that dreadful out-wending, *going forth of the spirit.*
Send my soul good weryyng, *guard.*
That I ne dread none evil thing.

I shall next present a short lyric, displaying more of art than this last, giving it now in the old form, and afterwards in a new one, that my reader may

see both how it looks in its original dress, and what it means.

Wynter wakeneth al my care,
Nou this leves waxeth bare,
Ofte y sike ant mourne sare, *sigh : sore.*
When hit cometh in my thoht
Of this worldes joie, how hit goth al to noht.

Now hit is, ant now hit nys, *it is not.*
Also hit ner nere y-wys,[1]
That moni mon seith soth hit ys,[2]
Al goth bote Godes wille,
Alle we shule deye, thah us like ylle. *though it pleases us ill.*

Al that gren me graueth grene,[3]
Nou hit faleweth al by-dene; *grows yellow: speedily.*
Jhesu, help that hit be sene, *seen.*
Ant shild us from helle ;
For y not whider y shal, ne hou longe her duelle.[4]

I will now give a modern version of it, in which I have spoiled the original of course, but I hope as little as well may be.

Winter wakeneth all my care ;
Now the trees are waxing bare ;
Oft my sighs my grief declare[5]
When it comes into my thought
Of this world's joy, how it goes all to nought.

[1] "All as if it were not never, I wis."

[2] "So that many men say—True it is, all goeth but God's will."

[3] I conjecture "All that grain (me) groweth green."

[4] *Not* is a contraction for *ne wot, know not.* "For I know not whither I must go, nor how long here I dwell." I think *y* is omitted by mistake before *duelle.*

[5] This is very poor compared with the original.

Now it is, and now 'tis not—
As it ne'er had been, I wot.
Hence many say—it is man's lot :
  All goeth but God's will ;
  We all die, though we like it ill.

Green about me grows the grain ;
Now it yelloweth all again :
Jesus, give us help amain,
  And shield us from hell ;
  For when or whither I go I cannot tell.

There were no doubt many religious poems in a certain amount of circulation of a different cast from these ; some a metrical recounting of portions of the Bible history—a kind unsuited to our ends ; others a setting forth of the doctrines and duties then believed and taught. Of the former class is one of the oldest Anglo-Saxon poems we have, that of Caedmon, and there are many specimens to be found in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They could, however, have been of little service to the people, so few of whom could read, or could have procured manuscripts if they had been able to use them. A long and elaborate composition of the latter class was written in the reign of Edward II. by William de Shoreham, vicar of Chart-Sutton in Kent. He probably taught his own verses to the people at his catechisings. The intention was, no doubt, by the aid of measure and rhyme to facilitate the remembrance of the facts and doctrines. It consists of a long poem on the Seven Sacraments ; of a shorter, associating the Canonical Hours with the principal events of the close of our Lord's life ; of an exposition of the Ten Commandments, followed by a kind

of treatise on the Seven Cardinal Sins : the fifth part describes the different joys of the Virgin; the sixth, in praise of the Virgin, is perhaps the most poetic ; the last is less easy to characterize. The poem is written in the Kentish dialect, and is difficult.

I shall now turn into modern verse a part of " The Canonical Hours," giving its represented foundation of the various acts of worship in the Romish Church throughout the day, from early in the morning to the last service at night. After every fact concerning our Lord, follows an apostrophe to his mother, which I omit, being compelled to choose.

Father's wisdom lifted high,
  Lord of us aright—
God and man taken was,
  At matin-time by night.
The disciples that were his,
  Anon they him forsook;
Sold to Jews and betrayed,
  To torture him took.

At the prime Jesus was led
  In presence of Pilate,
Where witnesses, false and fell,
  Laughed at him for hate.
In the neck they him smote,
  Bound his hands of might ;
Spit upon that sweet face
  That heaven and earth did light.

" Crucify him ! crucify ! "
  They cried at nine o'clock ;
A purple cloth they put on him—
  To stare at him and mock.
They upon his sweet head
  Stuck a thorny crown ;
To Calvary his cross he bears,
  Pitiful, from the town

Jesus was nailed on the cross
At the noon-tide ;
Strong thieves they hanged up,
One on either side.
In his pain, his strong thirst
Quenched they with gall ;
So that God's holy Lamb
From sin washed us all.

At the nones Jesus Christ
Felt the hard death ;
He to his father "Eloi!" cried,
Gan up yield his breath.
A soldier with a sharp spear
Pierced his right side ;
The earth shook, the sun grew dim,
The moment that he died.

He was taken off the cross
At even-song's hour ;
The strength left and hid in God
Of our Saviour.
Such death he underwent,
Of life the medicine!
Alas ! he was laid adown—
The crown of bliss in pine!

At complines, it was borne away
To the burying,
That noble corpse of Jesus Christ,
Hope of life's coming.
Anointed richly it was,
Fulfilled his holy book :
I pray, Lord, thy passion
In my mind lock.

Childlike simplicity, realism, and tenderness will be evident in this, as in preceding poems, especially in the choice of adjectives. But indeed the combina-

tion of certain words had become conventional; as "The hard tree," "The nails great and strong," and such like.

I know I have spoiled the poem in half-translating it thus; but I have rendered it intelligible to all my readers, have not wandered from the original, and have retained a degree of antiqueness both in the tone and the expression.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIRACLE PLAYS AND OTHER POEMS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

THE oldest form of regular dramatic representation in England was the Miracle Plays, improperly called Mysteries, after the French. To these plays the people of England, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, owed a very large portion of what religious knowledge they possessed, for the prayers were in an unknown tongue, the sermons were very few, and printing was uninvented. The plays themselves, introduced into the country by the Normans, were, in the foolish endeavour to make Normans of Anglo-Saxons, represented in Norman French[1] until the year 1338, when permission was obtained from the Pope to represent them in English.

The word *Miracle*, in their case, means anything recorded in Scripture. The Miracle Plays had for their subjects the chief incidents of Old and New Testament history; not merely, however, of this history as accepted by the Reformed Church, but of

[1] I owe almost all my information on the history of these plays to Mr. Collier's well-known work on English Dramatic Poetry.

that contained in the Apocryphal Gospels as well. An entire series of these *Miracles* consisted of short dramatic representations of many single passages of the sacred story. The whole would occupy about three days. It began with the Creation, and ended with the Judgment. That for which the city of Coventry was famous consists of forty-two subjects, with a long prologue. Composed by ecclesiastics, the plays would seem to have been first represented by them only, although afterwards it was not always considered right for the clergy to be concerned with them. The hypocritical Franciscan friar, in "Piers Ploughman's Creed," a poem of the close of the same century, claims as a virtue for his order—

> At markets and miracles we meddleth us never.

They would seem likewise to have been first represented in churches and chapels, sometimes in churchyards. Later, when the actors chiefly belonged to city-guilds, they were generally represented in the streets and squares.

It must be borne in mind by any who would understand the influence of these plays upon the people, that much in them appearing to us grotesque, childish, absurd, and even irreverent, had no such appearance in the eyes of the spectators. A certain amount of the impression of absurdity is simply the consequence of antiquity; and even that which is rightly regarded as absurd in the present age, will not at least have produced the discomposing effects of absurdity upon the less developed beholders of that age;

just as the quaint pictures with which their churches were decorated may make us smile, but were by them regarded with awe and reverence from their infancy.

It must be confessed that there is in them even occasional coarseness ; but that the devil for instance should always be represented as a baffled fool, and made to play the buffoon sometimes after a disgusting fashion, was to them only the treatment he deserved : it was their notion of "poetic justice;" while most of them were too childish to be shocked at the discord thus introduced, and many, we may well hope, too childlike to lose their reverence for the holy because of the proximity of the ridiculous.

There seems to me considerably more of poetic worth scattered through these plays than is generally recognized; and I am glad to be able to do a little to set forth the fact. I cannot doubt that my readers will be interested in such fragments as the scope and design of my book will allow me to offer. Had there been no such passages, I might have regarded the plays as but remotely connected with my purpose, and mentioned them merely as a dramatic form of religious versification. I quote from the *Coventry Miracles*, better known than either of the other two sets in existence, the Chester Plays and those of Widkirk Abbey. The manuscript from which they have been edited by Mr. Halliwell, one of those students of our early literature to whom we are endlessly indebted for putting valuable things within our reach, is by no means so old as the plays themselves ; it bears date 1468, a hundred and thirty

years after they appeared in their English dress. Their language is considerably modernized, a process constantly going on where transcription is the means of transmission—not to mention that the actors would of course make many changes to the speech of their own time. I shall modernize it a little further, but only as far as change of spelling will go.

The first of the course is *The Creation.* God, and angels, and Lucifer appear. That God should here utter, I cannot say announce, the doctrine of the Trinity, may be defended on the ground that he does so in a soliloquy ; but when we find afterwards that the same doctrine is one of the subjects upon which the boy Jesus converses with the doctors in the Temple, we cannot help remarking the strange anachronism. Two remarkable lines in the said soliloquy are these :

> And all that ever shall have being
> It is closed in my mind.

The next scene is the *Fall of Man,* which is full of poetic feeling and expression both. I must content myself with a few passages.

Here is part of Eve's lamentation, when she is conscious of the death that has laid hold upon her.

> Alas that ever that speech was spoken
> That the false angel said unto me!
> Alas! our Maker's bidding is broken,
> For I have touched his own dear tree.
> Our fleshly eyes are all unlokyn, *unlocked.*
> Naked for sin ourself we see ;
> That sorry apple that we have sokyn *sucked.*
> To death hath brought my spouse and me.

When the voice of God is heard, saying,

> Adam, that with my hands I made,
> Where art thou now? what hast thou wrought?

Adam replies, in two lines, containing the whole truth of man's spiritual condition ever since:

> Ah, Lord! for sin our flowers do fade:
> I hear thy voice, but I see thee nought.

The vision had vanished, but the voice remained; for they that hear shall live, and to the pure in heart one day the vision shall be restored, for "they shall see God." There is something wonderfully touching in the quaint simplicity of the following words of God to the woman:

> Unwise woman, say me why
> That thou hast done this foul folly,
> And I made thee a great lady,
> In Paradise for to play?

As they leave the gates, the angel with the flaming sword ends his speech thus:

> This bliss I spere from you right fast; *bar.*
> Herein come ye no more,
> Till a child of a maid be born,
> And upon the rood rent and torn,
> To save all that ye have forlorn, *lost.*
> Your wealth for to restore.

Eve laments bitterly, and at length offers her throat to her husband, praying him to strangle her:

> Now stumble we on stalk and stone;
> My wit away from me is gone;
> Writhe on to my neck-bone
> With hardness of thine hand.

Adam replies—not over politely—

> Wife, thy wit is not worth a rush ;

and goes on to make what excuse for themselves he can in a very simple and touching manner :

> Our hap was hard, our wit was nesche, *soft, weak*, still in use
> To Paradise when we were brought : [in some provinces.
> My weeping shall be long fresh ;
> Short liking shall be long bought. *pleasure.*

The scene ends with these words from Eve :

> Alas, that ever we wrought this sin !
> Our bodily sustenance for to win,
> Ye must delve and I shall spin,
> In care to lead our life.

Cain and Abel follows ; then *Noah's Flood*, in which God says,

> They shall not dread the flood's flow ;

then *Abraham's Sacrifice ;* then *Moses and the Two Tables ;* then *The Prophets*, each of whom prophesies of the coming Saviour ; after which we find ourselves in the Apocryphal Gospels, in the midst of much nonsense about Anna and Joachim, the parents of Mary, about Joseph and Mary and the birth of Jesus, till we arrive at *The Shepherds* and *The Magi, The Purification, The Slaughter of the Innocents, The Disputing in the Temple, The Baptism, The Temptation*, and *The Woman taken in Adultery*, at which point I pause for the sake of the remarkable tradition embodied in the scene—that each of the woman's accusers thought Jesus was writing his individual sins on the ground. While he is writing the second time,

the Pharisee, the Accuser, and the Scribe, who have chiefly sustained the dialogue hitherto, separate, each going into a different part of the Temple, and soliloquize thus:

Pharisee. Alas! alas! I am ashamed!
I am afeared that I shall die;
All my sins even properly named
Yon prophet did write before mine eye.
If that my fellows that did espy,
They will tell it both far and wide;
My sinful living if they outcry,
I wot not where my head to hide.

Accuser. Alas! for sorrow mine heart doth bleed,
All my sins yon man did write;
If that my fellows to them took heed,
I cannot me from death acquite.
I would I were hid somewhere out of sight,
That men should me nowhere see nor know;
If I be taken I am aflyght *afraid.*
In mekyl shame I shall be throwe. *much.*

Scribe. Alas the time that this betyd! *happened.*
Right bitter care doth me embrace.
All my sins be now unhid,
Yon man before me them all doth trace.
If I were once out of this place,
To suffer death great and vengeance able,[1]
I will never come before his face,
Though I should die in a stable.

Upon this follows *The Raising of Lazarus;* next *The Council of the Jews,* to which the devil appears as a Prologue, dressed in the extreme of the fashion of the day, which he sets forth minutely enough in his speech also. *The Entry into Jerusalem; The Last*

[1] *Able to suffer,* deserving, subject to, obnoxious to, liable to death and vengeance.

Supper; The Betrayal; King Herod; The Trial of Christ; Pilate's Wife's Dream come next; to the subject of the last of which the curious but generally accepted origin is given, that it was inspired by Satan, anxious that Jesus should not be slain, because he dreaded the mischief he would work when he entered Hades or Hell, for there is no distinction between them either here or in the Apocryphal Gospel whence the *Descent into Hell* is taken. Then follow *The Crucifixion* and *The Descent into Hell*—often called the *Harrowing of Hell*—that is, the *making war upon* or *despoiling of hell*,[1] for which the authority is a passage in the Gospel of Nicodemus, full of a certain florid Eastern grandeur. I need hardly remind my readers that the Apostles' Creed, as it now stands, contains the same legend in the form of an article of faith. The allusions to it are frequent in the early literature of Christendom.

The soul of Christ comes to the gates of hell, and says:

Undo your gates of sorwatorie; *place of sorrow.*
On man's soul I have memorie;
There cometh now the king of glory,
  These gates for to breke!
Ye devils that are here within,
Hell gates ye shall unpin;
I shall deliver man's kin—
  From woe I will them wreke. *avenge.*

* * *

[1] The word *harry* is still used in Scotland, but only in regard to a bird's nest.

Against me it were but waste
To holdyn or to standyn fast;
Hell-lodge may not last
  Against the king of glory.
Thy dark door down I throw;
My fair friends now well I know;
I shall them bring, reckoned by row,
  Out of their purgatory!

The Burial; The Resurrection; The Three Maries; Christ appearing to Mary; The Pilgrim of Emmaus; The Ascension; The Descent of the Holy Ghost; The Assumption of the Virgin; and *Doomsday*, close the series. I have quoted enough to show that these plays must, in the condition of the people to whom they were presented, have had much to do with their religious education.

This fourteenth century was a wonderful time of outbursting life. Although we cannot claim the *Miracles* as entirely English products, being in all probability translations from the Norman-French, yet the fact that they were thus translated is one remarkable amongst many in this dawn of the victory of England over her conquerors. From this time, English prospered and French decayed. Their own language was now, so far, authorized as the medium of religious instruction to the people, while a similar change had passed upon processes at law; and, most significant of all, the greatest poet of the time, and one of the three greatest poets as yet of all English time, wrote, although a courtier, in the language of the people. Before selecting some of Chaucer's religious verses, however, I must speak of two or three poems by other writers.

The first of these is *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman*,—a poem of great influence in the same direction as the writings of Wycliffe. It is a vision and an allegory, wherein the vices of the time, especially those of the clergy, are unsparingly dealt with. Towards the close it loses itself in a metaphysical allegory concerning Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest.[1] I do not find much poetry in it. There is more, to my mind, in another poem, written some thirty or forty years later, the author of which is unknown, perhaps because he was an imitator of William Langland, the author of the *Vision*. It is called *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*. Both are written after the fashion of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, and not after the fashion of the Anglo-Norman, of which distinction a little more presently. Its object is to contrast the life and character of the four orders of friars with those of a simple Christian. There is considerable humour in the working plan of the poem.

A certain poor man says he has succeeded in learning his A B C, his Paternoster, and his Ave Mary, but he cannot, do what he will, learn his Creed. He sets out, therefore, to find some one whose life, according with his profession, may give him a hope that he will teach him his creed aright. He applies to the friars. One after another, every order abuses the other; nor this only, but for money offers either to teach him his creed, or to absolve

[1] Do-well, Do-better, and Do-best.

him for ignorance of the same. He finds no helper until he falls in with Pierce the Ploughman, of whose poverty he gives a most touching description. I shall, however, only quote some lines of *The Believe* as taught by the Ploughman, and this principally to show the nature of the versification:

Leve thou on our Lord God, that all the world wroughté ; *believe.*
Holy heaven upon high wholly he formed ;
And is almighty himself over all his workés ;
And wrought as his will was, the world and the heaven ;
And on gentle Jesus Christ, engendered of himselven,
His own only Son, Lord over all y-knowen.
* * * * *
With thorn y-crowned, crucified, and on the cross diéd ;
And sythen his blessed body was in a stone buried ; *after that.*
And descended adown to the dark hellé,
And fetched out our forefathers ; and they full fain weren. *glad.*
The third day readily, himself rose from death,
And on a stone there he stood, he stey up to heaven. *where : ascended.*

Here there is no rhyme. There is measure—a dance-movement in the verse ; and likewise, in most of the lines, what was essential to Anglo-Saxon verse—three or more words beginning with the same sound. This is somewhat of the nature of rhyme, and was all our Anglo-Saxon forefathers had of the kind. Their Norman conquerors brought in rhyme, regularity of measure, and division into stanzas, with many refinements of versification now regarded, with some justice and a little more injustice, as peurilities. Strange as it may seem, the peculiar rhythmic movement of the Anglo-Saxon verse is even yet the most popular of all measures. Its representative is now that kind of verse which is measured not by the

number of syllables, but by the number of *accented* syllables. The bulk of the nation is yet Anglo-Saxon in its blind poetic tastes.

Before taking my leave of this mode, I would give one fine specimen from another poem, lately printed, for the first time in full, from Bishop Percy's manuscript. It may chronologically belong to the beginning of the next century: its proper place in my volume is here. It is called *Death and Liffe.* Like Langland's poem, it is a vision; but, short as it is in comparison, there is far more poetry in it than in *Piers Plowman.* Life is thus described:

> She was brighter of her blee[1] than was the bright sun;
> Her rudd[2] redder than the rose that on the rise[3] hangeth;
> Meekly smiling with her mouth, and merry in her looks;
> Ever laughing for love, as she like would.

Everything bursts into life and blossom at her presence,

> And the grass that was grey greened belive. *forthwith.*

But the finest passage is part of Life's answer to Death, who has been triumphing over her:

How didst thou joust at Jerusalem, with Jesu, my Lord,
Where thou deemedst his death in one day's time! *judgedst.*
There wast thou shamed and shent and stripped for aye! *rebuked.*
When thou saw the king come with the cross on his shoulder,
On the top of Calvary thou camest him against;
Like a traitor untrue, treason thou thought;
Thou laid upon my liege lord loathful hands,
Sithen beat him on his body, and buffeted him rightly, *then.*
Till the railing red blood ran from his sides; *pouring down.*

[1] Complexion. [2] Ruddiness—complexion. [3] Twig.

Sith rent him on the rood with full red wounds : *then.*
To all the woes that him wasted, I wot not few,
Then deemedst (him) to have been dead, and dressed for ever.
But, Death, how didst thou then, with all thy derffe words, *fierce.*
When thou pricked at his pap with the point of a spear,
And touched the tabernacle of his true heart,
Where my bower was bigged to abide for ever? *built.*
When the glory of his Godhead glinted in thy face,
Then wast thou feared of this fare in thy false heart ; *affair.*
Then thou hied into hell-hole to hide thee belive ; *at once.*
Thy falchion flew out of thy fist, so fast thou thee hied ;
Thou durst not blush once back, for better or worse, *look.*
But drew thee down full in that deep hell,
And bade them bar bigly Belzebub his gates. *greatly, strongly.*
Then thou told them tidings, that teened them sore ; *grieved.*
How that king came to kithen his strength, *show.*
And how she[1] had beaten thee on thy bent,[2] and thy brand taken,
With everlasting life that longed him till. *belonged to him.*

When Life has ended her speech to Death, she turns to her own followers and says :—

Therefore be not abashed, my barnes so dear, *children.*
Of her falchion so fierce, nor of her fell words.
She hath no might, nay, no means, no more you to grieve,
Nor on your comely corses to clap once her hands.
I shall look you full lively, and latch full well, *search for : lay hold of.*
And keere ye further of this kithe,[3] above the clear skies.

I now turn from those poems of national scope and wide social interest, bearing their share, doubtless, in the growth of the great changes that showed themselves at length more than a century after, and from the poem I have just quoted of a yet wider human interest, to one of another tone, springing from the grief that attends love, and the aspiration born of the

[1] Life (?).—I think *she* should be *he.* [2] Field.
[3] "Carry you beyond this region."

grief. It is, nevertheless, wide in its scope as the conflict between Death and Life, although dealing with the individual and not with the race. The former poems named of Pierce Ploughman are the cry of John the Baptist in the English wilderness; this is the longing of Hannah at home, having left her little son in the temple. The latter *seems* a poorer matter; but it is an easier thing to utter grand words of just condemnation, than, in the silence of the chamber, or with the well-known household-life around, forcing upon the consciousness only the law of things seen, to regard with steadfastness the blank left by a beloved form, and believe in the unseen, the marvellous, the eternal. In the midst of "the light of common day," with all the persistently common things pressing upon the despairing heart, to hold fast, after what fashion may be possible, the vanishing song that has changed its key, is indeed a victory over the flesh, however childish the forms in which the faith may embody itself, however weak the logic with which it may defend its intrenchments.

The poem which has led me to make these remarks is in many respects noteworthy. It is very different in style and language from any I have yet given. There was little communication to blend the different modes of speech prevailing in different parts of the country. It belongs,[1] according to students of English, to the Midland dialect of the

[1] For the knowledge of this poem I am indebted to the Early English Text Society, now printing so many valuable manuscripts.

fourteenth century. The author is beyond conjecture.

It is not merely the antiquity of the language that causes its difficulty, but the accumulated weight of artistically fantastic and puzzling requirements which the writer had laid upon himself in its composition. The nature of these I shall be enabled to show by printing the first twelve lines almost as they stand in the manuscript.

Perle plesaunte to prynces paye,
To clanly clos in golde so clere!
Oute of oryent I hardyly saye,
Ne proued I neuer her precios pere;
So rounde, so reken in vche araye,
So smal, so smothe her sydes were!
Quere-so-euer I iugged gemmes gaye,
I sette hyr sengeley in synglure:
Allas! I leste hyr in on erbere,
Thurh gresse to grounde hit fro me yot;
I dewyne for-dolked of luf daungere,
Of that pryuy perle with-outen spot.

Here it will be observed that the Norman mode—that of rhymes—is employed, and that there is a far more careful measure in the line that is found in the poem last quoted. But the rhyming is carried to such an excess as to involve the necessity of constant invention of phrase to meet its requirements—a fertile source of obscurity. The most difficult form of stanza in respect of rhyme now in use is the Spenserian, in which, consisting of nine lines, four words rhyme together, three words, and two words. But the stanza in the poem before us consists of twelve lines, six of which, two of which, four of

which, rhyme together. This we should count hard enough; but it does not nearly exhaust the tyranny of the problem the author has undertaken. I have already said that one of the essentials of the poetic form in Anglo-Saxon was the commencement of three or more words in the line with the same sound: this peculiarity he has exaggerated: every line has as many words as possible commencing with the same sound. In the first line, for instance,—and it must be remembered that the author's line is much shorter than the Anglo-Saxon line,—there are four words beginning with *þ;* in the second, three beginning with *cl,* and so on. This, of course, necessitates much not merely of circumlocution, but of contrivance, involving endless obscurity.

He has gone on to exaggerate the peculiarities of Norman verse as well; but I think it better not to run the risk of wearying my reader by pointing out more of his oddities. I will now betake myself to what is far more interesting as well as valuable.

The poem sets forth the grief and consolation of a father who has lost his daughter. It is called *The Pearl.* Here is a literal rendering, line for line, into modern English words, not modern English speech, of the stanza which I have already given in its original form:

> Pearl pleasant to prince's pleasure,
> Most cleanly closed in gold so clear!
> Out of the Orient, I boldly say,
> I never proved her precious equal;
> So round, so beautiful in every point!
> So small, so smooth, her sides were!

Wheresoever I judged gemmes gay
I set her singly in singleness.
Alas ! I lost her in an arbour ;
Through the grass to the ground it from me went.
I pine, sorely wounded by dangerous love
Of that especial pearl without spot.

The father calls himself a jeweller; the pearl is his daughter. He has lost the pearl in the grass; it has gone to the ground, and he cannot find it; that is, his daughter is dead and buried. Perhaps the most touching line is one in which he says to the grave:

O moul, thou marrez a myry mele.
(O mould, thou marrest a merry talk.)

The poet, who is surely the father himself, cannot always keep up the allegory; his heart burns holes in it constantly; at one time he says *she*, at another *it*, and, between the girl and the pearl, the poem is bewildered. But the allegory helps him out with what he means notwithstanding; for although the highest aim of poetry is to say the deepest things in the simplest manner, humanity must turn from mode to mode, and try a thousand, ere it finds the best. The individual, in his new endeavour to make "the word cousin to the deed," must take up the forms his fathers have left him, and add to them, if he may, new forms of his own. In both the great revivals of literature, the very material of poetry was allegory.

The father falls asleep on his child's grave, and has a dream, or rather a vision, of a country where everything—after the childish imagination which invents

differences instead of discovering harmonies—is supernaturally beautiful: rich rocks with a gleaming glory, crystal cliffs, woods with blue trunks and leaves of burnished silver, gravel of precious Orient pearls, form the landscape, in which are delicious fruits, and birds of flaming colours and sweet songs: its loveliness no man with a tongue is worthy to describe. He comes to the bank of a river:

> Swinging sweet the water did sweep
> With a whispering speech flowing adown;
> (Wyth a rownande rourde raykande aryght)

and the stones at the bottom were shining like stars. It is a noteworthy specimen of the mode in which the imagination works when invention is dissociated from observation and faith. But the sort of way in which some would improve the world now, if they might, is not so very far in advance of this would-be glorification of Nature. The barest heath and sky have lovelinesses infinitely beyond the most gorgeous of such phantasmagoric idealization of her beauties; and the most wretched condition of humanity struggling for existence contains elements of worth and future development inappreciable by the philanthropy that would elevate them by cultivating their self-love.

At the foot of a crystal cliff, on the opposite side of the river, which he cannot cross, he sees a maiden sitting, clothed and crowned with pearls, and wearing one pearl of surpassing wonder and spotlessness upon her breast. I now make the spelling and forms of the words as modern as I may, altering the text no further.

"O pearl," quoth I, "in perlés pight,	*pitched, dressed.*
Art thou my pearl that I have plained?	*mourned.*
Regretted by myn one, on night?	*by myself.*
Much longing have I for thee layned	*hidden.*
Since into grass thou me a-glyghte;	*didst glide from me.*
Pensive, payred, I am for-pained,[1]	*pined away.*
And thou in a life of liking light	*bright pleasure.*
In Paradise-earth, of strife unstrained!	*untortured with strife.*
What wyrde hath hither my jewel vayned,	*destiny: carried off.*
And done me in this del and great danger?	*sorrow.*
Fro we in twain were towen and twayned,	*since: pulled: divided.*
I have been a joyless jeweller."	
That jewel then in gemmés gente,	*gracious.*
Vered up her vyse with eyen gray,	*turned: face.*
Set on her crown of pearl orient,	
And soberly after then gan she say:	
"Sir, ye have your tale myse-tente,	*mistaken.*
To say your pearl is all away,	
That is in coffer so comely clente	*clenched.*
As in this garden gracious gay,	
Herein to lenge for ever and play,	*abide.*
There mys nor mourning come never—here,	*where: wrong.*
Here was a forser for thee in faye,	*strong-box: faith.*
If thou wert a gentle jeweller.	
"But jeweller gente, if thou shalt lose	
Thy joy for a gem that thee was lef,	*had left thee.*
Me thinks thee put in a mad purpose,	
And busiest thee about a reason bref.	*poor object.*
For that thou lostest was but a rose,	
That flowered and failed as kynd hit gef.	*nature gave it.*
Now through kind of the chest that it gan close,	*nature.*
To a pearl of price it is put in pref;[2]	
And thou hast called thy wyrde a thef,	*doom, fate: theft.*
That ought of nought has made thee, clear!	*something of nothing.*
Thou blamest the bote of thy mischef:	*remedy: hurt.*
Thou art no kyndé jeweller."	*natural, reasonable.*

[1] The *for* here is only an intensive.

[2] *Pref* is *proof*. *Put in pref* seems to stand for something more than *being tested*. Might it not mean *proved to be a pearl of price?*

When the father pours out his gladness at the sight of her, she rejoins in these words:

" I hold that jeweller little to praise
That loves well that he sees with eye;
And much to blame, and uncortoyse, *uncourteous.*
That leves our Lord would make a lie, *believes.*
That lelly hyghte your life to raise *who truly promised.*
Though fortune did your flesh to die; *caused.*
To set his words full westernays[1]
That love no thing but ye it syghe! *see.*
And that is a point of surquedrie, *presumption.*
That each good man may evil beseem, *ill become.*
To leve no tale be true to tryghe, *trust in.*
But that his one skill may deme."[2]

Much conversation follows, the glorified daughter rebuking and instructing her father. He prays for a sight of the heavenly city of which she has been speaking, and she tells him to walk along the bank until he comes to a hill. In recording what he saw from the hill, he follows the description of the New Jerusalem given in the Book of the Revelation. He sees the Lamb and all his company, and with them again his lost Pearl. But it was not his prince's pleasure that he should cross the stream; for when his eyes and ears were so filled with delight that he could no longer restrain the attempt, he awoke out of his dream.

My head upon that hill was laid
There where my pearl to groundé strayed.
I wrestled and fell in great affray, *fear.*
And sighing to myself I said,
" Now all be to that prince's paye." *pleasure.*

[1] A word acknowledged to be obscure. Mr. Morris suggests *on the left hand*, as unbelieved.

[2] " Except that which his sole wit may judge."

After this, he holds him to that prince's will, and yearns after no more than he grants him.

"As in water face is to face, so the heart of man." Out of the far past comes the cry of bereavement mingled with the prayer for hope: we hear, and lo! it is the cry and the prayer of a man like ourselves.

From the words of the greatest man of his age, let me now gather two rich blossoms of utterance, presenting an embodiment of religious duty and aspiration, after a very practical fashion. I refer to two short lyrics, little noted, although full of wisdom and truth. They must be accepted as the conclusions of as large a knowledge of life in diversified mode as ever fell to the lot of man.

GOOD COUNSEL OF CHAUCER.

Fly from the press, and dwell with soothfastness ; *truthfulness.*
Suffice[1] unto thy good, though it be small ;
For hoard hath hate, and climbing tickleness ;[2]
Praise hath envy, and weal is blent over all.[3]
Savour[4] no more than thee behové shall.
Rede well thyself that other folk shalt rede ; *counsel.*
And truth thee shall deliver—it is no drede. *there is no doubt.*

Painé thee not each crooked to redress, *every crooked thing.*
In trust of her that turneth as a ball : Fortune.
Great rest standeth in little busi-ness.
Beware also to spurn against a nall ; *nail—to kick against*
Strive not as doth a crocké with a wall. [*the pricks.*
Demé thyself that demest others' deed ; *judge.*
And truth thee shall deliver—it is no drede.

[1] "Be equal to thy possessions :" "fit thy desires to thy means."
[2] "Ambition has uncertainty." We use the word *ticklish* still.
[3] "Is mingled everywhere."
[4] To relish, to like. "Desire no more than is fitting for thee."

That thee is sent receive in buxomness : *submission.*
The wrestling of this world asketh a fall. *tempts destruction.*
Here is no home, here is but wilderness:
Forth, pilgrim, forth !—beast, out of thy stall!
Look up on high, and thanké God of[1] all.
Waivé thy lusts, and let thy ghost[2] thee lead,
And truth thee shall deliver—it is no drede.

This needs no comment. Even the remark that every line is worth meditation may well appear superfluous. One little fact only with regard to the rhymes, common to this and the next poem, and usual enough in Norman verse, may be pointed out, namely, that every line in the stanza ends with the same rhyme-sound as the corresponding line in each of the other stanzas. A reference to either of the poems will at once show what I mean.

The second is superior, inasmuch as it carries one thought through the three stanzas. It is entitled *A Balade made by Chaucer, teaching what is gentilnesse, or whom is worthy to be called gentill.*

The first stock-father of gentleness— *ancestor of the race of*
What man desireth gentle for to be [*the gentle.*
Must follow his trace, and all his wittés dress *track, footsteps: apply.*
Virtue to love and vices for to flee;
For unto virtue longeth dignity, *belongeth.*
And not the reverse falsely dare I deem,[3]
All wear he mitre, crown, or diadem. *although he wear.*

The first stock was full of righteousness ; *the progenitor.*
True of his word, sober, piteous, and free ;
Clean of his ghost, and loved busi-ness, *pure in his spirit.*
Against the vice of sloth in honesty ;

[1] For.
[2] "Let thy spiritual and not thine animal nature guide thee."
[3] "And I dare not falsely judge the reverse."

And but his heir love virtue as did he, *except.*
He is not gentle, though he rich seem,
All wear he mitre, crown, or diadem.

Vicesse may well be heir to old Richesse, *Vice: Riches.*
But there may no man, as men may well see,
Bequeath his heir his virtue's nobleness;
That is appropried unto no degree, *rank.*
But to the first father in majesty,
That maketh his heirés them that him queme, *please him.*
All wear he mitre, crown, or diadem.

I can come to no other conclusion than that by *the first stock-father* Chaucer means our Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

AFTER the birth of a Chaucer, a Shakspere, or a Milton, it is long before the genial force of a nation can again culminate in such a triumph: time is required for the growth of the conditions. Between the birth of Chaucer and the birth of Shakspere, his sole equal, a period of more than two centuries had to elapse. It is but small compensation for this, that the more original, that is simple, natural, and true to his own nature a man is, the more certain is he to have a crowd of imitators. I do not say that such are of no use in the world. They do not indeed advance art, but they widen the sphere of its operation; for many will talk with the man who know nothing of the master. Too often intending but their own glory, they point the way to the source of it, and are straightway themselves forgotten.

Very little of the poetry of the fifteenth century is worthy of a different fate from that which has befallen it. Possibly the Wars of the Roses may in some measure account for the barrenness of the time; but

I do not think they will explain it. In the midst of the commotions of the seventeenth century we find Milton, the only English poet of whom we are yet sure as worthy of being named with Chaucer and Shakspere.

It is in quality, however, and not in quantity that the period is deficient. It had a good many writers of poetry, some of them prolific. John Lydgate, the monk of Bury, a great imitator of Chaucer, was the principal of these, and wrote an enormous quantity of verse. We shall find for our use enough as it were to keep us alive in passing through this desert to the Paradise of the sixteenth century—a land indeed flowing with milk and honey. For even in the desert of the fifteenth are spots luxuriant with the rich grass of language, although they greet the eye with few flowers of individual thought or graphic speech.

Rather than give portions of several of Lydgate's poems, I will give one entire—the best I know. It is entitled, *Thonke God of alle.*[1]

THANK GOD FOR ALL.

By a way wandering as I went,
  Well sore I sorrowed, for sighing sad:
Of hard haps that I had hent
  Mourning me made almost mad;[2]

[1] A poem so like this that it may have been written immediately after reading it, is attributed to Robert Henryson, the Scotch poet. It has the same refrain to every verse as Lydgate's.

[2] "Mourning for mishaps that I had caught made me almost mad."

Till a letter all one me lad,[1]
That well was written on a wall,
A blissful word that on I rad,[2]
That alway said, 'Thank God for[3] all.'

And yet I read furthermore[4]—
Full good intent I took there till:[5]
Christ may well your state restore;
Nought is to strive against his will; *it is useless.*
He may us spare and also spill:
Think right well we be his thrall. *slaves.*
What sorrow we suffer, loud or still,
Alway thank God for all.

Though thou be both blind and lame,
Or any sickness be on thee set,
Thou think right well it is no shame— *think thou.*
The grace of God it hath thee gret.[6]
In sorrow or care though ye be knit, *snared.*
And worldés weal be from thee fall, *fallen.*
I cannot say thou mayst do bet, *better.*
But alway thank God for all.

Though thou wield this world's good,
And royally lead thy life in rest,
Well shaped of bone and blood,
None the like by east nor west;
Think God thee sent as him lest; *as it pleased him.*
Riches turneth as a ball;
In all manner it is the best *in every condition.*
Alway to thank God for all.

If thy good beginneth to pass,
And thou wax a poor man,
Take good comfort and bear good face,
And think on him that all good wan; *did win.*

---

[1] "Led me all one:" "brought me back to peace, unity, harmony."(?)
[2] "That I read on (it)."
[3] *Of* in the original, as in the title.
[4] Does this mean by contemplation on it?
[5] "I paid good attention to it."
[6] "Greeted thee"—*in the very affliction.*

Christ himself forsooth began—
He may renew both bower and hall:
No better counsel I ne kan *am capable of.*
But alway thank God for all.

Think on Job that was so rich:
He waxed poor from day to day;
His beastés died in each ditch;
His cattle vanished all away;
He was put in poor array,
Neither in purple nor in pall,
But in simple weed, as clerkés say, *clothes: learned men.*
And alway he thanked God for all.

For Christés love so do we;[1]
He may both give and take;
In what mischief that we in be, *whatever trouble we*
He is mighty enough our sorrow to slake. [*be in.*
Full good amends he will us make,
And we to him cry or call: *if.*
What grief or woe that do thee thrall,[2]
Yet alway thank God for all.

Though thou be in prison cast,
Or any distress men do thee bede, *offer.*
For Christés love yet be steadfast,
And ever have mind on thy creed;
Think he faileth us never at need,
The dearworth duke that deem us shall;[3]
When thou art sorry, thereof take heed,[4]
And alway thank God for all.

Though thy friendés from thee fail,
And death by rene hend[5] their life,
Why shouldest thou then weep or wail?
It is nought against God to strive: *it is useless.*

---

1 "For Christ's love let us do the same."

2 "Whatever grief or woe enslaves thee." But *thrall* is a blunder, for the word ought to have rhymed with *make.*

3 "The precious leader that shall judge us."

4 "When thou art in sorry plight, think of this."

5 "And death, beyond renewal, lay hold upon their life."

Himself maked both man and wife—
To his bliss he bring us all : *may he bring.*
However thou thole or thrive, *suffer.*
Alway thank God for all.

What diverse sonde[1] that God thee send,
Here or in any other place,
Take it with good intent;
The sooner God will send his grace.
Though thy body be brought full base, *low.*
Let not thy heart adown fall,
But think that God is where he was,
And alway thank God for all.

Though thy neighbour have world at will,
And thou far'st not so well as he,
Be not so mad to think him ill, *wish.* (?)
For his wealth envious to be :
The king of heaven himself can see
Who takes his sonde,[2] great or small ;
Thus each man in his degree,
I rede thanké God for all. *counsel.*

For Cristés love, be not so wild,
But rule thee by reason within and without ;
And take in good heart and mind
The sonde that God sent all about ; *the gospel.* (?)
Then dare I say withouten doubt,
That in heaven is made thy stall. *place, seat, room.*
Rich and poor that low will lowte, *bow.*
Alway thank God for all.

I cannot say there is much poetry in this, but there is much truth and wisdom. There is the finest poetry, however, too, in the line—I give it now letter for letter:—

But think that God ys ther he was.

[1] *Sending, message:* "whatever varying decree God sends thee."
[2] "Receives his message :" "accepts his will."

There is poetry too in the line, if I interpret it rightly as intending the gospel—

The sonde that God sent al abowte.

I shall now make a few extracts from poems of the same century whose authors are unknown.[1] A good many such are extant. With regard to the similarity of those I choose, I would remark, that not only will the poems of the same period necessarily resemble each other, but, where the preservation of any has depended upon the choice and transcription of one person, these will in all probability resemble each other yet more. Here are a few verses from a hymn headed *The Sweetness of Jesus*:—

If I for kindness should love my kin, *for natural reasons.*
Then me thinketh in my thought [*Kind* is *nature.*
By kindly skill I should begin *by natural judgment.*
At him that hath me made of nought;
His likeness he set my soul within,
And all this world for me hath wrought;
As father he fondid my love to win, *set about.*
For to heaven he hath me brought.

Our brother and sister he is by skill, *reason.*
For he so said, and lerid us that lore, *taught.*
That whoso wrought his Father's will,
Brethren and sisters to him they wore. *were.*
My kind also he took ther-tille; *my nature also he took*
Full truly trust I him therefore [*for that purpose.*
That he will never let me spill, *perish.*
But with his mercy salve my sore.

[1] Recently published by the Early English Text Society.

With lovely lore his works to fill, *fulfil.*
  Well ought I, wretch, if I were kind— *natural.*
Night and day to work his will,
  And ever have that Lord in mind.
But ghostly foes grieve me ill, *spiritual.*
  And my frail flesh maketh me blind;
Therefore his mercy I take me till, *betake me to.*
  For better bote can I none find. *aid.*

In my choice of stanzas I have to keep in view some measure of completeness in the result. These poems, however, are mostly very loose in structure. This, while it renders choice easy, renders closeness of unity impossible.

From a poem headed—again from the last line of each stanza—*Be my comfort, Christ Jesus,* I choose the following four, each possessing some remarkable flavour, tone, or single touch. Note the alliteration in the lovely line, beginning "Bairn y-born." The whole of the stanza in which we find it, sounds so strangely fresh in the midst of its antiquated tones, that we can hardly help asking whether it can be only the quaintness of the expression that makes the feeling appear more real, or whether in very truth men were not in those days nearer in heart, as well as in time, to the marvel of the Nativity.

In the next stanza, how oddly the writer forgets that Jesus himself was a Jew, when, embodying the detestation of Christian centuries in one line, he says,

And tormented with many a Jew!

In the third stanza, I consider the middle quatrain, that is, the four lines beginning "Out of this world," perfectly grand.

The oddness of the last line but one of the fourth stanza is redeemed by the wonderful reality it gives to the faith of the speaker: "See my sorrow, and say Ho!" stopping it as one would call after a man and stop him.

Jesus, thou art wisdom of wit, *understanding.*
  Of thy Father full of might!
Man's soul—to save it,
  In poor apparel thou wert pight. *pitched, placed, dressed.*
Jesus, thou wert in cradle knit,
  In weed wrapped both day and night; originally, *dress of any kind.*
In Bethlehem born, as the gospel writ,
  With angels' song, and heaven-light.
Bairn y-born of a beerde bright,[1]
  Full courteous was thy comely cus: *kiss.*
Through virtue of that sweet light,
  So be my comfort, Christ Jesus.

Jesus, that wert of yearis young,
  Fair and fresh of hide and hue,
When thou wert in thraldom throng, *driven.*
  And tormented with many a Jew,
When blood and water were out-wrung,
  For beating was thy body blue;
As a clot of clay thou wert for-clong, *shrunk.*
  So dead in trough then men thee threw. *coffin.*
But grace from thy grave grew:
  Thou rose up quick comfort to us. *living.*
For her love that this counsel knew,
  So be my comfort, Christ Jesus.

Jesus, soothfast God and man,
  Two kinds knit in one person,
The wonder-work that thou began
  Thou hast fulfilled in flesh and bone.

[1] "Child born of a bright lady." *Bird, berd, brid, burd,* means *lady* originally: thence comes our *bride.*

Out of this world wightly thou wan,
  Lifting up thyself alone;
For mightily thou rose and ran
  Straight unto thy Father on throne.
Now dare man make no more moan—
  For man it is thou wroughtest thus,
And God with man is made at one;
  So be my comfort, Christ Jesus.

thou didst win, or *make thy [way, powerfully.*

Jesu, my sovereign Saviour,
  Almighty God, there ben no mo:
Christ, thou be my governor;
  Thy faith let me not fallen fro.
Jesu, my joy and my succour,
  In my body and soul also,
God, thou be my strongest food,
  And wisse thou me when me is woe.
Lord, thou makest friend of foe,
  Let me not live in languor thus,
But see my sorrow, and say now "Ho,"
  And be my comfort, Christ Jesus.

there are no more—thou art [all in all. (?)
from
the rhyme fails here.
think on me.

Of fourteen stanzas called *Richard de Castre's Prayer to Jesus*, I choose five from the latter half, where the prayer passes from his own spiritual necessities, very tenderly embodied, to those of others. It does our hearts good to see the clouded sun of prayer for oneself break forth in the gladness of blessed entreaty for all men, for them that make Him angry, for saints in trouble, for the country torn by war, for the whole body of Christ and its unity. After the stanza—

> Jesus, for the deadly tears
> That thou sheddest for my guilt,
> Hear and speed my prayérs
> And spare me that I be not spilt;

the best that is in the suppliant shines out thus:

Jesu, for them I thee beseech
That wrathen thee in any wise;
Withhold from them thy hand of wreche, *vengeance.*
And let them live in thy service.

Jesu, most comfort for to see
Of thy saintis every one,
Comfort them that careful be,
And help them that be woe-begone.

Jesu, keep them that be good,
And amend them that have grieved thee;
And send them fruits of earthly food,
As each man needeth in his degree.

Jesu, that art, withouten lees, *lies.*
Almighty God in trinity,
Cease these wars, and send us peace,
With lasting love and charity.

Jesu, that art the ghostly stone *spiritual.*
Of all holy church in middle-erde, *the world.*
Bring thy folds and flocks in one,
And rule them rightly with one herd.

We now approach the second revival of literature, preceded in England by the arrival of the art of printing; after which we find ourselves walking in a morning twilight, knowing something of the authors as well as of their work.

I have little more to offer from this century. There are a few religious poems by John Skelton, who was tutor to Henry VIII. But such poetry, though he was a clergyman, was not much in Skelton's manner of mind. We have far better of a similar sort already.

A new sort of dramatic representation had by this time greatly encroached upon the old Miracle Plays. The fresh growth was called Morals or Moral

Plays. In them we see the losing victory of invention over the imagination that works with given facts. No doubt in the Moral Plays there is more exercise of intellect as well as of ingenuity; for they consist of metaphysical facts turned into individual existences by personification, and their relations then dramatized by allegory. But their poetry is greatly inferior both in character and execution to that of the Miracles. They have a religious tendency, as everything moral must have, and sometimes they go even farther, as in one, for instance, called *The Castle of Perseverance*, in which we have all the cardinal virtues and all the cardinal sins contending for the possession of *Humanum Genus*, the *Human Race* being presented as a new-born child, who grows old and dies in the course of the play; but it was a great stride in art when human nature and human history began again to be exemplified after a simple human fashion, in the story, that is, of real men and women, instead of by allegorical personifications of the analysed and abstracted constituents of them. Allegory has her place, and a lofty one, in literature; but when her plants cover the garden and run to seed, Allegory herself is ashamed of her children: the loveliest among them are despised for the general obtrusiveness of the family. Imitation not only brings the thing imitated into disrepute, but tends to destroy what original faculty the imitator may have possessed.

CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ELIZABETHAN ERA.

POETS now began to write more smoothly—not a great virtue, but indicative of a growing desire for finish, which, in any art, is a great virtue. No doubt smoothness is often confounded with, and mistaken for finish; but you might have a mirror-like polish on the surface of a statue, for instance, and yet the marble be full of inanity, or vagueness, or even vulgarity of result—irrespective altogether of its idea. The influence of Italian poetry reviving once more in the country, roused such men as Wyat and Surrey to polish the sound of their verses; but smoothness, I repeat, is not melody, and where the attention paid to the outside of the form results in flatness, and, still worse, in obscurity, as is the case with both of these poets, little is gained and much is lost.

Each has paraphrased portions of Scripture, but with results of little value; and there is nothing of a religious nature I care to quote from either, except these five lines from an epistle of Sir Thomas Wyat's:

> Thyself content with that is thee assigned,
> And use it well that is to thee allotted;

Then seek no more out of thyself to find
The thing that thou hast sought so long before,
For thou shalt feel it sticking in thy mind.

Students of versification will allow me to remark that Sir Thomas was the first English poet, so far as I know, who used the *terza rima*, Dante's chief mode of rhyming: the above is too small a fragment to show that it belongs to a poem in that manner. It has never been popular in England, although to my mind it is the finest form of continuous rhyme in any language. Again, we owe his friend Surrey far more for being the first to write English blank verse, whether invented by himself or not, than for any matter he has left us in poetic shape.

This period is somewhat barren of such poetry as we want. Here is a portion of the Fifty-first Psalm, translated amongst others into English verse by John Croke, Master in Chancery, in the reign of Henry VIII.

Open my lips first to confess
  My sin conceived inwardly;
And my mouth after shall express
  Thy laud and praises outwardly.

If I should offer for my sin,
  Or sacrifice do unto thee
Of beast or fowl, I should begin
  To stir thy wrath more towards me.

Offer we must for sacrifice
  A troubled mind with sorrow's smart:
Canst thou refuse? Nay, nor despise
  The humble and the contrite heart.

To us of Sion that be born,
  If thou thy favour wilt renew,
The broken sowle, the temple torn, *threshold.*
  The walls and all shall be made new.

The sacrifice then shall we make
  Of justice and of pure intent;
And all things else thou wilt well take
  That we shall offer or present.

In the works of George Gascoigne I find one poem fit for quoting here. He is not an interesting writer, and, although his verse is very good, there is little likelihood of its ever being read more than it is now. The date of his birth is unknown, but probably he was in his teens when Surrey was beheaded in the year 1547. He is the only poet whose style reminds me of his, although the *wherefore* will hardly be evident from my quotation. It is equally flat, but more articulate. I need not detain my reader with remarks upon him. The fact is, I am glad to have something, if not "a cart-load of wholesome instructions," to cast into this Slough of Despond, should it be only to see it vanish. The poem is called

GASCOIGNE'S GOOD MORROW.

You that have spent the silent night
  In sleep and quiet rest,
And joy to see the cheerful light
  That riseth in the east;
Now clear your voice, now cheer your heart;
  Come help me now to sing;
Each willing wight come bear a part,
  To praise the heavenly King.

And you whom care in prison keeps,
  Or sickness doth suppress,
Or secret sorrow breaks your sleeps,
  Or dolours do distress ;
Yet bear a part in doleful wise;
  Yea, think it good accord,
And acceptable sacrifice,
  Each sprite to praise the Lord.

The dreadful night with darksomeness
  Had overspread the light,
And sluggish sleep with drowsiness
  Had overpressed our might :
A glass wherein you may behold
  Each storm that stops our breath,
Our bed the grave, our clothes like mould,
  And sleep like dreadful death.

Yet as this deadly night did last
  But for a little space,
And heavenly day, now night is past,
  Doth shew his pleasant face;
So must we hope to see God's face
  At last in heaven on high,
When we have changed this mortal place
  For immortality.

This is not so bad, but it is enough. There are six stanzas more of it. I transcribe yet another, that my reader may enjoy a smile in passing. He is "moralizing" the aspects of morning :

The carrion crow, that loathsome beast,
  Which cries against the rain,
Both for his hue and for the rest,
  The Devil resembleth plain ;
And as with guns we kill the crow,
  For spoiling our relief,
The Devil so must we overthrow,
  With gunshot of belief.

So fares the wit, when it walks abroad to do its business without the heart that should inspire it.

Here is one good stanza from his *De Profundis:*

But thou art good, and hast of mercy store;
Thou not delight'st to see a sinner fall;
Thou hearkénest first, before we come to call;
Thine ears are set wide open evermore;
Before we knock thou comest to the door.
Thou art more prest to hear a sinner cry, *ready.*
Than he is quick to climb to thee on high.
Thy mighty name be praised then alway:
Let faith and fear
True witness bear
How fast they stand which on thy mercy stay.

Here follow two of unknown authorship, belonging apparently to the same period.

THAT EACH THING IS HURT OF ITSELF.

Why fearest thou the outward foe,
When thou thyself thy harm dost feed?
Of grief or hurt, of pain or woe,
Within each thing is sown the seed.
So fine was never yet the cloth,
No smith so hard his iron did beat,
But th' one consuméd was with moth,
Th' other with canker all to-freate. *fretted away.*

The knotty oak and wainscot old
Within doth eat the silly worm;[1]
Even so a mind in envy rolled
Always within it self doth burn.
Thus every thing that nature wrought,
Within itself his hurt doth bear!
No outward harm need to be sought,
Where enemies be within so near.

[1] In *Chalmers' English Poets*, from which I quote, it is *selly-worme*; but I think this must be a mistake. *Silly* would here mean *weak*.

Lest this poem should appear to any one hardly religious enough for the purpose of this book, I would remark that it reminds me of what our Lord says about the true source of defilement: it is what is bred in the man that defiles him. Our Lord himself taught a divine morality, which is as it were the body of love, and is as different from *mere* morality as the living body is from the dead.

TOTUS MUNDUS IN MALIGNO POSITUS.

The whole world lieth in the Evil One.

Complain we may; much is amiss;
  Hope is nigh gone to have redress;
These days are ill, nothing sure is;
  Kind heart is wrapt in heaviness.

The stern is broke, the sail is rent, *helm or rudder — the*
  The ship is given to wind and wave; *[thing to steer with.*
All help is gone, the rock present,
  That will be lost, what man can save? *that which will be lost.*

When power lacks care and forceth not, *careth.*
  When care is feeble and may not, *is not able.*
When might is slothful and will not,
  Weeds may grow where good herbs cannot.

Wily is witty, brainsick is wise; *wiliness is counted*
  Truth is folly, and might is right; *[prudence.*
Words are reason, and reason is lies;
  The bad is good, darkness is light.

Order is broke in things of weight:
  Measure and mean who doth nor flee? *who does not avoid*
Two things prevail, money and sleight; *[moderation?*
  To seem is better than to be.

Folly and falsehood prate apace;
  Truth under bushel is fain to creep;
Flattery is treble, pride sings the bass,
  The mean, the best part, scant doth peep.

With floods and storms thus be we tost :
  Awake, good Lord, to thee we cry ;
Our ship is almost sunk and lost ;
  Thy mercy help our misery.

Man's strength is weak ; man's wit is dull ;
  Man's reason is blind these things t'amend :
Thy hand, O Lord, of might is full—
  Awake betimes, and help us send.

In thee we trust, and in no wight ;
  Save us, as chickens under the hen ;
Our crookedness thou canst make right—
  Glory to thee for aye. Amen.

The apprehensions of the wiser part of the nation have generally been ahead of its hopes. Every age is born with an ideal ; but instead of beholding that ideal in the future where it lies, it throws it into the past. Hence the lapse of the nation must appear tremendous, even when she is making her best progress.

CHAPTER V.

SPENSER AND HIS FRIENDS.

WE have now arrived at the period of English history in every way fullest of marvel—the period of Elizabeth. As in a northern summer the whole region bursts into blossom at once, so with the thought and feeling of England in this glorious era.

The special development of the national mind with which we are now concerned, however, did not by any means arrive at its largest and clearest result until the following century. Still its progress is sufficiently remarkable. For, while everything that bore upon the mental development of the nation must bear upon its poetry, the fresh vigour given by the doctrines of the Reformation to the sense of personal responsibility, and of immediate relation to God, with the grand influences, both literary and spiritual, of the translated, printed, and studied Bible, operated more immediately upon its devotional utterance.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century, we begin to find such verse as I shall now present to my readers. Only I must first make a few remarks

upon the great poem of the period: I mean, of course, *The Faerie Queen.*

I dare not begin to set forth after any fashion the profound religious truth contained in this poem; for it would require a volume larger than this to set forth even that of the first book adequately. In this case it is well to remember that the beginning of comment, as well as of strife, is like the letting out of water.

The direction in which the wonderful allegory of the latter moves may be gathered from the following stanza, the first of the eighth canto:

> Ay me! how many perils do enfold
> The righteous man to make him daily fall;
> Were not that heavenly grace doth him uphold, *it* understood.
> And steadfast Truth acquit him out of all!
> Her love is firm, her care continual,
> So oft as he, through his own foolish pride
> Or weakness, is to sinful bands made thrall:
> Else should this Redcross Knight in bands have died,
> For whose deliverance she this Prince doth thither guide.

Nor do I judge it good to spend much of my space upon remarks personal to those who have not been especially writers of sacred verse. When we come to the masters of such song, we cannot speak of their words without speaking of themselves; but when in the midst of many words those of the kind we seek are few, the life of the writer does not justify more than a passing notice here.

We know but little of Spenser's history: if we might know all, I do not fear that we should find anything to destroy the impression made by his verse—that

he was a Christian gentleman, a noble and pure-minded man, of highest purposes and aims.

His style is injured by the artistic falsehood of producing antique effects in the midst of modern feeling.[1] It was scarcely more justifiable, for instance, in Spenser's time than it would be in ours to use *glitterand* for *glittering;* or to return to a large use of alliteration, three, four, sometimes even five words in the same line beginning with the same consonant sound. Everything should look like what it is: prose or verse should be written in the language of its own era. No doubt the wide-spreading roots of poetry gather to it more variety of expression than prose can employ; and the very nature of verse will make it free of times and seasons, harmonizing many opposites. Hence, through its mediation, without discord, many fine old words, by the loss of which the language has grown poorer and feebler, might be honourably enticed to return even into our prose. But nothing ought to be brought back *because* it is old. That it is out of use is a presumptive argument that it ought to remain out of use: good reasons must be at hand to support its reappearance. I must not, however, enlarge upon this wide-reaching question; for of the two portions of Spenser's verse which I shall quote, one of them is not at all, the other not so much as his great poem, affected with this whim.

[1] The first poem he wrote, a very fine one, *The Shepheard's Calender*, is so full of old and provincial words, that the educated people of his own time required a glossary to assist them in the reading of it.

The first I give is a sonnet, one of eighty-eight which he wrote to his wife before their marriage. Apparently disappointed in early youth, he did not fall in love again,—at least there is no sign of it that I know,—till he was middle-aged. But then—woman was never more grandly wooed than was his Elizabeth. I know of no marriage-present worthy to be compared with the Epithalamion which he gave her "in lieu of many ornaments,"—one of the most stately, melodious, and tender poems in the world, I fully believe.

But now for the sonnet—the sixty-eighth of the *Amoretti:*

> Most glorious Lord of Life! that, on this day,
> Didst make thy triumph over death and sin,
> And having harrowed hell, didst bring away
> Captivity thence captive, us to win:
> This joyous day, dear Lord, with joy begin;
> And grant that we, for whom thou diddest die,
> Being with thy dear blood clean washed from sin,
> May live for ever in felicity!
> And that thy love we weighing worthily,
> May likewise love thee for the same again;
> And for thy sake, that all like dear didst buy,
> With love may one another entertain.
>
> So let us love, dear love, like as we ought:
> Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

Those who have never felt the need of the divine, entering by the channel of will and choice and prayer, for the upholding, purifying, and glorifying of that which itself first created human, will consider this poem untrue, having its origin in religious affectation. Others will think otherwise.

The greater part of what I shall next quote is tolerably known even to those who have made little study of our earlier literature, yet it may not be omitted here. It is from *An Hymne of Heavenly Love*, consisting of forty-one stanzas, written in what was called *Rime Royal*—a favourite with Milton, and, next to the Spenserian, in my opinion the finest of stanzas. Its construction will reveal itself. I take two stanzas from the beginning of the hymn, then one from the heart of it, and the rest from the close. It gives no feeling of an outburst of song, but rather of a brooding chant, most quiet in virtue of the depth of its thoughtfulness. Indeed, all his rhythm is like the melodies of water, and I could quote at least three passages in which he speaks of rhythmic movements and watery progressions together. His thoughts, and hence his words, flow like a full, peaceful stream, diffuse, with plenteousness unrestrained.

AN HYMN OF HEAVENLY LOVE.

Before this world's great frame, in which all things
  Are now contained, found any being place,
Ere flitting Time could wag his eyas[1] wings
  About that mighty bound which doth embrace
  The rolling spheres, and parts their hours by space,
That high eternal power, which now doth move
In all these things, moved in itself by love.

It loved itself, because itself was fair,
  For fair is loved; and of itself begot
Like to itself his eldest son and heir,
  Eternal, pure, and void of sinful blot,

[1] *Eyas* is a young hawk, whose wings are not fully fledged.

The firstling of his joy, in whom no jot
Of love's dislike or pride was to be found,
Whom he therefore with equal honour crowned.

* * * * *

Out of the bosom of eternal bliss,
In which he reignéd with his glorious Sire,
He down descended, like a most demisse *humble.*
And abject thrall, in flesh's frail attire,
That he for him might pay sin's deadly hire,
And him restore unto that happy state
In which he stood before his hapless fate.

* * * * *

O blessed well of love! O flower of grace!
O glorious Morning-Star! O Lamp of Light!
Most lively image of thy Father's face!
Eternal King of Glory, Lord of might!
Meek Lamb of God, before all worlds behight! *promised.*
How can we thee requite for all this good?
Or what can prize that thy most precious blood? *equal in value.*

Yet nought thou ask'st in lieu of all this love
But love of us for guerdon of thy pain:
Ay me! what can us less than that behove?[1]
Had he required life of[2] us again,
Had it been wrong to ask his own with gain?
He gave us life, he it restored lost;
Then life were least, that us so little cost.

But he our life hath left unto us free—
Free that was thrall, and blessed that was banned; *enslaved: [cursed.*
Nor aught demands but that we loving be,
As he himself hath loved us aforehand,
And bound thereto with an eternal band—
Him first to love that us[3] so dearly bought,
And next our brethren, to his image wrought.

[1] "What less than that is fitting?"
[2] *For*, even in Collier's edition, but certainly a blunder.
[3] *Was*, in the editions; clearly wrong.

Him first to love great right and reason is,
  Who first to us our life and being gave,
And after, when we faréd had amiss,
  Us wretches from the second death did save ;
  And last, the food of life, which now we have,
Even he himself, in his dear sacrament,
To feed our hungry souls, unto us lent.

Then next, to love our brethren that were made
  Of that self mould, and that self Maker's hand,
That[1] we, and to the same again shall fade,
  Where they shall have like heritage of land, *the same grave-*
  However here on higher steps we stand ; [*room.*
Which also were with selfsame price redeemed,
That we, however, of us light esteemed. *as.*

And were they not, yet since that loving Lord
  Commanded us to love them for his sake,
Even for his sake, and for his sacred word,
  Which in his last bequest he to us spake,
  We should them love, and with their needs partake ; *share*
Knowing that, whatsoe'er to them we give, [*their needs.*
We give to him by whom we all do live.

Such mercy he by his most holy rede *instruction.*
  Unto us taught, and to approve it true,
Ensampled it by his most righteous deed,
  Shewing us mercy, miserable crew !
  That we the like should to the wretches[2] shew,
And love our brethren ; thereby to approve
How much himself that loved us we love.

Then rouse thyself, O earth ! out of thy soil,
  In which thou wallowest like to filthy swine,
And dost thy mind in dirty pleasures moyle, *defile.*
  Unmindful of that dearest Lord of thine ;
  Lift up to him thy heavy clouded eyne,
That thou this sovereign bounty mayst behold,
And read through love his mercies manifold.

[1] "Of the same mould and hand as we."

[2] There was no contempt in the use of this word then.

Begin from first, where he encradled was
  In simple cratch, wrapt in a wad of hay, *a rack* or *crib.*
Between the toilful ox and humble ass;
  And in what rags, and in what base array
  The glory of our heavenly riches lay,
When him the silly[1] shepherds came to see,
Whom greatest princes sought on lowest knee.

From thence read on the story of his life,
  His humble carriage, his unfaulty ways,
His cankered foes, his fights, his toil, his strife,
  His pains, his poverty, his sharp assays, *temptations* or *trials.*
  Through which he passed his miserable days,
Offending none, and doing good to all,
Yet being maliced both by great and small.

And look at last, how of most wretched wights
  He taken was, betrayed, and false accused;
How with most scornful taunts and fell despites
  He was reviled, disgraced, and foul abused;
  How scourged, how crowned, how buffeted, how bruised;
And, lastly, how 'twixt robbers crucified,
With bitter wounds through hands, through feet, and side!
  * * * * * * *
With sense whereof whilst so thy softened spirit
  Is inly touched, and humbled with meek zeal
Through meditation of his endless merit,
  Lift up thy mind to th' author of thy weal,
  And to his sovereign mercy do appeal;
Learn him to love that lovéd thee so dear,
And in thy breast his blessed image bear.

With all thy heart, with all thy soul and mind,
  Thou must him love, and his behests embrace; *commands.*
All other loves with which the world doth blind
  Weak fancies, and stir up affections base,
  Thou must renounce and utterly displace,
And give thyself unto him full and free,
That full and freely gave himself to thee.
  * * * * * * *

[1] Simple-hearted, therefore blessed; like the German *selig.*

Thenceforth all world's desire will in thee die,
And all earth's glory, on which men do gaze,
Seem dust and dross in thy pure-sighted eye,
Compared to that celestial beauty's blaze,
Whose glorious beams all fleshly sense do daze
With admiration of their passing light,
Blinding the eyes and lumining the sprite.

Then shalt thy ravished soul inspiréd be
With heavenly thoughts far above human skill, *reason.*
And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see
The Idea of his pure glory present still
Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill
With sweet enragement of celestial love,
Kindled through sight of those fair things above.

There is a companion to the poem of which these verses are a portion, called *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie*, filled like this, and like two others on Beauty and Love, with Platonic forms both of thought and expression; but I have preferred quoting a longer part of the former to giving portions of both. My reader will recognize in the extract a fuller force of intellect brought to bear on duty; although it would be unwise to take a mind like Spenser's for a type of more than the highest class of the age. Doubtless the division in the country with regard to many of the Church's doctrines had its part in bringing out and strengthening this tendency to reasoning which is so essential to progress. Where religion itself is not the most important thing with the individual, all reasoning upon it must indeed degenerate into strifes of words, *vermiculate* questions, as Lord Bacon calls them—such, namely, as like the hoarded manna reveal the character of the owner by breeding

of worms—yet on no questions may the light of the candle of the Lord, that is, the human understanding, be cast with greater hope of discovery than on those of religion, those, namely, that bear upon man's relation to God and to his fellow. The most partial illumination of this region, the very cause of whose mystery is the height and depth of its *truth*, is of more awful value to the human being than perfect knowledge, if such were possible, concerning everything else in the universe; while, in fact, in this very region, discovery may bring with it a higher kind of conviction than can accompany the results of investigation in any other direction. In these grandest of all thinkings, the great men of this time showed a grandeur of thought worthy of their surpassing excellence in other noblest fields of human labour. They thought greatly because they aspired greatly.

Sir Walter Raleigh was a personal friend of Edmund Spenser. They were almost of the same age, the former born in 1552, the latter in the following year. A writer of magnificent prose, itself full of religion and poetry both in thought and expression, he has not distinguished himself greatly in verse. There is, however, one remarkable poem fit for my purpose, which I can hardly doubt to be his. It is called *Sir Walter Raleigh's Pilgrimage.* The probability is that it was written just after his condemnation in 1603 — although many years passed before his sentence was carried into execution.

Give me my scallop-shell[1] of Quiet;
My staff of Faith to walk upon;
My scrip of Joy, immortal diet;
My bottle of Salvation;
My gown of Glory, hope's true gage;
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.
Blood must be my body's balmer,—
No other balm will there be given—
Whilst my soul, like quiet palmer,
Travelleth towards the land of Heaven;
Over the silver mountains,
Where spring the nectar fountains—
There will I kiss
The bowl of Bliss,
And drink mine everlasting fill
Upon every milken hill:
My soul will be a-dry before,
But after, it will thirst no more.
Then by that happy blissful day,
More peaceful pilgrims I shall see,
That have cast off their rags of clay,
And walk apparelled fresh like me:
I'll take them first,
To quench their thirst,
And taste of nectar's suckets, *sweet things—things [to suck.*
At those clear wells
Where sweetness dwells,
Drawn up by saints in crystal buckets.
And when our bottles and all we
Are filled with immortality,
Then the blessed paths we'll travel,
Strowed with rubies thick as gravel.
Ceilings of diamonds! sapphire floors!
High walls of coral, and pearly bowers!—
From thence to Heaven's bribeless hall,
Where no corrupted voices brawl;
No conscience molten into gold;
No forged accuser bought or sold;

[1] A shell plentiful on the coast of Palestine, and worn by pilgrims to show that they had visited that country.

No cause deferred ; no vain-spent journey ;
For there Christ is the King's Attorney,
Who pleads for all without degrees, *irrespective of rank.*
And he hath angels, but no fees.
And when the grand twelve million jury
Of our sins, with direful fury,
'Gainst our souls black verdicts give,
Christ pleads his death, and then we live.
Be thou my speaker, taintless Pleader,
Unblotted Lawyer, true Proceeder!
Thou giv'st salvation even for alms,—
Not with a bribéd lawyer's palms.
And this is my eternal plea
To him that made heaven, earth, and sea,
That, since my flesh must die so soon,
And want a head to dine next noon,—
Just at the stroke, when my veins start and spread,
Set on my soul an everlasting head :
Then am I ready, like a palmer fit,
To tread those blest paths which before I writ.
Of death and judgment, heaven and hell
Who oft doth think, must needs die well.

This poem is a somewhat strange medley, with a confusion of figure, and a repeated failure in dignity, which is very far indeed from being worthy of Raleigh's prose. But it is very remarkable how wretchedly some men will show, who, doing their own work well, attempt that for which practice has not—to use a word of the time—*enabled* them. There is real power in the poem, however, and the confusion is far more indicative of the pleased success of an unaccustomed hand than of incapacity for harmonious work. Some of the imagery, especially the "crystal buckets," will suggest those grotesque drawings called *Emblems*, which were much in use

before and after this period, and, indeed, were only a putting into visible shape of such metaphors and similes as some of the most popular poets of the time, especially Doctor Donne, indulged in; while the profusion of earthly riches attributed to the heavenly paths and the places of repose on the journey, may well recall Raleigh's own descriptions of South American glories. Englishmen of that era believed in an earthly Paradise beyond the Atlantic, the wonderful reports of whose magnificence had no doubt a share in lifting the imaginations and hopes of the people to the height at which they now stood.

There may be an appearance of irreverence in the way in which he contrasts the bribeless Hall of Heaven with the proceedings at his own trial, where he was browbeaten, abused, and, from the very commencement, treated as a guilty man by Sir Edward Coke, the king's attorney. He even puns with the words *angels* and *fees*. Burning from a sense of injustice, however, and with the solemnity of death before him, he could not be guilty of *conscious* irreverence, at least. But there is another remark I have to make with regard to the matter, which will bear upon much of the literature of the time: even the great writers of that period had such a delight n words, and such a command over them, that like their skilful horsemen, who enjoyed making their steeds show off the fantastic paces they had taught them, they played with the words as they passed through their hands, tossing them about as a juggler might his balls. But even herein the true master of

speech showed his masterdom: his play must not be by-play; it must contribute to the truth of the idea which was taking form in those words. We shall see this more plainly when we come to transcribe some of Sir Philip Sidney's work. There is no irreverence in it. Nor can I take it as any sign of hardness that Raleigh should treat the visual image of his own anticipated death with so much coolness, if the writer of a little elegy on his execution, when Raleigh was fourteen years older than at the presumed date of the foregoing verses, describes him truly when he says:

> I saw in every stander-by
> Pale death, life only in thy eye.

The following hymn is also attributed to Raleigh. If it has less brilliance of fancy, it has none of the faults of the preceding, and is far more artistic in construction and finish, notwithstanding a degree of irregularity.

> Rise, oh my soul, with thy desires to heaven;
> And with divinest contemplation use
> Thy time, where time's eternity is given;
> And let vain thoughts no more thy thoughts abuse,
> But down in darkness let them lie:
> So live thy better, let thy worse thoughts die!
>
> And thou, my soul, inspired with holy flame,
> View and review, with most regardful eye,
> That holy cross, whence thy salvation came,
> On which thy Saviour and thy sin did die!
> For in that sacred object is much pleasure,
> And in that Saviour is my life, my treasure.

To thee, O Jesus, I direct my eyes;
To thee my hands, to thee my humble knees,
To thee my heart shall offer sacrifice;
To thee my thoughts, who my thoughts only sees—
To thee myself,—myself and all I give;
To thee I die; to thee I only live!

See what an effect of stately composure quiet artistic care produces, and how it leaves the ear of the mind in a satisfied peace!

There are a few fine lines in the poem. The last two lines of the first stanza are admirable; the last two of the second very weak. The last stanza is good throughout.

But it would be very unfair to judge Sir Walter by his verse. His prose is infinitely better, and equally displays the devout tendency of his mind—a tendency common to all the great men of that age. The worst I know of him is the selfishly prudent advice he left behind for his son. No doubt he had his faults, but we must not judge a man even by what he says in an over-anxiety for the prosperity of his child.

Another remarkable fact in the history of those great men is that they were all men of affairs. Raleigh was a soldier, a sailor, a discoverer, a politician, as well as an author. His friend Spenser was first secretary to Lord Grey when he was Governor of Ireland, and afterwards Sheriff of Cork. He has written a large treatise on the state of Ireland. But of all the men of the age no one was more variously gifted, or exercised those gifts in more differing directions, than the man who of them all was most in favour with queen, court, and people—Philip Sidney.

I could write much to set forth the greatness, culture, balance, and scope of this wonderful man. Renowned over Europe for his person, for his dress, for his carriage, for his speech, for his skill in arms, for his horsemanship, for his soldiership, for his statesmanship, for his learning, he was beloved for his friendship, his generosity, his steadfastness, his simplicity, his conscientiousness, his religion. Amongst the lamentations over his death printed in Spenser's works, there is one poem by Matthew Roydon, a few verses of which I shall quote, being no vain eulogy. Describing his personal appearance, he says :

A sweet, attractive kind of grace,
  A full assurance given by looks,
Continual comfort in a face,
  The lineaments of Gospel books !—
    I trow, that countenance cannot lie
    Whose thoughts are legible in the eye.

Was ever eye did see that face,
  Was ever ear did hear that tongue,
Was ever mind did mind his grace
  That ever thought the travel long ?
    But eyes and ears, and every thought,
    Were with his sweet perfections caught.

His *Arcadia* is a book full of wisdom and beauty. None of his writings were printed in his lifetime ; but the *Arcadia* was for many years after his death one of the most popular books in the country. His prose, as prose, is not equal to his friend Raleigh's, being less condensed and stately. It is too full of fancy in thought and freak in rhetoric to find now-a-days more than a very limited number of readers ;

and a good deal of the verse that is set in it, is obscure and uninteresting, partly from some false notions of poetic composition which he and his friend Spenser entertained when young; but there is often an exquisite art in his other poems.

The first I shall transcribe is a sonnet, to which the Latin words printed below it might be prefixed as a title: *Splendidis longum valedico nugis.*

A LONG FAREWELL TO GLITTERING TRIFLES.

Leave me, O love, which reachest but to dust;
And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
What ever fades but fading pleasure brings.
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be;
Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light
That doth both shine and give us sight to see.
Oh take fast hold; let that light be thy guide,
In this small course which birth draws out to death;
And think how evil[1] becometh him to slide
Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath.
Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see:
Eternal love, maintain thy life in me.

Before turning to the treasury of his noblest verse, I shall give six lines from a poem in the *Arcadia*—chiefly for the sake of instancing what great questions those mighty men delighted in:

What essence destiny hath; if fortune be or no;
Whence our immortal souls to mortal earth do stow[2]:

[1] *Evil* was pronounced almost as a monosyllable, and was at last contracted to *ill*.

[2] "Come to find a place." The transitive verb *stow* means to put in a place: here it is used intransitively.

What life it is, and how that all these lives do gather,
With outward maker's force, or like an inward father.
Such thoughts, me thought, I thought, and strained my single mind,
Then void of nearer cares, the depth of things to find.

Lord Bacon was not the only one, in such an age, to think upon the mighty relations of physics and metaphysics, or, as Sidney would say, "of naturall and supernaturall philosophie." For a man to do his best, he must be upheld, even in his speculations, by those around him.

In the specimen just given, we find that our religious poetry has gone down into the deeps. There are indications of such a tendency in the older times, but neither then were the questions so articulate, nor were the questioners so troubled for an answer. The alternative expressed in the middle couplet seems to me the most imperative of all questions—both for the individual and for the church: Is man fashioned by the hands of God, as a potter fashioneth his vessel; or do we indeed come forth from his heart? Is power or love the making might of the universe? He who answers this question aright possesses the key to all righteous questions.

Sir Philip and his sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke, made between them a metrical translation of the Psalms of David. It cannot be determined which are hers and which are his; but if I may conclude anything from a poem by the sister, to which I shall by and by refer, I take those I now give for the brother's work.

The souls of the following psalms have, in the

version I present, transmigrated into fairer forms than I have found them occupy elsewhere. Here is a grand hymn for the whole world: *Sing unto the Lord.*

PSALM XCVI.

Sing, and let your song be new,
  Unto him that never endeth!
Sing all earth, and all in you—
Sing to God, and bless his name.
  Of the help, the health he sendeth,
Day by day new ditties frame.

Make each country know his worth:
  Of his acts the wondered story
Paint unto each people forth.
For Jehovah great alone,
  All the gods, for awe and glory,
Far above doth hold his throne.

For but idols, what are they
  Whom besides mad earth adoreth?
He the skies in frame did lay.
Grace and honour are his guides;
  Majesty his temple storeth;
Might in guard about him bides.

Kindreds come! Jehovah give—
  O give Jehovah all together,
Force and fame whereso you live.
Give his name the glory fit:
  Take your off'rings, get you thither,
Where he doth enshrined sit.

Go, adore him in the place
  Where his pomp is most displayed.
Earth, O go with quaking pace,
Go proclaim Jehovah king:
  Stayless world shall now be stayed;
Righteous doom his rule shall bring.

Starry roof and earthy floor,
  Sea, and all thy wideness yieldeth,
Now rejoice, and leap, and roar.
Leafy infants of the wood,
  Fields, and all that on you feedeth,
Dance, O dance, at such a good!

For Jehovah cometh, lo!
  Lo to reign Jehovah cometh!
Under whom you all shall go.
He the world shall rightly guide—
  Truly, as a king becometh,
For the people's weal provide.

Attempting to give an ascending scale of excellence —I do not mean in subject but in execution—I now turn to the national hymn, *God is our Refuge.*

PSALM XLIV.

God gives us strength, and keeps us sound—
  A present help when dangers call;
Then fear not we, let quake the ground,
  And into seas let mountains fall;
  Yea so let seas withal
In watery hills arise,
  As may the earthly hills appal
With dread and dashing cries.

For lo, a river, streaming joy,
  With purling murmur safely slides,
That city washing from annoy,
  In holy shrine where God resides.
  God in her centre bides:
What can this city shake?
  God early aids and ever guides:
Who can this city take?

When nations go against her bent,
  And kings with siege her walls enround;
The void of air his voice doth rent,
  Earth fails their feet with melting ground.

To strength and keep us sound,
The God of armies arms;
Our rock on Jacob's God we found,
Above the reach of harms.

O come with me, O come, and view
The trophies of Jehovah's hand!
What wrecks from him our foes pursue!
How clearly he hath purged our land!
By him wars silent stand:
He brake the archer's bow,
Made chariot's wheel a fiery brand,
And spear to shivers go.

Be still, saith he; know, God am I;
Know I will be with conquest crowned
Above all nations—raiséd high,
High raised above this earthly round.
To strength and keep us sound,
The God of armies arms;
Our rock on Jacob's God we found,
Above the reach of harms.

"The God of armies arms" is a grand line.

Now let us have a hymn of Nature—a far finer, I think, than either of the preceding: *Praise waiteth for thee.*

PSALM LXV.

Sion it is where thou art praiséd,
Sion, O God, where vows they pay thee:
There all men's prayers to thee raiséd,
Return possessed of what they pray thee.
There thou my sins, prevailing to my shame,
Dost turn to smoke of sacrificing flame.

Oh! he of bliss is not deceivéd, *disappointed.*
Whom chosen thou unto thee takest;
And whom into thy court receivéd,
Thou of thy checkrole[1] number makest:

[1] The list of servants then kept in large houses, the number of such being far greater than it is now.

The dainty viands of thy sacred store
'Shall feed him so he shall not hunger more.

From thence it is thy threat'ning thunder—
  Lest we by wrong should be disgracéd—
Doth strike our foes with fear and wonder,
  O thou on whom their hopes are placéd,
Whom either earth doth stedfastly sustain,
Or cradle rocks the restless wavy plain.

Thy virtue stays the mighty mountains, *power.*
  Girded with power, with strength abounding.
The roaring dam of watery fountains *the "dam of fountains"*
  Thy beck doth make surcease her sounding. [*is the ocean.*
When stormy uproars toss the people's brain,
That civil sea to calm thou bring'st again. *political, as opposed to* [*natural.*

Where earth doth end with endless ending,
  All such as dwell, thy signs affright them ;
And in thy praise their voices spending,
  Both houses of the sun delight them—
Both whence he comes, when early he awakes,
And where he goes, when evening rest he takes.

Thy eye from heaven this land beholdeth,
  Such fruitful dews down on it raining,
That storehouse-like her lap enfoldeth
  Assuréd hope of ploughman's gaining :
Thy flowing streams her drought doth temper so,
That buried seed through yielding grave doth grow.

Drunk is each ridge of thy cup drinking ;
  Each clod relenteth at thy dressing ; *groweth soft.*
Thy cloud-borne waters inly sinking,
  Fair spring sprouts forth, blest with thy blessing.
The fertile year is with thy bounty crowned ;
And where thou go'st, thy goings fat the ground.

Plenty bedews the desert places ;
  A hedge of mirth the hills encloseth ;
The fields with flocks have hid their faces ;
  A robe of corn the valleys clotheth.
Deserts, and hills, and fields, and valleys all,
Rejoice, shout, sing, and on thy name do call.

The first stanza seems to me very fine, especially the verse, "Return possessed of what they pray thee." The third stanza might have been written after the Spanish Philip's Armada, but both King David and Sir Philip Sidney were dead before God brake that archer's bow.[1] The fourth line of the next stanza is a noteworthy instance of the sense gathering to itself the sound, and is in lovely contrast with the closing line of the same stanza.

One of the most remarkable specimens I know of the play with words of which I have already spoken as common even in the serious writings of this century, is to be found in the next line: "Where earth doth end with endless ending." David, regarding the world as a flat disc, speaks of the *ends* of the earth: Sidney, knowing it to be a globe, uses the word of the Psalmist, but re-moulds and changes the form of it, with a power fantastic, almost capricious in its wilfulness, yet causing it to express the fact with a marvel of precision. We *see* that the earth ends; we cannot reach the end we see; therefore the "earth doth end with endless ending." It is a case of that contradiction in the form of the words used, which brings out a truth in another plane as it were;—a paradox in words, not in meaning, for the words can bear no meaning but the one which reveals its own reality.

[1] There has been some blundering in the transcription of the last two lines of this stanza. In the former of the two I have substituted *doth* for *dost*, evidently wrong. In the latter, the word *cradle* is doubtful. I suggest *cradled*, but am not satisfied with it. The meaning is, however, plain enough.

The following little psalm, *The Lord reigneth,* is a thunderous organ-blast of praise. The repetition of words in the beginning of the second stanza produces a remarkably fine effect.

PSALM XCIII.

Clothed with state, and girt with might,
  Monarch-like Jehovah reigns;
He who earth's foundation pight— *pitched.*
  Pight at first, and yet sustains;
  He whose stable throne disdains
Motion's shock and age's flight;
  He who endless one remains
One, the same, in changeless plight.

Rivers—yea, though rivers roar,
  Roaring though sea-billows rise,
Vex the deep, and break the shore—
  Stronger art thou, Lord of skies!
  Firm and true thy promise lies
Now and still as heretofore:
  Holy worship never dies
In thy house where we adore.

I close my selections from Sidney with one which I consider the best of all: it is the first half of *Lord, thou hast searched me.*

PSALM CXXXIX.

O Lord, in me there lieth nought
  But to thy search revealed lies;
    For when I sit
    Thou markest it;
  No less thou notest when I rise:
Yea, closest closet of my thought
  Hath open windows to thine eyes.

Thou walkest with me when I walk;
  When to my bed for rest I go,
    I find thee there,
    And every where:

Not youngest thought in me doth grow,
No, not one word I cast to talk
But, yet unuttered, thou dost know.

If forth I march, thou goest before;
If back I turn, thou com'st behind:
So forth nor back
Thy guard I lack;
Nay, on me too thy hand I find.
Well I thy wisdom may adore,
But never reach with earthy mind.

To shun thy notice, leave thine eye,
O whither might I take my way?
To starry sphere?
Thy throne is there.
To dead men's undelightsome stay?
There is thy walk, and there to lie
Unknown, in vain I should assay.

O sun, whom light nor flight can match!
Suppose thy lightful flightful wings
Thou lend to me,
And I could flee
As far as thee the evening brings:
Ev'n led to west he would me catch,
Nor should I lurk with western things.

Do thou thy best, O secret night,
In sable veil to cover me:
Thy sable veil
Shall vainly fail:
With day unmasked my night shall be;
For night is day, and darkness light,
O father of all lights, to thee.

Note the most musical play with the words *light* and *flight* in the fifth stanza. There is hardly a line that is not delightful.

They were a wonderful family those Sidneys. Mary, for whom Philip wrote his chief work, thence called "The Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*," was a woman

of rare gifts. The chief poem known to be hers is called *Our Saviour's Passion.* It is full of the faults of the age. Sir Philip's sport with words is so graceful and ordered as to subserve the utterance of the thought: his sister's fanciful convolutions appear to be there for their own sake—certainly are there to the obscuration of the sense. The difficulty of the poem arises in part, I believe, from corruption, but chiefly from a certain fantastic way of dealing with thought as well as word of which I shall have occasion to say more when we descend a little further. It is, in the main, a lamentation over our Saviour's sufferings, in which the countess is largely guilty of the very feminine fault of seeking to convey the intensity of her emotions by forcing words, accumulating forms, and exaggerating descriptions. This may indeed convince as to the presence of feeling, but cannot communicate the feeling itself. *The* right word will at once generate a sympathy of which all agonies of utterance will only render the willing mind more and more incapable.

The poem is likewise very diffuse—again a common fault with women of power; for indeed the faculty of compressing thought into crystalline form is one of the rarest gifts of artistic genius. It consists of a hundred and ten stanzas, from which I shall gather and arrange a few.

> He placed all rest, and had no resting place;
> He healed each pain, yet lived in sore distress;
> Deserved all good, yet lived in great disgrace;
> Gave all hearts joy, himself in heaviness;
> Suffered them live, by whom himself was slain:
> Lord, who can live to see such love again?

Whose mansion heaven, yet lay within a manger;
Who gave all food, yet sucked a virgin's breast;
Who could have killed, yet fled a threatening danger;
Who sought all quiet by his own unrest;
  Who died for them that highly did offend him,
  And lives for them that cannot comprehend him.

Who came no further than his Father sent him,
And did fulfil but what he did command him;
Who prayed for them that proudly did torment him
For telling truly of what they did demand him;
  Who did all good that humbly did intreat him,
  And bare their blows, that did unkindly beat him.

Had I but seen him as his servants did,
At sea, at land, in city, or in field,
Though in himself he had his glory hid,
That in his grace the light of glory held,
  Then might my sorrow somewhat be appeaséd,
  That once my soul had in his sight been pleaséd.

No! I have run the way of wickedness,
Forgetting what my faith should follow most;
I did not think upon thy holiness,
Nor by my sins what sweetness I have lost.
  Oh sin! for sin hath compassed me about,
  That, Lord, I know not where to find thee out.

Where he that sits on the supernal throne,
In majesty most glorious to behold,
And holds the sceptre of the world alone,
Hath not his garments of imbroidered gold,
  But he is clothed with truth and righteousness,
  Where angels all do sing with joyfulness,

Where heavenly love is cause of holy life,
And holy life increaseth heavenly love;
Where peace established without fear or strife,
Doth prove the blessing of the soul's behove;[1]
  Where thirst nor hunger, grief nor sorrow dwelleth,
  But peace in joy, and joy in peace excelleth.

[1] "The very blessing the soul needed."

Had all the poem been like these stanzas, I should not have spoken so strongly concerning its faults. There are a few more such in it. It closes with a very fantastic use of musical terms, following upon a curious category of the works of nature as praising God, to which I refer for the sake of one stanza, or rather of one line in the stanza:

> To see the greyhound course, the hound in chase,
> *Whilst little dormouse sleepeth out her eyne;*
> The lambs and rabbits sweetly run at base,[1]
> Whilst highest trees the little squirrels climb,
> The crawling worms out creeping in the showers,
> And how the snails do climb the lofty towers.

What a love of animated nature there is in the lovely lady! I am all but confident, however, that second line came to her from watching her children asleep. She had one child at least: that William Herbert, who is generally, and with weight, believed the W. H. of Shakspere's Sonnets, a grander honour than the earldom of Pembroke, or even the having Philip Sidney to his uncle: I will not say grander than having Mary Sidney to his *mother*.

Let me now turn to Sidney's friend, Sir Fulk Grevill, Lord Brooke, who afterwards wrote his life, "as an intended preface" to all his "Monuments to the memory of Sir Philip Sidney," the said *monuments* being Lord Brooke's own poems.

My extract is from *A Treatise of Religion*, in which,

[1] An old English game, still in use in Scotland and America, but vanishing before cricket.

if the reader do not find much of poetic form, he will find at least some grand spiritual philosophy, the stuff whereof all highest poetry is fashioned. It is one of the first poems in which the philosophy of religion, and not either its doctrine, feeling, or history, predominates. It is, as a whole, poor, chiefly from its being so loosely written. There are men, and men whose thoughts are of great worth, to whom it never seems to occur that they may utter very largely and convey very little; that what is clear to themselves is in their speech obscure as a late twilight. Their utterance is rarely articulate: their spiritual mouth talks with but half-movements of its lips; it does not model their thoughts into clear-cut shapes, such as the spiritual ear can distinguish as they enter it. Of such is Lord Brooke. These few stanzas, however, my readers will be glad to have:

What is the chain which draws us back again,
And lifts man up unto his first creation?
Nothing in him his own heart can restrain;
His reason lives a captive to temptation;
  Example is corrupt; precepts are mixed;
  All fleshly knowledge frail, and never fixed.

It is a light, a gift, a grace inspired;
A spark of power, a goodness of the Good;
Desire in him, that never is desired;
An unity, where desolation stood;
  In us, not of us, a Spirit not of earth,
  Fashioning the mortal to immortal birth.

* * * *

Sense of this God, by fear, the sensual have,
Distressèd Nature crying unto Grace;

For sovereign reason then becomes a slave,
And yields to servile sense her sovereign place,
When more or other she affects to be
Than seat or shrine of this Eternity.

Yea, Prince of Earth let Man assume to be,
Nay more—of Man let Man himself be God,
Yet without God, a slave of slaves is he;
To others, wonder; to himself, a rod;
Restless despair, desire, and desolation;
The more secure, the more abomination.

Then by affecting power, we cannot know him.
By knowing all things else, we know him less.
Nature contains him not. Art cannot show him.
Opinions idols, and not God, express.
Without, in power, we see him everywhere;
Within, we rest not, till we find him there.

Then seek we must; that course is natural—
For ownéd souls to find their owner out.
Our free remorses when our natures fall—
When we do well, our hearts made free from doubt—
Prove service due to one Omnipotence,
And Nature of religion to have sense.

Questions again, which in our hearts arise—
Since loving knowledge, not humility—
Though they be curious, godless, and unwise,
Yet prove our nature feels a Deity;
For if these strifes rose out of other grounds,
Man were to God as deafness is to sounds.

* * * *

Yet in this strife, this natural remorse,
If we could bend the force of power and wit
To work upon the heart, and make divorce
There from the evil which preventeth it,
In judgment of the truth we should not doubt
Good life would find a good religion out.

If a fair proportion of it were equal to this, the poem would be a fine one, not for its poetry, but for its spiritual metaphysics. I think the fourth and fifth of the stanzas I have given, profound in truth, and excellent in utterance. They are worth pondering.

We now descend a decade of the century, to find another group of names within the immediate threshold of the sixties.

CHAPTER VI.

LORD BACON AND HIS COEVALS.

EXCEPT it be Milton's, there is not any prose fuller of grand poetic embodiments than Lord Bacon's. Yet he always writes contemptuously of poetry, having in his eye no doubt the commonplace kinds of it, which will always occupy more bulk, and hence be more obtrusive, than that which is true in its nature and rare in its workmanship. Towards the latter end of his life, however, being in ill health at the time, he translated seven of the Psalms of David into verse, dedicating them to George Herbert. The best of them is Psalm civ.—just the one upon which we might suppose, from his love to the laws of Nature, he would dwell with the greatest sympathy. Partly from the wish to hear his voice amongst the rest of our singers, partly for the merits of the version itself, which has some remarkable lines, I have resolved to include it here. It is the first specimen I have given in the heroic couplet.

> Father and King of Powers both high and low,
> Whose sounding fame all creatures serve to blow;
> My soul shall with the rest strike up thy praise,
> And carol of thy works, and wondrous ways.

But who can blaze thy beauties, Lord, aright?
They turn the brittle beams of mortal sight.
Upon thy head thou wear'st a glorious crown,
All set with virtues, polished with renown:
Thence round about a silver veil doth fall
Of crystal light, mother of colours all.
The compass, heaven, smooth without grain or fold,
All set with spangs of glittering stars untold,
And striped with golden beams of power unpent,
Is raiséd up for a removing tent.
Vaulted and archéd are his chamber beams
Upon the seas, the waters, and the streams;
The clouds as chariots swift do scour the sky;
The stormy winds upon their wings do fly.
His angels spirits are, that wait his will;
As flames of fire his anger they fulfil.
In the beginning, with a mighty hand,
He made the earth by counterpoise to stand,
Never to move, but to be fixéd still;
Yet hath no pillars but his sacred will.
This earth, as with a veil, once covered was;
The waters overflowéd all the mass;
But upon his rebuke away they fled,
And then the hills began to show their head;
The vales their hollow bosoms opened plain,
The streams ran trembling down the vales again;
And that the earth no more might drowned be,
He set the sea his bounds of liberty;
And though his waves resound and beat the shore,
Yet it is bridled by his holy lore.
Then did the rivers seek their proper places,
And found their heads, their issues, and their races;
The springs do feed the rivers all the way,
And so the tribute to the sea repay:
Running along through many a pleasant field,
Much fruitfulness unto the earth they yield;
That know the beasts and cattle feeding by,
Which for to slake their thirst do thither hie.
Nay, desert grounds the streams do not forsake,
But through the unknown ways their journey take;
The asses wild that hide in wilderness,

Do thither come, their thirst for to refresh.
The shady trees along their banks do spring,
In which the birds do build, and sit, and sing,
Stroking the gentle air with pleasant notes,
Plaining or chirping through their warbling throats.
The higher grounds, where waters cannot rise,
By rain and dews are watered from the skies,
Causing the earth put forth the grass for beasts,
And garden-herbs, served at the greatest feasts,
And bread that is all viands' firmament,
And gives a firm and solid nourishment;
And wine man's spirits for to recreate,
And oil his face for to exhilarate.
The sappy cedars, tall like stately towers,
High flying birds do harbour in their bowers;
The holy storks that are the travellers,
Choose for to dwell and build within the firs;
The climbing goats hang on steep mountains' side;
The digging conies in the rocks do bide.
The moon, so constant in inconstancy,
Doth rule the monthly seasons orderly;
The sun, eye of the world, doth know his race,
And when to show, and when to hide his face.
Thou makest darkness, that it may be night,
Whenas the savage beasts that fly the light,
As conscious of man's hatred, leave their den,
And range abroad, secured from sight of men.
Then do the forests ring of lions roaring,
That ask their meat of God, their strength restoring;
But when the day appears, they back do fly,
And in their dens again do lurking lie;
Then man goes forth to labour in the field,
Whereby his grounds more rich increase may yield.
O Lord, thy providence sufficeth all;
Thy goodness not restrained but general
Over thy creatures, the whole earth doth flow
With thy great largeness poured forth here below.
Nor is it earth alone exalts thy name,
But seas and streams likewise do spread the same.
The rolling seas unto the lot do fall
Of beasts innumerable, great and small;

There do the stately ships plough up the floods;
The greater navies look like walking woods;
The fishes there far voyages do make,
To divers shores their journey they do take;
There hast thou set the great leviathan,
That makes the seas to seethe like boiling pan:
All these do ask of thee their meat to live,
Which in due season thou to them dost give:
Ope thou thy hand, and then they have good fare;
Shut thou thy hand, and then they troubled are.
All life and spirit from thy breath proceed,
Thy word doth all things generate and feed:
If thou withdraw'st it, then they cease to be,
And straight return to dust and vanity;
But when thy breath thou dost send forth again,
Then all things do renew, and spring amain,
So that the earth but lately desolate
Doth now return unto the former state.
The glorious majesty of God above
Shall ever reign, in mercy and in love;
God shall rejoice all his fair works to see,
For, as they come from him, all perfect be.
The earth shall quake, if aught his wrath provoke;
Let him but touch the mountains, they shall smoke.
As long as life doth last, I hymns will sing,
With cheerful voice, to the Eternal King;
As long as I have being, I will praise
The works of God, and all his wondrous ways.
I know that he my words will not despise:
Thanksgiving is to him a sacrifice.
But as for sinners, they shall be destroyed
From off the earth—their places shall be void.
Let all his works praise him with one accord!
Oh praise the Lord, my soul! Praise ye the Lord!

His Hundred and Forty-ninth Psalm is likewise good; but I have given enough of Lord Bacon's verse, and proceed to call up one who was a poet indeed, although little known as such, being a Roman Catholic, a Jesuit even, and therefore, in Elizabeth's

reign, a traitor, and subject to the penalties according. Robert Southwell, "thirteen times most cruelly tortured," could "not be induced to confess anything, not even the colour of the horse whereon on a certain day he rode, lest from such indication his adversaries might conjecture in what house, or in company of what Catholics, he that day was." I quote these words of Lord Burleigh, lest any of my readers, discovering weakness in his verse, should attribute weakness to the man himself.

It was no doubt on political grounds that these tortures, and the death that followed them, were inflicted. But it was for the truth *as he saw it*, that is, for the sake of duty, that Southwell thus endured. We must not impute all the evils of a system to every individual who holds by it. It may be found that a man has, for the sole sake of self-abnegation, yielded homage, where, if his object had been personal aggrandizement, he might have wielded authority. Southwell, if that which comes from within a man may be taken as the test of his character, was a devout and humble Christian. In the choir of our singers we only ask: "Dost thou lift up thine heart?" Southwell's song answers for him: "I lift it up unto the Lord."

His chief poem is called *St. Peter's Complaint.* It is of considerable length—a hundred and thirty-two stanzas. It reminds us of the Countess of Pembroke's poem, but is far more articulate and far superior in versification. Perhaps its chief fault is that the pauses are so measured with the lines as

to make every line almost a sentence, the effect of which is a considerable degree of monotony. Like all writers of the time, he is, of course, fond of antithesis, and abounds in conceits and fancies; whence he attributes a multitude of expressions to St. Peter of which never possibly could the substantial ideas have entered the Apostle's mind, or probably any other than Southwell's own. There is also a good deal of sentimentalism in the poem, a fault from which I fear modern Catholic verse is rarely free. Probably the Italian poetry with which he must have been familiar in his youth, during his residence in Rome, accustomed him to such irreverences of expression as this sentimentalism gives occasion to, and which are very far from indicating a correspondent state of feeling. Sentiment is a poor ape of love; but the love is true notwithstanding. Here are a few stanzas from *St. Peter's Complaint:*

Titles I make untruths: am I a rock,
That with so soft a gale was overthrown?
Am I fit pastor for the faithful flock
To guide their souls that murdered thus mine own?
A rock of ruin, not a rest to stay;
A pastor,—not to feed, but to betray.

Parting from Christ my fainting force declined;
With lingering foot I followed him aloof;
Base fear out of my heart his love unshrined,
Huge in high words, but impotent in proof.
My vaunts did seem hatched under Samson's locks,
Yet woman's words did give me murdering knocks.

* * * * * *

At Sorrow's door I knocked: they craved my name.
I answered, "One unworthy to be known."
"What one?" say they. "One worthiest of blame."
"But who?" "A wretch not God's, nor yet his own."
"A man?" "Oh, no!" "A beast?" "Much worse." "What creature?"
"A rock." "How called?" "The rock of scandal, Peter."
* * * * * * * *
Christ! health of fevered soul, heaven of the mind,
Force of the feeble, nurse of infant loves,
Guide to the wandering foot, light to the blind,
Whom weeping wins, repentant sorrow moves!
Father in care, mother in tender heart,
Revive and save me, slain with sinful dart!

If King Manasseh, sunk in depth of sin,
With plaints and tears recovered grace and crown,
A worthless worm some mild regard may win,
And lowly creep where flying threw it down.
A poor desire I have to mend my ill;
I should, I would, I dare not say I will.

I dare not say I will, but wish I may;
My pride is checked: high words the speaker spilt.
My good, O Lord, thy gift—thy strength, my stay—
Give what thou bidst, and then bid what thou wilt.
Work with me what of me thou dost request;
Then will I dare the worst and love the best.

Here, from another poem, are two little stanzas worth preserving:

Yet God's must I remain,
By death, by wrong, by shame;
I cannot blot out of my heart
That grace wrought in his name.

I cannot set at nought,
Whom I have held so dear;
I cannot make Him seem afar
That is indeed so near.

The following poem, in style almost as simple as

a ballad, is at once of the quaintest and truest. Common minds, which must always associate a certain conventional respectability with the forms of religion, will think it irreverent. I judge its reverence profound, and such none the less that it is pervaded by a sweet and delicate tone of holy humour. The very title has a glimmer of the glowing heart of Christianity:

NEW PRINCE, NEW POMP.

Behold a silly,[1] tender babe,
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies;
Alas! a piteous sight.

The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed;
But forced he is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud his head.

Despise him not for lying there;
First what he is inquire:
An orient pearl is often found
In depth of dirty mire.

Weigh not his crib, his wooden dish,
Nor beasts that by him feed;
Weigh not his mother's poor attire,
Nor Joseph's simple weed.

This stable is a prince's court,
The crib his chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate.

[1] *Silly* means *innocent*, and therefore *blessed;* ignorant of evil, and in so far helpless. It is easy to see how affection came to apply it to idiots. It is applied to the ox and ass in the next stanza, and is often an epithet of shepherds.

The persons in that poor attire
  His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heaven:
  This pomp is praiséd there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight;
  Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise this humble pomp,
  Which he from heaven doth bring.

Another, on the same subject, he calls *New Heaven, New War.* It is fantastic to a degree. One stanza, however, I like much:

This little babe, so few days old,
Is come to rifle Satan's fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake,
Though he himself for cold do shake;
For in this weak, unarmed wise,
The gates of hell he will surprise.

There is profoundest truth in the symbolism of this.

Here is the latter half of a poem called *St. Peter's Remorse:*

Did mercy spin the thread
  To weave in justice' loom?
Wert then a father to conclude
  With dreadful judge's doom?

It is a small relief
  To say I was thy child,
If, as an ill-deserving foe,
  From grace I am exiled.

I was, I had, I could—
  All words importing want;
They are but dust of dead supplies,
  Where needful helps are scant.

Once to have been in bliss
  That hardly can return,
Doth but bewray from whence I fell,
  And wherefore now I mourn.

All thoughts of passed hopes
  Increase my present cross;
Like ruins of decayed joys,
  They still upbraid my loss.

O mild and mighty Lord!
  Amend that is amiss;
My sin my sore, thy love my salve,
  Thy cure my comfort is.

Confirm thy former deed;
  Reform that is defiled;
I was, I am, I will remain
  Thy charge, thy choice, thy child.

Here are some neat stanzas from a poem he calls

CONTENT AND RICH.

My conscience is my crown,
  Contented thoughts my rest;
My heart is happy in itself,
  My bliss is in my breast.

My wishes are but few,
  All easy to fulfil;
I make the limits of my power
  The bounds unto my will.

Sith sails of largest size
  The storm doth soonest tear,
I bear so small and low a sail
  As freeth me from fear.

And taught with often proof,
  A tempered calm I find
To be most solace to itself,
  Best cure for angry mind.

No chance of Fortune's calms
  Can cast my comforts down;
When Fortune smiles I smile to think
  How quickly she will frown.

And when in froward mood
She proves an angry foe:
Small gain I found to let her come,
Less loss to let her go.

There is just one stanza in a poem of Daniel, who belongs by birth to this group, which I should like to print by itself, if it were only for the love Coleridge had to the last two lines of it. It needs little stretch of scheme to let it show itself amongst religious poems. It occurs in a fine epistle to the Countess of Cumberland. Daniel's writing is full of the practical wisdom of the inner life, and the stanza which I quote has a certain Wordsworthian flavour about it. It will not make a complete sentence, but must yet stand by itself:

Knowing the heart of man is set to be
The centre of this world, about the which
These revolutions of disturbances
Still roll; where all th' aspects of misery
Predominate; whose strong effects are such
As he must bear, being powerless to redress;
And that unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!

Later in the decade, comes Sir Henry Wotton. It will be seen that I have arranged my singers with reference to their birth, not to the point of time at which this or that poem was written or published. The poetic influences which work on the shaping fantasy are chiefly felt in youth, and hence the predominant mode of a poet's utterance will be determined by what and where and amongst whom he was during that season. The kinds of the various poems will therefore probably fall into natural

sequence rather after the dates of the youth of the writers than after the years in which they were written.

Wotton was better known in his day as a politician than as a poet, and chiefly in ours as the subject of one of Izaak Walton's biographies. Something of artistic instinct, rather than finish, is evident in his verses. Here is the best and the best-known of the few poems recognized as his:

THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE.

How happy is he born and taught,
  That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
  And silly truth his highest skill;

Whose passions not his masters are;
  Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Untiéd to the world with care
  Of prince's grace or vulgar breath;

Who hath his life from humours freed;
  Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
  Nor ruin make accusers great;

Who envieth none whom chance doth raise,
  Or vice; who never understood
How swords give slighter wounds than praise,
  Nor rules of state, but rules of good;

Who God doth late and early pray
  More of his grace than gifts to lend;
And entertains the harmless day
  With a well-chosen book or friend.

This man is free from servile bands
  Of hope to rise, or fear to fall:
Lord of himself, though not of lands!
  And having nothing, yet hath all.

Some of my readers will observe that in many places I have given a reading different from that in the best-known copy of the poem. I have followed a manuscript in the handwriting of Ben Jonson.[1] I cannot tell whether Jonson has put the master's hand to the amateur's work, but in every case I find his reading the best.

Sir John Davies must have been about fifteen years younger than Sir Fulk Grevill. He was born in 1570, was bred a barrister, and rose to high position through the favour of James I.—gained, it is said, by the poem which the author called *Nosce Teipsum*,[2] but which is generally entitled *On the Immortality of the Soul*, intending by *immortality* the spiritual nature of the soul, resulting in continuity of existence. It is a wonderful instance of what can be done for metaphysics in verse, and by means of imagination or poetic embodiment generally. Argumentation cannot of course naturally belong to the region of poetry, however well it may comport itself when there naturalized; and consequently, although there are most poetic no less than profound passages in the treatise, a light scruple arises whether its constituent matter can properly be called poetry. At all events, however, certain of the more prosaic measures and stanzas lend themselves readily, and with much favour, to some of the more complex of logical necessities. And it must be remembered

[1] See *Poems by Sir Henry Wotton and others. Edited by the Rev. John Hannah.*

[2] "Know thyself."

that in human speech, as in the human mind, there are no absolute divisions: power shades off into feeling; and the driest logic may find the heroic couplet render it good service.

Sir John Davies's treatise is not only far more poetic in image and utterance than that of Lord Brooke, but is far more clear in argument and firm in expression as well. Here is a fine invocation:

O Light, which mak'st the light which makes the day!
Which sett'st the eye without, and mind within;
Lighten my spirit with one clear heavenly ray,
Which now to view itself doth first begin.

* * * *

Thou, like the sun, dost, with an equal ray,
Into the palace and the cottage shine;
And show'st the soul both to the clerk and lay, *learned and*
By the clear lamp of th' oracle divine. [*unlearned.*

He is puzzled enough to get the theology of his time into harmony with his philosophy, and I cannot say that he is always triumphant in the attempt; but here at least is good argument in justification of the freedom of man to sin.

If by His word he had the current stayed
Of Adam's will, which was by nature free,
It had been one as if his word had said,
"I will henceforth that Man no Man shall be."

* * * *

For what is Man without a moving mind,
Which hath a judging wit, and choosing will?
Now, if God's pow'r should her election bind,
Her motions then would cease, and stand all still.

* * * *

So that if Man would be unvariable,
He must be God, or like a rock or tree;
For ev'n the perfect angels were not stable,
But had a fall more desperate than we.

The poem contains much excellent argument in mental science as well as in religion and metaphysics; but with that department I have nothing to do.

I shall now give an outlook from the highest peak of the poem—to any who are willing to take the trouble necessary for seeing what another would show them.

The section from which I have gathered the following stanzas is devoted to the more immediate proof of the soul's immortality.

Her only end is never-ending bliss,
  Which is the eternal face of God to see,
Who last of ends and first of causes is;
  And to do this, she must eternal be.

Again, how can she but immortal be,
  When with the motions of both will and wit,
She still aspireth to eternity,
  And never rests till she attains to it?

Water in conduit-pipes can rise no higher
  Than the well-head from whence it first doth spring;
Then since to eternal God she doth aspire,
  She cannot but be an eternal thing.

At first her mother-earth she holdeth dear,
  And doth embrace the world and worldly things;
She flies close by the ground, and hovers here,
  And mounts not up with her celestial wings.

Yet under heaven she cannot light on ought
  That with her heavenly nature doth agree;
She cannot rest, she cannot fix her thought,
  She cannot in this world contented be.

For who did ever yet, in honour, wealth,
  Or pleasure of the sense, contentment find?
Whoever ceased to wish, when he had health?
  Or having wisdom, was not vexed in mind?

Then as a bee, which among weeds doth fall,
  Which seem sweet flowers, with lustre fresh and gay—
She lights on that, and this, and tasteth all,
  But, pleased with none, doth rise, and soar away;

So, when the soul finds here no true content,
  And, like Noah's dove, can no sure footing take,
She doth return from whence she first was sent,
  And flies to him that first her wings did make.

Wit, seeking truth, from cause to cause ascends,
  And never rests till it the first attain;
Will, seeking good, finds many middle ends,
  But never stays till it the last do gain.

Now God the truth, and first of causes is;
  God is the last good end, which lasteth still;
Being Alpha and Omega named for this:
  Alpha to wit, Omega to the will.

Since then her heavenly kind she doth display
  In that to God she doth directly move,
And on no mortal thing can make her stay,
  She cannot be from hence, but from above.

One passage more, the conclusion and practical summing up of the whole:

O ignorant poor man! what dost thou bear,
  Locked up within the casket of thy breast?
What jewels and what riches hast thou there!
  What heavenly treasure in so weak a chest!

Think of her worth, and think that God did mean
  This worthy mind should worthy things embrace:
Blot not her beauties with thy thoughts unclean,
  Nor her dishonour with thy passion base.

Kill not her quickening power with surfeitings;
  Mar not her sense with sensuality;
Cast not her serious wit on idle things;
  Make not her free-will slave to vanity.

And when thou think'st of her eternity,
  Think not that death against our nature is;
Think it a birth; and when thou go'st to die,
  Sing like a swan, as if thou went'st to bliss.

And if thou, like a child, didst fear before,
  Being in the dark where thou didst nothing see;
Now I have brought thee torch-light, fear no more;
  Now when thou diest thou canst not hood-wink'd be.

And thou, my soul, which turn'st with curious eye
  To view the beams of thine own form divine,
Know, that thou canst know nothing perfectly,
  While thou art clouded with this flesh of mine.

Take heed of over-weening, and compare
  Thy peacock's feet with thy gay peacock's train:
Study the best and highest things that are,
  But of thyself an humble thought retain.

Cast down thyself, and only strive to raise
  The story of thy Maker's sacred name:
Use all thy powers that blessed Power to praise,
  Which gives the power to be, and use the same.

In looking back over our path from the point we have now reached, the first thought that suggests itself is—How much the reflective has supplanted the emotional! I do not mean for a moment that the earliest poems were without thought, or that the latest are without emotion; but in the former there is more of the skin, as it were—in the latter, more of the bones of worship; not that in the one the worship is but skin-deep, or that in the other the bones are dry.

To look at the change a little more closely: we find in the earliest time, feeling working on historic fact and on what was received as such, and the result

simple aspiration after goodness. The next stage is good *doctrine*—I use the word, as St. Paul uses it, for instruction in righteousness—chiefly by means of allegory, all attempts at analysis being made through personification of qualities. Here the general form is frequently more poetic than the matter. After this we have a period principally of imitation, sometimes good, sometimes indifferent. Next, with the Reformation and the revival of literature together, come more of art and more of philosophy, to the detriment of the lyrical expression. People cannot think and sing: they can only feel and sing. But the philosophy goes farther in this direction, even to the putting in abeyance of that from which song takes its rise,—namely, feeling itself. As to the former, amongst the verse of the period I have given, there is hardly anything to be called song but Sir Philip Sidney's Psalms, and for them we are more indebted to King David than to Sir Philip. As to the latter, even in the case of that most mournful poem of the Countess of Pembroke, it is, to quite an unhealthy degree, occupied with the attempt to work upon her own feelings by the contemplation of them, instead of with the utterance of those aroused by the contemplation of truth. In her case the metaphysics have begun to prey upon and consume the emotions. Besides, that age was essentially a dramatic age, as even its command of language, especially as shown in the pranks it plays with it, would almost indicate; and the dramatic impulse is less favourable, though not at all opposed, to lyrical utterance. In the cases

of Sir Fulk Grevill and Sir John Davies, the feeling is assuredly profound; but in form and expression the philosophy has quite the upper hand.

We must not therefore suppose, however, that the cause of religious poetry has been a losing one. The last wave must sink that the next may rise, and the whole tide flow shorewards. The man must awake through all his soul, all his strength, all his mind, that he may worship God in unity, in the one harmonious utterance of his being: his heart must be united to fear his name. And for this final perfection of the individual the race must awake. At this season and that season, this power or that power must be chiefly developed in her elect; and for its sake the growth of others must for a season be delayed. But the next generation will inherit all that has gone before; and its elect, if they be themselves pure in heart, and individual, that is original, in mind, will, more or less thoroughly, embody the result, in subservience to some new development, essential in its turn to further progress. Even the fallow times, which we are so ready to call barren, must have their share in working the one needful work. They may be to the nation that which sickness so often is to the man—a time of refreshing from the Lord. A nation's life does not lie in its utterance any more than in the things which it possesses: it lies in its action. The utterance is a result, and therefore a sign, of life; but there may be life without any *such* sign. To do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God, is the highest life of a nation as of an individual; and when the time

for speech comes, it will be such life alone that causes the speech to be strong at once and harmonious. When at last there are not ten righteous men in Sodom, Sodom can neither think, act, nor say, and her destruction is at hand.

While the wave of the dramatic was sinking, the wave of the lyric was growing in force and rising in height. Especially as regards religious poetry we are as yet only approaching the lyrical jubilee. Fact and faith, self-consciousness and metaphysics, all are needful to the lyric of love. Modesty and art find their grandest, simplest labour in rightly subordinating each of those to the others. How could we have a George Herbert without metaphysics? In those poems I have just given, the way of metaphysics was prepared for him. That which overcolours one age to the injury of its harmony, will, in the next or the next, fall into its own place in the seven-chorded rainbow of truth.

His volant touch
Fled and pursusd tra[illegible]verse the resonant fugue.

CHAPTER VII.

DR. DONNE.

WE now come to Dr. John Donne, a man of justly great respect and authority, who, born in the year 1573, the fifteenth of Queen Elizabeth, died Dean of St. Paul's in the year 1636. But, although even Ben Jonson addresses him as "the delight of Phœbus and each Muse," we are too far beyond the power of his social presence and the influence of his public utterances to feel that admiration of his poems which was so largely expressed during his lifetime. Of many of those that were written in his youth, Izaak Walton says Dr. Donne "wished that his own eyes had witnessed their funerals." Faulty as they are, however, they are not the less the work of a great and earnest man.

Bred to the law, but never having practised it, he lost his secretaryship to the Lord Chancellor Ellesmere through the revenge of Sir George More, whose daughter Donne had married in secret because of her father's opposition. Dependent thereafter for years on the generous kindness of unrelated friends, he yet for conscience' sake refused to take orders when

a good living was offered him; and it was only after prolonged thought that he yielded to the importunity of King James, who was so convinced of his surpassing fitness for the church that he would speed him towards no other goal. When at length he dared hope that God might have called him to the high office, never man gave himself to its duties with more of whole-heartedness and devotion, and none have proved themselves more clean of the sacrilege of serving at the altar for the sake of the things offered thereon.

He is represented by Dr. Johnson as one of the chief examples of that school of poets called by himself the *metaphysical*, an epithet which, as a definition, is almost false. True it is that Donne and his followers were always ready to deal with metaphysical subjects, but it was from their mode, and not their subjects, that Dr. Johnson classed them. What this mode was we shall see presently, for I shall be justified in setting forth its strangeness, even absurdity, by the fact that Dr. Donne was the dear friend of George Herbert, and had much to do with the formation of his poetic habits. Just twenty years older than Herbert, and the valued and intimate friend of his mother, Donne was in precisely that relation of age and circumstance to influence the other in the highest degree.

The central thought of Dr. Donne is nearly sure to be just: the subordinate thoughts by means of which he unfolds it are often grotesque, and so wildly associated as to remind one of the lawlessness of a dream, wherein mere suggestion without choice or fitness

rules the sequence. As some of the writers of whom I have last spoken would play with words, Dr. Donne would sport with ideas, and with the visual images or embodiments of them. Certainly in his case much knowledge reveals itself in the association of his ideas, and great facility in the management and utterance of them. True likewise, he says nothing unrelated to the main idea of the poem; but not the less certainly does the whole resemble the speech of a child of active imagination, to whom judgment as to the character of his suggestions is impossible, his taste being equally gratified with a lovely image and a brilliant absurdity: a butterfly and a shining potsherd are to him similarly desirable. Whatever wild thing starts from the thicket of thought, all is worthy game to the hunting intellect of Dr. Donne, and is followed without question of tone, keeping, or harmony. In his play with words, Sir Philip Sidney kept good heed that even that should serve the end in view; in his play with ideas, Dr. John Donne, so far from serving the end, sometimes obscures it almost hopelessly: the hart escapes while he follows the squirrels and weasels and bats. It is not surprising that, their author being so inartistic with regard to their object, his verses themselves should be harsh and unmusical beyond the worst that one would imagine fit to be called verse. He enjoys the unenviable distinction of having no rival in ruggedness of metric movement and associated sounds. This is clearly the result of indifference; an indifference, however, which grows very strange to us when we find

that he *can* write a lovely verse and even an exquisite stanza.

Greatly for its own sake, partly for the sake of illustration, I quote a poem containing at once his best and his worst, the result being such an incongruity that we wonder whether it might not be called his best *and* his worst, because we cannot determine which. He calls it *Hymn to God, my God, in my Sickness.* The first stanza is worthy of George Herbert in his best mood.

> Since I am coming to that holy room,
> Where with the choir of saints for evermore
> I shall be made thy music, as I come
> I tune the instrument here at the door,
> And what I must do then, think here before.

To recognize its beauty, leaving aside the depth and truth of the phrase, "Where I shall be made thy music," we must recall the custom of those days to send out for "a noise of musicians." Hence he imagines that he has been summoned as one of a band already gone in to play before the king of "The High Countries:" he is now at the door, where he is listening to catch the tone, that he may have his instrument tuned and ready before he enters. But with what a jar the next stanza breaks on heart, mind, and ear!

> Whilst my physicians by their love are grown
> Cosmographers, and I[1] their map, who lie
> Flat on this bed, that by them may be shown
> That this is my south-west discovery,
> *Per fretum febris*—by these straits to die;—

[1] "And I have grown their map."

Here, in the midst of comparing himself to a map, and his physicians to cosmographers consulting the map, he changes without warning into a navigator whom they are trying to follow upon the map as he passes through certain straits—namely, those of the fever — towards his south-west discovery, Death. Grotesque as this is, the absurdity deepens in the end of the next stanza by a return to the former idea. He is alternately a map and a man sailing on the map of himself. But the first half of the stanza is lovely : my reader must remember that the region of the West was at that time the Land of Promise to England.

> I joy that in these straits I see my West;
> For though those currents yield return to none,
> What shall my West hurt me? As west and east
> In all flat maps (and I am one) are one,
> So death doth touch the resurrection.

It is hardly worth while, except for the strangeness of the phenomenon, to spend any time in elucidating this. Once more a map, he is that of the two hemispheres, in which the east of the one touches the west of the other. Could anything be much more unmusical than the line, "In all flat maps (and I am one) are one"? But the next stanza is worse.

> Is the Pacific sea my home? Or are
> The eastern riches? Is Jerusalem?
> Anvan, and Magellan, and Gibraltar?
> All straits, and none but straits are ways to them,
> Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Cham, or Sem.

The meaning of the stanza is this: there is no

earthly home: all these places are only straits that lead home, just as they themselves cannot be reached but through straits.

Let my reader now forget all but the first stanza, and take it along with the following, the last two:

> We think that Paradise and Calvary,
> Christ's cross and Adam's tree, stood in one place:
> Look, Lord, and find both Adams met in me;
> As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
> May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace.
>
> So, in his purple wrapped, receive me, Lord;
> By these his thorns give me his other crown;
> And as to others' souls I preached thy word,
> Be this my text, my sermon to mine own:
> *Therefore, that he may raise, the Lord throws down.*

Surely these are very fine, especially the middle verse of the former and the first verse of the latter stanza. The three stanzas together make us lovingly regret that Dr. Donne should have ridden his Pegasus over quarry and housetop, instead of teaching him his paces.

The next I quote is artistic throughout. Perhaps the fact, of which we are informed by Izaak Walton, "that he caused it to be set to a grave and solemn tune, and to be often sung to the organ by the choristers of St. Paul's church in his own hearing, especially at the evening service," may have something to do with its degree of perfection. There is no sign of his usual haste about it. It is even elaborately rhymed after Norman fashion, the rhymes in each stanza being consonant with the rhymes in every stanza.

A HYMN TO GOD THE FATHER.

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?[1]
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,[2]
And do run still, though still I do deplore?—
When thou hast done, thou hast not done;
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sins their door?[3]
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowed in a score?—
When thou hast done, thou hast not done;
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine, as he shines now and heretofore;
And having done that, thou hast done:
I fear no more.

In those days even a pun might be a serious thing: witness the play in the last stanza on the words *son* and *sun*—not a mere pun, for the Son of the Father is the Sun of Righteousness: he is Life *and* Light.

What the Doctor himself says concerning the hymn, appears to me not only interesting but of practical value. He "did occasionally say to a friend, 'The words of this hymn have restored to me the same thoughts of joy that possessed my soul in my sickness, when I composed it.'" What a help it

[1] The guilt of Adam's first sin, supposed by the theologians of Dr. Donne's time to be imputed to Adam's descendants.

[2] The past tense: ran.

[3] Their door to enter into sin—by his example.

would be to many, if in their more gloomy times they would but recall the visions of truth they had, and were assured of, in better moments!

Here is a somewhat strange hymn, which yet possesses, rightly understood, a real grandeur:

A HYMN TO CHRIST

At the Author's last going into Germany.[1]

In what torn ship soever I embark,
That ship shall be my emblem of thy ark;
What sea soever swallow me, that flood
Shall be to me an emblem of thy blood.
Though thou with clouds of anger do disguise
Thy face, yet through that mask I know those eyes,
Which, though they turn away sometimes—
They never will despise.

I sacrifice this island unto thee,
And all whom I love here and who love me:
When I have put this flood 'twixt them and me,
Put thou thy blood betwixt my sins and thee.
As the tree's sap doth seek the root below
In winter, in my winter[2] now I go
Where none but thee, the eternal root
Of true love, I may know.

Nor thou, nor thy religion, dost control
The amorousness of an harmonious soul;
But thou wouldst have that love thyself: as thou
Art jealous, Lord, so I am jealous now.
Thou lov'st not, till from loving more thou free
My soul: who ever gives, takes liberty:
Oh, if thou car'st not whom I love,
Alas, thou lov'st not me!

[1] He was sent by James I. to assist an embassy to the Elector Palatine, who had married his daughter Elizabeth.

[2] He had lately lost his wife, for whom he had a rare love.

Seal then this bill of my divorce to all
On whom those fainter beams of love did fall;
Marry those loves, which in youth scattered be
On face, wit, hopes, (false mistresses), to thee.
Churches are best for prayer that have least light:
To see God only, I go out of sight;
And, to 'scape stormy days, I choose
An everlasting night.

To do justice to this poem, the reader must take some trouble to enter into the poet's mood.

It is in a measure distressing that, while I grant with all my heart the claim of his "Muse's white sincerity," the taste in—I do not say *of*—some of his best poems should be such that I will not present them.

Out of twenty-three *Holy Sonnets*, every one of which, I should almost say, possesses something remarkable, I choose three. Rhymed after the true Petrarchian fashion, their rhythm is often as bad as it can be to be called rhythm at all. Yet these are very fine.

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste;
I run to death, and death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday.
I dare not move my dim eyes any way,
Despair behind, and death before doth cast
Such terror; and my feeble flesh doth waste
By sin in it, which it towards hell doth weigh.
Only thou art above, and when towards thee
By thy leave I can look, I rise again;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
That not one hour myself I can sustain:
Thy grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart.

If faithful souls be alike glorified
As angels, then my father's soul doth see,
And adds this even to full felicity,
That valiantly I hell's wide mouth o'erstride:
But if our minds to these souls be descried
By circumstances and by signs that be
Apparent in us—not immediately[1]—
How shall my mind's white truth by them be tried?
They see idolatrous lovers weep and mourn,
And, style blasphemous, conjurors to call
On Jesu's name, and pharisaical
Dissemblers feign devotiön. Then turn,
O pensive soul, to God; for he knows best
Thy grief, for he put it into my breast.

Death, be not proud, though some have calléd thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death; nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy picture be,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow;
And soonest[2] our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery!
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st[3] thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die.

In a poem called *The Cross*, full of fantastic conceits, we find the following remarkable lines, embodying the profoundest truth.

As perchance carvers do not faces make,
But that away, which hid them there, do take:
Let crosses so take what hid Christ in thee,
And be his image, or not his, but he.

---

[1] "If they know us not by intuition, but by judging from circumstances and signs."

[2] "With most willingness."

[3] "Art proud."

One more, and we shall take our leave of Dr. Donne. It is called a fragment; but it seems to me complete. It will serve as a specimen of his best and at the same time of his most characteristic mode of presenting fine thoughts grotesquely attired.

RESURRECTION.

Sleep, sleep, old sun; thou canst not have re-past[1]
As yet the wound thou took'st on Friday last.
Sleep then, and rest: the world may bear thy stay;
A better sun rose before thee to-day;
Who, not content to enlighten all that dwell
On the earth's face as thou, enlightened hell,
And made the dark fires languish in that vale,
As at thy presence here our fires grow pale;
Whose body, having walked on earth and now
Hastening to heaven, would, that he might allow
Himself unto all stations and fill all,
For these three days become a mineral.
He was all gold when he lay down, but rose
All tincture; and doth not alone dispose
Leaden and iron wills to good, but is
Of power to make even sinful flesh like his.
Had one of those, whose credulous piety
Thought that a soul one might discern and see
Go from a body, at this sepulchre been,
And issuing from the sheet this body seen,
He would have justly thought this body a soul,
If not of any man, yet of the whole.

What a strange mode of saying that he is our head, the captain of our salvation, the perfect humanity in which our life is hid! Yet it has its dignity. When one has got over the oddity of these

[1] A strange use of the word; but it evidently means *recovered*, and has some analogy with the French *repasser*.

last six lines, the figure contained in them shows itself almost grand.

As an individual specimen of the grotesque form holding a fine sense, regard for a moment the words,

> He was all gold when he lay down, but rose
> All tincture;

which means, that, entirely good when he died, he was something yet greater when he rose, for he had gained the power of making others good: the *tincture* intended here was a substance whose touch would turn the basest metal into gold.

Through his poems are scattered many fine passages; but not even his large influence on the better poets who followed is sufficient to justify our listening to him longer now.

CHAPTER VIII.

BISHOP HALL AND GEORGE SANDYS.

JOSEPH HALL, born in 1574, a year after Dr. Donne, bishop, first of Exeter, next of Norwich, is best known by his satires. It is not for such that I can mention him: the most honest satire can claim no place amongst religious poems. It is doubtful if satire ever did any good. Its very language is that of the half-brute from which it is well named.

Here are three poems, however, which the bishop wrote for his choir.

ANTHEM FOR THE CATHEDRAL OF EXETER.

Lord, what am I? A worm, dust, vapour, nothing!
What is my life? A dream, a daily dying!
What is my flesh? My soul's uneasy clothing!
What is my time? A minute ever flying:
My time, my flesh, my life, and I,
What are we, Lord, but vanity?

Where am I, Lord? Down in a vale of death.
What is my trade? Sin, my dear God offending;
My sport sin too, my stay a puff of breath.
What end of sin? Hell's horror never ending:
My way, my trade, sport, stay, and place,
Help to make up my doleful case.

Lord, what art thou? Pure life, power, beauty, bliss.
Where dwell'st thou? Up above in perfect light.
What is thy time? Eternity it is.
What state? Attendance of each glorious sprite:
Thyself, thy place, thy days, thy state
Pass all the thoughts of powers create.

How shall I reach thee, Lord? Oh, soar above,
Ambitious soul. But which way should I fly?
Thou, Lord, art way and end. What wings have I?
Aspiring thoughts—of faith, of hope, of love:
Oh, let these wings, that way alone
Present me to thy blissful throne.

FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Immortal babe, who this dear day
Didst change thine heaven for our clay,
And didst with flesh thy Godhead veil,
Eternal Son of God, all hail!

Shine, happy star! Ye angels, sing
Glory on high to heaven's king!
Run, shepherds, leave your nightly watch!
See heaven come down to Bethlehem's cratch! *manger.*

Worship, ye sages of the east,
The king of gods in meanness drest!
O blessed maid, smile, and adore
The God thy womb and arms have bore!

Star, angels, shepherds, and wise sages!
Thou virgin-glory of all ages!
Restored frame of heaven and earth!
Joy in your dear Redeemer's birth.

Leave, O my soul, this baser world below;
O leave this doleful dungeön of woe;
And soar aloft to that supernal rest
That maketh all the saints and angels blest:
Lo, there the Godhead's radiant throne,
Like to ten thousand suns in one!

Lo, there thy Saviour dear, in glory dight, *dressed.*
Adored of all the powers of heavens bright!
Lo, where that head that bled with thorny wound,
Shines ever with celestial honour crowned!
That hand that held the scornful reed
Makes all the fiends infernal dread.

That back and side that ran with bloody streams
Daunt angels' eyes with their majestic beams;
Those feet, once fastened to the cursed tree,
Trample on Death and Hell, in glorious glee.
Those lips, once drenched with gall, do make
With their dread doom the world to quake.

Behold those joys thou never canst behold;
Those precious gates of pearl, those streets of gold,
Those streams of life, those trees of Paradise
That never can be seen by mortal eyes!
And when thou seest this state divine,
Think that it is or shall be thine.

See there the happy troops of purest sprites
That live above in endless true delights!
And see where once thyself shalt rangéd be,
And look and long for immortality!
And now beforehand help to sing
Hallelujahs to heaven's king.

Polished as these are in comparison to those of Dr. Donne, and fine, too, as they are intrinsically, there are single phrases in his that are worth them all—except, indeed, that one splendid line,

Trample on Death and Hell in glorious glee.

George Sandys, the son of an archbishop of York, and born in 1577, is better known by his travels in the east than by his poetry. But his version of the Psalms is in good and various verse, not unfrequently

graceful, sometimes fine. The following is not only in a popular rhythm, but is neat and melodious as well.

PSALM XCII.

Thou who art enthroned above,
Thou by whom we live and move,
O how sweet, how excellent
Is't with tongue and heart's consent,
Thankful hearts and joyful tongues,
To renown thy name in songs!
When the morning paints the skies,
When the sparkling stars arise,
Thy high favours to rehearse,
Thy firm faith, in grateful verse!
Take the lute and violin,
Let the solemn harp begin,
Instruments strung with ten strings,
While the silver cymbal rings.
From thy works my joy proceeds;
How I triumph in thy deeds!
Who thy wonders can express?
All thy thoughts are fathomless—
Hid from men in knowledge blind,
Hid from fools to vice inclined.
Who that tyrant sin obey,
Though they spring like flowers in May—
Parched with heat, and nipt with frost,
Soon shall fade, for ever lost.
Lord, thou art most great, most high;
Such from all eternity.
Perish shall thy enemies,
Rebels that against thee rise.
All who in their sins delight,
Shall be scattered by thy might.
But thou shalt exalt my horn
Like a youthful unicorn,
Fresh and fragrant odours shed
On thy crownéd prophet's head.

I shall see my foes' defeat,
Shortly hear of their retreat;
But the just like palms shall flourish
Which the plains of Judah nourish,
Like tall cedars mounted on
Cloud-ascending Lebanon.
Plants set in thy court, below
Spread their roots, and upwards grow;
Fruit in their old age shall bring,
Ever fat and flourishing.
This God's justice celebrates:
He, my rock, injustice hates.

PSALM CXXIII.

Thou mover of the rolling spheres,
I, through the glasses of my tears,
To thee my eyes erect.
As servants mark their master's hands,
As maids their mistress's commands,
And liberty expect,

So we, depressed by enemies
And growing troubles, fix our eyes
On God, who sits on high;
Till he in mercy shall descend,
To give our miseries an end,
And turn our tears to joy.

O save us, Lord, by all forlorn,
The subject of contempt and scorn:
Defend us from their pride
Who live in fluency and ease,
Who with our woes their malice please,
And miseries deride.

Here is a part of the 66th Psalm, which makes a complete little song of itself:

Bless the Lord. His praise be sung
While an ear can hear a tongue.
He our feet establisheth;
He our souls redeems from death.
Lord, as silver purified,
Thou hast with affliction tried,
Thou hast driven into the net,
Burdens on our shoulders set.
Trod on by their horses' hooves,
Theirs whom pity never moves,
We through fire, with flames embraced,
We through raging floods have passed,
Yet by thy conducting hand,
Brought into a wealthy land.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW OF THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMATISTS.

FROM the nature of their adopted mode, we cannot look for much poetry of a devotional kind from the dramatists. That mode admitting of no utterance personal to the author, and requiring the scope of a play to bring out the intended truth, it is no wonder that, even in the dramas of Shakspere, profound as is the teaching they contain, we should find nothing immediately suitable to our purpose; while neither has he left anything in other form approaching in kind what we seek. Ben Jonson, however, born in 1574, who may be regarded as the sole representative of learning in the class, has left, amongst a large number of small pieces, three *Poems of Devotion*, whose merit may not indeed be great, but whose feeling is, I think, genuine. Whatever were his faults, and they were not few, hypocrisy was not one of them. His nature was fierce and honest. He might boast, but he could not pretend. His oscillation between the reformed and the Romish church can hardly have had other cause than a vacillating conviction. It could not have served any prudential

end that we can see, to turn catholic in the reign of Elizabeth, while in prison for killing in a duel a player who had challenged him.

THE SINNER'S SACRIFICE.

I.—TO THE HOLY TRINITY.

O holy, blessed, glorious Trinity
Of persons, still one God in Unity,
The faithful man's believéd mystery,
Help, help to lift
Myself up to thee, harrowed, torn, and bruised
By sin and Satan, and my flesh misused.
As my heart lies—in pieces, all confused—
O take my gift.

All-gracious God, the sinner's sacrifice,
A broken heart, thou wert not wont despise,
But, 'bove the fat of rams or bulls, to prize
An offering meet
For thy acceptance: Oh, behold me right,
And take compassion on my grievous plight!
What odour can be, than a heart contrite,
To thee more sweet?

Eternal Father, God, who didst create
This All of nothing, gav'st it form and fate,
And breath'st into it life and light, with state
To worship thee!
Eternal God the Son, who not deniedst
To take our nature, becam'st man, and diedst,
To pay our debts, upon thy cross, and criedst
All's done in me!

Eternal Spirit, God from both proceeding,
Father and Son—the Comforter, in breeding
Pure thoughts in man, with fiery zeal them feeding
For acts of grace!
Increase those acts, O glorious Trinity
Of persons, still one God in Unity,
Till I attain the longed-for mystery
Of seeing your face,

Beholding one in three, and three in one,
A Trinity, to shine in Union—
The gladdest light, dark man can think upon—
O grant it me,
Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, you three,
All co-eternal in your majesty,
Distinct in persons, yet in unity
One God to see;

My Maker, Saviour, and my Sanctifier,
To hear, to mediate,[1] sweeten my desire,
With grace, with love, with cherishing entire!
O then, how blest
Among thy saints elected to abide,
And with thy angels placéd, side by side!
But in thy presence truly glorified,
Shall I there rest!

2.—AN HYMN TO GOD THE FATHER.

Hear me, O God!
A broken heart
Is my best part:
Use still thy rod,
That I may prove
Therein thy love.

If thou hadst not
Been stern to me,
But left me free,
I had forgot
Myself and thee.

For sin's so sweet
As minds ill bent *that.*
Rarely repent
Until they meet
Their punishment.

Who more can crave
Than thou hast done?
Thou gav'st a Son

[1] *To* understood: *to sweeten.*

To free a slave,
First made of nought,
With all since bought.

Sin, death, and hell
His glorious name
Quite overcame;
Yet I rebel,
And slight the same.

But I'll come in
Before my loss
Me farther toss,
As sure to win
Under his cross.

3.—AN HYMN ON THE NATIVITY OF MY SAVIOUR.

I sing the birth was born to-night,
The author both of life and light;
The angels so did sound it.
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light, and were afraid,
Yet searched, and true they found it.

The Son of God, the eternal King,
That did us all salvation bring,
And freed the soul from danger;
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Word which heaven and earth did make,
Was now laid in a manger.

The Father's wisdom willed it so;
The Son's obedience knew no *No;*
Both wills were in one stature;
And, as that wisdom had decreed,
The Word was now made flesh indeed,
And took on him our nature.

What comfort by him do we win,
Who made himself the price of sin,
To make us heirs of glory!
To see this babe, all innocence,
A martyr born in our defence!—
Can man forget this story?

Somewhat formal and artificial, no doubt; rugged at the same time, like him who wrote them. When a man would utter that concerning which he has only felt, not thought, he can express himself only in the forms he has been taught, conventional or traditional. Let his powers be ever so much developed in respect of other things, here, where he has not meditated, he must understand as a child, think as a child, speak as a child. He can as yet generate no sufficing or worthy form natural to himself. But the utterance is not therefore untrue. There was no professional bias to cause the stream of Ben Jonson's verses to flow in that channel. Indeed, feeling without thought, and the consequent combination of impulse to speak with lack of matter, is the cause of much of that common-place utterance concerning things of religion which is so wearisome, but which therefore it is not always fair to despise as cant.

About the same age as Ben Jonson, though the date of his birth is unknown, I now come to mention Thomas Heywood, a most voluminous writer of plays, who wrote also a book, chiefly in verse, called *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, a strange work, in which, amongst much that is far from poetic, occur the following remarkable metaphysico-religious verses. He had strong Platonic tendencies, interesting himself chiefly however in those questions afterwards pursued by Dr. Henry More, concerning witches and such like subjects, which may be called the shadow of Platonism.

I have wandered like a sheep that's lost,
To find Thee out in every coast:

Without I have long seeking bin, *been.*
Whilst thou, the while, abid'st *within.*
Through every broad street and strait lane
Of this world's city, but in vain,
I have enquired. The reason why?
I sought thee ill: for how could I
Find thee *abroad,* when thou, mean space,
Hadst made *within* thy dwelling-place?

I sent my messengers about,
To try if they could find thee out;
But all was to no purpose still,
Because indeed they sought thee ill:
For how could they discover thee
That saw not when thou entered'st me?

Mine eyes could tell me? If he were
Not coloured, sure he came not there.
If not by sound, my ears could say
He doubtless did not pass my way.
My nose could nothing of him tell,
Because my God he did not smell.
None such I relished, said my taste,
And therefore me he never passed.
My feeling told me that none such
There entered, for he none did touch.
Resolved by them how should I be,
Since none of all these are in thee,

In thee, my God? Thou hast no hue
That man's frail optic sense can view;
No sound the ear hears; odour none
The smell attracts; all taste is gone
At thy appearance; where doth fail
A body, how can touch prevail?
What even the brute beasts comprehend—
To think thee such, I should offend.

Yet when I seek my God, I enquire
For light than sun and moon much higher,
More clear and splendrous, 'bove all light
Which the eye receives not, 'tis so bright.

I seek a voice beyond degree
Of all melodious harmony:
The ear conceives it not; a smell
Which doth all other scents excel:
No flower so sweet, no myrrh, no nard,
Or aloës, with it compared;
Of which the brain not sensible is.
I seek a sweetness—such a bliss
As hath all other sweets surpassed,
And never palate yet could taste.
I seek that to contain and hold
No touch can feel, no embrace enfold.

So far this light the rays extends,
As that no place it comprehends.
So deep this sound, that though it speak
It cannot by a sense so weak
Be entertained. A redolent grace
The air blows not from place to place.
A pleasant taste, of that delight
It doth confound all appetite.
A strict embrace, not felt, yet leaves
That virtue, where it takes it cleaves.
This light, this sound, this savouring grace,
This tasteful sweet, this strict embrace,
No place contains, no eye can see,
My God is, and there's none but he.

Very remarkable verses from a dramatist! They indicate substratum enough for any art if only the art be there. Even those who cannot enter into the philosophy of them, which ranks him among the mystics of whom I have yet to speak, will understand a good deal of it symbolically: for how could he be expected to keep his poetry and his philosophy distinct when of themselves they were so ready to run into one; or in verse to define carefully betwixt degree and kind, when kinds themselves may rise by degrees? To

distinguish without separating; to be able to see that what in their effects upon us are quite different, may yet be a grand flight of ascending steps, "to stop—no record hath told where," belongs to the philosopher who is not born mutilated, but is a poet as well.

John Fletcher, likewise a dramatist, the author of the following poem, was two years younger than Ben Jonson. It is, so far as I am aware, the sole non-dramatic voice he has left behind him. Its opening is an indignant apostrophe to certain men of pretended science, who in his time were much consulted —the Astrologers.

UPON AN HONEST MAN'S FORTUNE.

You that can look through heaven, and tell the stars;
Observe their kind conjunctions, and their wars;
Find out new lights, and give them where you please—
To those men honours, pleasures, to those ease;
You that are God's surveyors, and can show
How far, and when, and why the wind doth blow;
Know all the charges of the dreadful thunder,
And when it will shoot over, or fall under;
Tell me—by all your art I conjure ye—
Yes, and by truth—what shall become of me.
Find out my star, if each one, as you say,
Have his peculiar angel, and his way;
Observe my fate; next fall into your dreams;
Sweep clean your houses, and new-line your schemes;[1]
Then say your worst. Or have I none at all?
Or is it burnt out lately? or did fall?
Or am I poor? not able? no full flame?
My star, like me, unworthy of a name?

[1] He plays upon the astrological terms, *houses* and *schemes*. The astrologers divided the heavens into twelve *houses;* and the diagrams by which they represented the relative positions of the heavenly bodies, they called *schemes*.

Is it your art can only work on those
That deal with dangers, dignities, and clothes,
With love, or new opinions? You all lie:
A fishwife hath a fate, and so have I—
But far above your finding. He that gives,
Out of his providence, to all that lives—
And no man knows his treasure, no, not you;—
* * * * *
He that made all the stars you daily read,
And from them filch a knowledge how to feed,
Hath hid this from you. Your conjectures all
Are drunken things, not how, but when they fall:
Man is his own star, and the soul that can
Render an honest, and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early, or too late.
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still;
And when the stars are labouring, we believe
It is not that they govern, but they grieve
For stubborn ignorance. All things that are
Made for our general uses, are at war—
Even we among ourselves; and from the strife
Your first unlike opinions got a life.
Oh man! thou image of thy Maker's good,
What canst thou fear, when breathed into thy blood
His spirit is that built thee? What dull sense
Makes thee suspect, in need, that Providence?
Who made the morning, and who placed the light
Guide to thy labours? Who called up the night,
And bid her fall upon thee like sweet showers
In hollow murmurs, to lock up thy powers?
Who gave thee knowledge? Who so trusted thee,
To let thee grow so near himself, the Tree?[1]
Must he then be distrusted? Shall his frame
Discourse with him why thus and thus I am?
He made the angels thine, thy fellows all;
Nay, even thy servants, when devotions call.
Oh! canst thou be so stupid then, so dim,
To seek a saving influence, and lose him?

[1] The tree of knowledge.

Can stars protect thee? Or can poverty,
Which is the light to heaven, put out his eye?
He is my star; in him all truth I find,
All influence, all fate; and when my mind
Is furnished with his fulness, my poor story
Shall outlive all their age, and all their glory.
The hand of danger cannot fall amiss
When I know what, and in whose power it is;
Nor want, the cause[1] of man, shall make me groan:
A holy hermit is a mind alone.[2]
Doth not experience teach us, all we can,
To work ourselves into a glorious man?

* * * *

My mistress then be knowledge and fair truth;
So I enjoy all beauty and all youth!

* * * *

Affliction, when I know it, is but this—
A deep alloy, whereby man tougher is
To bear the hammer; and the deeper still,
We still arise more image of his will;
Sickness, an humorous cloud 'twixt us and light;
And death, at longest, but another night.
Man is his own star, and that soul that can
Be honest, is the only perfect man.

There is a tone of contempt in the verses which is not religious; but they express a true philosophy and a triumph of faith in God. The word *honest* is here equivalent to *true*.

I am not certain whether I may not now be calling up a singer whose song will appear hardly to justify his presence in the choir. But its teaching is of high import, namely, of content and cheerfulness and courage, and being both worthy and melodious,

[1] Dyce, following Seward, substitutes *curse*.

[2] A glimmer of that Platonism of which, happily, we have so much more in the seventeenth century.

it gravitates heavenward. The singer is yet another dramatist: I presume him to be Thomas Dekker. I cannot be certain, because others were concerned with him in the writing of the drama from which I take it. He it is who, in an often-quoted passage, styles our Lord "The first true gentleman that ever breathed;" just as Chaucer, in a poem I have given, calls him "The first stock-father of gentleness."

We may call the little lyric

A SONG OF LABOUR.

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
Oh, sweet content!
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed?
Oh, punishment!
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed
To add to golden numbers, golden numbers?
Oh, sweet content!
Chorus.—Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face.

Canst drink the waters of the crispéd spring?
Oh, sweet content!
Swimm'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?
Oh, punishment!
Then he that patiently want's burden bears,
No burden bears, but is a king, a king!
Oh, sweet content!
Chorus.—Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face.

It is a song of the poor in spirit, whose is the kingdom of heaven. But if my co-listeners prefer, we will call it the voice, not of one who sings in the choir, but of one who "tunes his instrument at the door."

CHAPTER X.

SIR JOHN BEAUMONT AND DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN.

SIR JOHN BEAUMONT, born in 1582, elder brother to the dramatist who wrote along with Fletcher, has left amongst his poems a few fine religious ones. From them I choose the following :

OF THE EPIPHANY.

Fair eastern star, that art ordained to run
Before the sages, to the rising sun,
Here cease thy course, and wonder that the cloud
Of this poor stable can thy Maker shroud :
Ye, heavenly bodies, glory to be bright,
And are esteemed as ye are rich in light;
But here on earth is taught a different way,
Since under this low roof the highest lay.
Jerusalem erects her stately towers,
Displays her windows, and adorns her bowers ;
Yet there thou must not cast a trembling spark :
Let Herod's palace still continue dark;
Each school and synagogue thy force repels,
There Pride, enthroned in misty errors, dwells;
The temple, where the priests maintain their choir,
Shall taste no beam of thy celestial fire,
While this weak cottage all thy splendour takes :
A joyful gate of every chink it makes.

Here shines no golden roof, no ivory stair,
No king exalted in a stately chair,
Girt with attendants, or by heralds styled,
But straw and hay enwrap a speechless child ;
Yet Sabæ's lords before this babe unfold
Their treasures, offering incense, myrrh, and gold.
The crib becomes an altar: therefore dies
No ox nor sheep; for in their fodder lies
The Prince of Peace, who, thankful for his bed,
Destroys those rites in which their blood was shed :
The quintessence of earth he takes and[1] fees,
And precious gums distilled from weeping trees ;
Rich metals and sweet odours now declare
The glorious blessings which his laws prepare,
To clear us from the base and loathsome flood
Of sense, and make us fit for angels' food,
Who lift to God for us the holy smoke
Of fervent prayers with which we him invoke,
And try our actions in that searching fire,
By which the seraphims our lips inspire :
No muddy dross pure minerals shall infect,
We shall exhale our vapours up direct :
No storms shall cross, nor glittering lights deface
Perpetual sighs which seek a happy place.

The creatures, no longer offered on his altar, standing around the Prince of Life, to whom they have given a bed, is a lovely idea. The end is hardly worthy of the rest, though there is fine thought involved in it.

The following contains an utterance of personal experience, the truth of which will be recognized by all to whom heavenly aspiration and needful disappointment are not unknown.

[1] Should this be "*in* fees ;" that is, in acknowledgment of his feudal sovereignty ?

IN DESOLATION.

O thou who sweetly bend'st my stubborn will,
Who send'st thy stripes to teach and not to kill!
Thy cheerful face from me no longer hide;
Withdraw these clouds, the scourges of my pride;
I sink to hell, if I be lower thrown:
I see what man is, being left alone.
My substance, which from nothing did begin,
Is worse than nothing by the weight of sin:
I see myself in such a wretched state
As neither thoughts conceive, nor words relate.
How great a distance parts us! for in thee
Is endless good, and boundless ill in me.
All creatures prove me abject, but how low
Thou only know'st, and teachest me to know.
To paint this baseness, nature is too base;
This darkness yields not but to beams of grace.
Where shall I then this piercing splendour find?
Or found, how shall it guide me, being blind?
Grace is a taste of bliss, a glorious gift,
Which can the soul to heavenly comforts lift:
It will not shine to me, whose mind is drowned
In sorrows, and with worldly troubles bound;
It will not deign within that house to dwell,
Where dryness reigns, and proud distractions swell.
Perhaps it sought me in those lightsome days
Of my first fervour, when few winds did raise
The waves, and ere they could full strength obtain,
Some whispering gale straight charmed them down again;
When all seemed calm, and yet the Virgin's child
On my devotions in his manger smiled;
While then I simply walked, nor heed could take
Of complacence, that sly, deceitful snake;
When yet I had not dangerously refused
So many calls to virtue, nor abused
The spring of life, which I so oft enjoyed,
Nor made so many good intentions void,
Deserving thus that grace should quite depart,
And dreadful hardness should possess my heart:

Yet in that state this only good I found,
That fewer spots did then my conscience wound;
Though who can censure whether, in those times, *judge.*
The want of feeling seemed the want of crimes?
If solid virtues dwell not but in pain,
I will not wish that golden age again
Because it flowed with sensible delights
Of heavenly things: God hath created nights
As well as days, to deck the varied globe;
Grace comes as oft clad in the dusky robe
Of desolation, as in white attire,
Which better fits the bright celestial choir.
Some in foul seasons perish through despair,
But more through boldness when the days are fair.
This then must be the medicine for my woes—
To yield to what my Saviour shall dispose;
To glory in my baseness; to rejoice
In mine afflictions; to obey his voice,
As well when threatenings my defects reprove,
As when I cherished am with words of love;
To say to him, in every time and place,
"Withdraw thy comforts, so thou leave thy grace."

Surely this is as genuine an utterance, whatever its merits as a poem—and those I judge not small—as ever flowed from Christian heart!

Chiefly for the sake of its beauty, I give the last passage of a poem written upon occasion of the feasts of the Annunciation and the Resurrection falling on the same day.

Let faithful souls this double feast attend
In two processions. Let the first descend
The temple's stairs, and with a downcast eye
Upon the lowest pavement prostrate lie:
In creeping violets, white lilies, shine
Their humble thoughts and every pure design.
The other troop shall climb, with sacred heat,
The rich degrees of Solomon's bright seat:

In glowing roses fervent zeal they bear,
And in the azure flower-de-lis appear
Celestial contemplations, which aspire
Above the sky, up to the immortal choir.

William Drummond of Hawthornden, a Scotchman, born in 1585, may almost be looked upon as the harbinger of a fresh outburst of word-music. No doubt all the great poets have now and then broken forth in lyrical jubilation. Ponderous Ben Jonson himself, when he takes to song, will sing in the joy of the very sound; but great men have always so much graver work to do, that they comparatively seldom indulge in this kind of melody. Drummond excels in madrigals, or canzonets — baby-odes or songs — which have more of wing and less of thought than sonnets. Through the greater part of his verse we hear a certain muffled tone of the sweetest, like the music that ever threatens to break out clear from the brook, from the pines, from the rain-shower,— never does break out clear, but remains a suggested, etherially vanishing tone. His is a *voix voilée*, or veiled voice of song. It is true that in the time we are now approaching far more attention was paid not merely to the smoothness but to the melody of verse than any except the great masters had paid before; but some are at the door, who, not being great masters, yet do their inferior part nearly as well as they their higher, uttering a music of marvellous and individual sweetness, which no mere musical care could secure, but which springs essentially from music in the thought gathering to itself musical words in melodious

division, and thus fashioning for itself a fitting body. The melody of their verse is all their own—as original as the greatest art-forms of the masters. Of Drummond, then, here are two sonnets on the Nativity; the first spoken by the angels, the second by the shepherds.

The Angels.

Run, shepherds, run where Bethlehem blest appears.
  We bring the best of news; be not dismayed:
A Saviour there is born more old than years,
  Amidst heaven's rolling height this earth who stayed.
  In a poor cottage inned, a virgin maid
A weakling did him bear, who all upbears;
  There is he poorly swaddled, in manger laid,
To whom too narrow swaddlings are our spheres:
Run, shepherds, run, and solemnize his birth.
  This is that night—no, day, grown great with bliss,
  In which the power of Satan broken is:
In heaven be glory, peace unto the earth!
  Thus singing, through the air the angels swam,
  And cope of stars re-echoëd the same.

The Shepherds.

O than the fairest day, thrice fairer night!
  Night to best days, in which a sun doth rise
  Of which that golden eye which clears the skies
Is but a sparkling ray, a shadow-light!
And blessed ye, in silly pastors' sight, *simple.*
  Mild creatures, in whose warm[1] crib now lies
That heaven-sent youngling, holy-maid-born wight,
  Midst, end, beginning of our prophecies!
Blest cottage that hath flowers in winter spread!
  Though withered—blessed grass, that hath the grace
  To deck and be a carpet to that place!
Thus sang, unto the sounds of oaten reed,
  Before the babe, the shepherds bowed on knees;
  And springs ran nectar, honey dropped from trees.

[1] *Warm* is here elongated, almost treated as a dissyllable.

No doubt there is a touch of the conventional in these. Especially in the close of the last there is an attempt to glorify the true by the homage of the false. But verses which make us feel the marvel afresh—the marvel visible and credible by the depth of its heart of glory—make us at the same time easily forget the discord in themselves.

The following, not a sonnet, although it looks like one, measuring the lawful fourteen lines, is the closing paragraph of a poem he calls *A Hymn to the Fairest Fair.*

O king, whose greatness none can comprehend,
Whose boundless goodness doth to all extend!
Light of all beauty! ocean without ground,
That standing flowest, giving dost abound!
Rich palace, and indweller ever blest,
Never not working, ever yet in rest!
What wit cannot conceive, words say of thee,
Here, where, as in a mirror, we but see
Shadows of shadows, atoms of thy might,
Still owly-eyed while staring on thy light,
Grant that, releaséd from this earthly jail,
And freed of clouds which here our knowledge veil,
In heaven's high temples, where thy praises ring,
I may in sweeter notes hear angels sing.

That is, "May I in heaven hear angels sing what wit cannot conceive here."

Drummond excels in nobility of speech, and especially in the fine line and phrase, so justly but disproportionately prized in the present day. I give an instance of each:

Here do seraphim
Burn with immortal love; there cherubim
With other noble people of the light,
As eaglets in the sun, delight their sight.

Like to a lightning through the welkin hurled,
That scores with flames the way, and every eye
With terror dazzles as it swimmeth by.

Here are six fine verses, in the heroic couplet, from *An Hymn of the Resurrection.*

So a small seed that in the earth lies hid
And dies—reviving bursts her cloddy side ;
Adorned with yellow locks, of new is born,
And doth become a mother great with corn ;
Of grains bring hundreds with it, which when old
Enrich the furrows with a sea of gold.

But I must content myself now with a little madrigal, the only one fit for my purpose. Those which would best support what I have said of his music are not of the kind we want. Unfortunately, the end of this one is not equal to the beginning.

CHANGE SHOULD BREED CHANGE.

New doth the sun appear ;
The mountains' snows decay ;
Crowned with frail flowers comes forth the baby year.
My soul, time posts away;
And thou yet in that frost,
Which flower and fruit hath lost,
As if all here immortal were, dost stay !
For shame ! thy powers awake ;
Look to that heaven which never night makes black ;
And there, at that immortal sun's bright rays,
Deck thee with flowers which fear not rage of days.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BROTHERS FLETCHER.

I NOW come to make mention of two gifted brothers, Giles and Phineas Fletcher, both clergymen, the sons of a clergyman and nephews to the Bishop of Bristol, therefore the cousins of Fletcher the dramatist, a poem by whom I have already given. Giles, the eldest, is supposed to have been born in 1588. From his poem *Christ's Victory and Triumph*, I select three passages.

To understand the first, it is necessary to explain that while Christ is on earth a dispute between Justice and Mercy, such as is often represented by the theologians, takes place in heaven. We must allow the unsuitable fiction attributing distraction to the divine Unity, for the sake of the words in which Mercy overthrows the arguments of Justice. For the poet unintentionally nullifies the symbolism of the theologian, representing Justice as defeated. He forgets that the grandest exercise of justice is mercy. The confusion comes from the fancy that justice means *vengeance upon sin*, and not *the doing of what is right*. Justice can be at no strife with mercy, for not to do what is just would be most unmerciful.

Mercy first sums up the arguments Justice has been employing against her, in the following stanza :

He was but dust; why feared he not to fall?
And being fallen how can he hope to live?
Cannot the hand destroy him that made all?
Could he not take away as well as give?
Should man deprave, and should not God deprive?
Was it not all the world's deceiving spirit
(That, bladdered up with pride of his own merit,
Fell in his rise) that him of heaven did disinherit?

To these she then proceeds to make reply :

He was but dust: how could he stand before him?
And being fallen, why should he fear to die?
Cannot the hand that made him first, restore him?
Depraved of sin, should he deprivéd lie
Of grace? Can he not find infirmity
That gave him strength?—Unworthy the forsaking
He is, whoever weighs (without mistaking)
Or maker of the man or manner of his making.[1]

Who shall thy temple incense any more,
Or to thy altar crown the sacrifice,
Or strew with idle flowers the hallowed floor?
Or what should prayer deck with herbs and spice, *why.*
Her vials breathing orisons of price,
If all must pay that which all cannot pay?
O first begin with me, and Mercy slay,
And thy thrice honoured Son, that now beneath doth stray.

But if or he or I may live and speak,
And heaven can joy to see a sinner weep,
Oh ! let not Justice' iron sceptre break
A heart already broke, that low doth creep,
And with prone humbless her feet's dust doth sweep.
Must all go by desert? Is nothing free?
Ah ! if but those that only worthy be,
None should thee ever see ! none should thee ever see !

[1] " He ought not to be forsaken: whoever weighs the matter rightly, will come to this conclusion."

What hath man done that man shall not undo,
Since God to him is grown so near akin?
Did his foe slay him? He shall slay his foe.
Hath he lost all? He all again shall win.
Is sin his master? He shall master sin.
Too hardy soul, with sin the field to try!
The only way to conquer was to fly;
But thus long death hath lived, and now death's self shall die.

He is a path, if any be misled;
He is a robe, if any naked be;
If any chance to hunger, he is bread;
If any be a bondman, he is free;
If any be but weak, how strong is he!
To dead men life he is, to sick men health,
To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth;
A pleasure without loss, a treasure without stealth.

Who can forget—never to be forgot—
The time that all the world in slumber lies,
When like the stars the singing angels shot
To earth, and heaven awakéd all his eyes
To see another sun at midnight rise?
On earth was never sight of peril fame; *pareil: equal.*
For God before man like himself did frame,
But God himself now like a mortal man became.

* * * * *

The angels carolled loud their song of peace;
The cursed oracles were stricken dumb;
To see their Shepherd the poor shepherds press;
To see their King, the kingly Sophies come;
And them to guide unto his master's home,
A star comes dancing up the orient,
That springs for joy over the strawy tent,
Where gold, to make their prince a crown, they all present.

No doubt there are here touches of execrable taste, such as the punning trick with *man* and *manners*, suggesting a false antithesis; or the opposition of the words *deprave* and *deprive;* but we have in them

only an instance of how the meretricious may co-exist with the lovely. The passage is fine and powerful, notwithstanding its faults and obscurities.

Here is another yet more beautiful:

So down the silver streams of Eridan,[1]
On either side banked with a lily wall,
Whiter than both, rides the triumphant swan,
And sings his dirge, and prophesies his fall,
Diving into his watery funeral!
But Eridan to Cedron must submit
His flowery shore; nor can he envy it,
If, when Apollo sings, his swans do silent sit.[2]

That heavenly voice I more delight to hear
Than gentle airs to breathe; or swelling waves
Against the sounding rocks their bosoms tear;[3]
Or whistling reeds that rutty[4] Jordan laves,
And with their verdure his white head embraves; *adorns.*

[1] The *Eridan* is the *Po.*—As regards classical allusions in connexion with sacred things, I would remind my reader of the great reverence our ancestors had for the classics, from the influence they had had in reviving the literature of the country.—I need hardly remind him of the commonly-received fancy that the swan does sing once—just as his death draws nigh. Does this come from the legend of Cycnus changed into a swan while lamenting the death of his friend Phaeton? or was that legend founded on the yet older fancy? The glorious bird looks as if he ought to sing.

[2] The poet refers to the singing of the hymn before our Lord went to the garden by the brook Cedron.

[3] The construction is obscure just from the insertion of the *to* before *breathe*, where it ought not to be after the verb *hear*. The poet does not mean that he delights to hear that voice more than to breathe gentle airs, but more than to hear gentle airs (to) breathe. *To hear*, understood, governs all the infinitives that follow; among the rest, *the winds (to) chide.*

[4] *Rut* is used for the sound of the tide in Cheshire. (See *Halliwell's Dictionary.*) Does *rutty* mean *roaring?* or does it describe the deep, rugged shores of the Jordan?

To chide the winds; or hiving bees that fly
About the laughing blossoms[1] of sallowy,[2]
Rocking asleep the idle grooms[3] that lazy lie.

And yet how can I hear thee singing go,
When men, incensed with hate, thy death foreset?
Or else, why do I hear thee sighing so,
When thou, inflamed with love, their life dost get,[4]
That love and hate, and sighs and songs are met?
But thus, and only thus, thy love did crave
To send thee singing for us to thy grave,
While we sought thee to kill, and thou sought'st us to save.

When I remember Christ our burden bears,
I look for glory, but find misery;
I look for joy, but find a sea of tears;
I look that we should live, and find him die;
I look for angels' songs, and hear him cry:
Thus what I look, I cannot find so well;
Or rather, what I find I cannot tell,
These banks so narrow are, those streams so highly swell.

We would gladly eliminate the few common-place allusions; but we must take them with the rest of the passage. Besides far higher merits, it is to my ear most melodious.

One more passage of two stanzas from Giles Fletcher, concerning the glories of heaven: I quote them for the sake of earth, not of heaven.

Gaze but upon the house where man embowers:
With flowers and rushes pavéd is his way;
Where all the creatures are his servitours:
The winds do sweep his chambers every day,
And clouds do wash his rooms; the ceiling gay,

[1] A monosyllable, contracted afterwards into *bloom*. [2] Willows.

[3] *Groom* originally means just *a man*. It was a word much used when pastoral poetry was the fashion. Spenser has *herd-grooms* in his *Shepherd's Calendar*. This last is what it means here: *shepherds*.

[4] Obtain, save.

Starréd aloft, the gilded knobs embrave:
If such a house God to another gave,
How shine those glittering courts he for himself will have!

And if a sullen cloud, as sad as night,
In which the sun may seem embodiéd,
Depured of all his dross, we see so white,
Burning in melted gold his watery head,
Or round with ivory edges silveréd;
What lustre super-excellent will he
Lighten on those that shall his sunshine see
In that all-glorious court in which all glories be!

These brothers were intense admirers of Spenser. To be like him Phineas must write an allegory; and such an allegory! Of all the strange poems in existence, surely this is the strangest. *The Purple Island* is man, whose body is anatomically described after the allegory of a city, which is then peopled with all the human faculties personified, each set in motion by itself. They say the anatomy is correct: the metaphysics are certainly good. The action of the poem is just another form of the *Holy War* of John Bunyan — all the good and bad powers fighting for the possession of the Purple Island. What renders the conception yet more amazing is the fact that the whole ponderous mass of anatomy and metaphysics, nearly as long as the *Paradise Lost*, is put as a song, in a succession of twelve cantos, in the mouth of a shepherd, who begins a canto every morning to the shepherds and shepherdesses of the neighbourhood, and finishes it by folding-time in the evening. And yet the poem is full of poetry. He triumphs over his difficulties partly by audacity, partly by seriousness, partly by the enchantment of song.

But the poem will never be read through except by students of English literature. It is a whole; its members are well-fitted; it is full of beauties—in parts they swarm like fire-flies; and *yet* it is not a good poem. It is like a well-shaped house, built of mud, and stuck full of precious stones. I do not care, in my limited space, to quote from it. Never was there a more incongruous dragon of allegory.

Both brothers were injured, not by their worship of Spenser, but by the form that worship took—imitation. They seem more pleased to produce a line or stanza that shall recall a line or stanza of Spenser, than to produce a fine original of their own. They even copy lines almost word for word from their great master. This is pure homage: it was their delight that such adaptations should be recognized—just as it was Spenser's hope, when he inserted translated stanzas from Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* in *The Fairy Queen*, to gain the honour of a true reproduction. Yet, strange fate for imitators! both, but Giles especially, were imitated by a greater than their worship—even by Milton. They make Spenser's worse: Milton makes theirs better. They imitate Spenser, faults and all: Milton glorifies their beauties.

From the smaller poems of Phineas, I choose the following version of

PSALM CXXX.

From the deeps of grief and fear,
O Lord, to thee my soul repairs:
From thy heaven bow down thine ear;
Let thy mercy meet my prayers.

Oh ! if thou mark'st what's done amiss,
What soul so pure can see thy bliss?

But with thee sweet Mercy stands,
  Sealing pardons, working fear.
Wait, my soul, wait on his hands ;
  Wait, mine eye; oh ! wait, mine ear :
If he his eye or tongue affords,
Watch all his looks, catch all his words.

As a watchman waits for day,
  And looks for light, and looks again :
When the night grows old and gray,
  To be relieved he calls amain :
So look, so wait, so long, mine eyes,
To see my Lord, my sun, arise.

Wait, ye saints, wait on our Lord,
  For from his tongue sweet mercy flows ;
Wait on his cross, wait on his word ;
  Upon that tree redemption grows :
He will redeem his Israel
From sin and wrath, from death and hell.

I shall now give two stanzas of his version of the 127th Psalm.

If God build not the house, and lay
  The groundwork sure—whoever build,
It cannot stand one stormy day.
  If God be not the city's shield,
If he be not their bars and wall,
In vain is watch-tower, men, and all.

Though then thou wak'st when others rest,
  Though rising thou prevent'st the sun,
Though with lean care thou daily feast,
  Thy labour's lost, and thou undone;
But God his child will feed and keep,
And draw the curtains to his sleep.

Compare this with a version of the same portion by Dr. Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, who, no

great poet, has written some good verse. He was about the same age as Phineas Fletcher.

> Except the Lord the house sustain,
> The builder's labour is in vain ;
> Except the city he defend,
> And to the dwellers safety send,
> In vain are sentinels prepared,
> Or arméd watchmen for the guard.
>
> You vainly with the early light
> Arise, or sit up late at night
> To find support, and daily eat
> Your bread with sorrow earned and sweat ;
> When God, who his beloved keeps,
> This plenty gives with quiet sleeps.

What difference do we find? That the former has the more poetic touch, the latter the greater truth. The former has just lost the one precious thing in the psalm ; the latter has kept it : that care is as useless as painful, for God gives us while we sleep, and not while we labour.

CHAPTER XII.

WITHER, HERRICK, AND QUARLES.

GEORGE WITHER, born in 1588, therefore about the same age as Giles Fletcher, was a very different sort of writer indeed. There could hardly be a greater contrast. Fancy, and all her motley train, were scarcely known to Wither, save by the hearing of the ears.

He became an eager Puritan towards the close of his life, but his poetry chiefly belongs to the earlier part of it. Throughout it is distinguished by a certain straightforward simplicity of good English thought and English word. His hymns remind me, in the form of their speech, of Gascoigne. I shall quote but little; for, although there is a sweet calm and a great justice of reflection and feeling, there is hardly anything of that warming glow, that rousing force, that impressive weight in his verse, which is the chief virtue of the lofty rhyme.

The best in a volume of ninety *Hymns and Songs of the Church*, is, I think, *The Author's Hymn* at the close, of which I give three stanzas. They manifest the simplicity and truth of the man, reflecting in their very tone his faithful, contented, trustful nature.

By thy grace, those passions, troubles,
And those wants that me opprest,
Have appeared as water-bubbles,
Or as dreams, and things in jest:
For, thy leisure still attending,
I with pleasure saw their ending.

Those afflictions and those terrors,
Which to others grim appear,
Did but show me where my errors
And my imperfections were;
But distrustful could not make me
Of thy love, nor fright nor shake me.

Those base hopes that would possess me,
And those thoughts of vain repute
Which do now and then oppress me,
Do not, Lord, to me impute;
And though part they will not from me,
Let them never overcome me.

He has written another similar volume, but much larger, and of a somewhat extraordinary character. It consists of no fewer than two hundred and thirty-three hymns, mostly long, upon an incredible variety of subjects, comprehending one for every season of nature and of the church, and one for every occurrence in life of which the author could think as likely to confront man or woman. Of these subjects I quote a few of the more remarkable, but even from them my reader can have little conception of the variety in the book: *A Hymn whilst we are washing; In a clear starry Night; A Hymn for a House-warming; After a great Frost or Snow; For one whose Beauty is much praised; For one upbraided with Deformity; For a Widower or a Widow deli-*

vered from a troublesome Yokefellow; For a Cripple; For a Jailor; For a Poet.

Here is a portion of one which I hope may be helpful to some of my readers.

WHEN WE CANNOT SLEEP.

What ails my heart, that in my breast
It thus unquiet lies;
And that it now of needful rest
Deprives my tiréd eyes?

Let not vain hopes, griefs, doubts, or fears,
Distemper so my mind;
But cast on God thy thoughtful cares,
And comfort thou shalt find.

In vain that soul attempteth ought,
And spends her thoughts in vain,
Who by or in herself hath sought
Desiréd peace to gain.

On thee, O Lord, on thee therefore,
My musings now I place;
Thy free remission I implore,
And thy refreshing grace.

Forgive thou me, that when my mind
Oppressed began to be,
I sought elsewhere my peace to find,
Before I came to thee.

And, gracious God, vouchsafe to grant,
Unworthy though I am,
The needful rest which now I want,
That I may praise thy name.

Before examining the volume, one would say that no man could write so many hymns without frequent

and signal failure. But the marvel here is, that the hymns are all so very far from bad. He can never have written in other than a gentle mood. There must have been a fine harmony in his nature, that *kept* him, as it were. This peacefulness makes him interesting in spite of his comparative flatness. I must restrain remark, however, and give five out of twelve stanzas of another of his hymns.

A ROCKING HYMN.

Sweet baby, sleep: what ails my dear?
  What ails my darling thus to cry?
Be still, my child, and lend thine ear
  To hear me sing thy lullaby.
My pretty lamb, forbear to weep;
Be still, my dear; sweet baby, sleep.

Whilst thus thy lullaby I sing,
  For thee great blessings ripening be;
Thine eldest brother is a king,
  And hath a kingdom bought for thee.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

A little infant once was he,
  And strength in weakness then was laid
Upon his virgin mother's knee,
  That power to thee might be conveyed.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

Within a manger lodged thy Lord,
  Where oxen lay, and asses fed;
Warm rooms we do to thee afford,
  An easy cradle or a bed.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

Thou hast, yet more to perfect this,
A promise and an earnest got,
Of gaining everlasting bliss,
Though thou, my babe, perceiv'st it not.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

I think George Wither's verses will grow upon the reader of them, tame as they are sure to appear at first. His *Hallelujah, or Britain's Second Remembrancer*, from which I have been quoting, is well worth possessing, and can be procured without difficulty.

We now come to a new sort, both of man and poet —still a clergyman. It is an especial pleasure to write the name of Robert Herrick amongst the poets of religion, for the very act records that the jolly, careless Anacreon of the church, with his head and heart crowded with pleasures, threw down at length his wine-cup, tore the roses from his head, and knelt in the dust.

Nothing bears Herrick's name so unrefined as the things Dr. Donne wrote in his youth; but the impression made by his earlier poems is of a man of far shallower nature, and greatly more absorbed in the delights of the passing hour. In the year 1648, when he was fifty-seven years of age, being prominent as a Royalist, he was ejected from his living by the dominant Puritans; and in that same year he published his poems, of which the latter part and later written is his *Noble Numbers*, or religious poems. We may wonder at his publishing the *Hesperides* along with them, but we must not forget that, while the manners of a time

are never to be taken as a justification of what is wrong, the judgment of men concerning what is wrong will be greatly influenced by those manners—not necessarily on the side of laxity. It is but fair to receive his own testimony concerning himself, offered in these two lines printed at the close of his *Hesperides:*

> To his book's end this last line he'd have placed :
> *Jocund his muse was, but his life was chaste.*

We find the same artist in the *Noble Numbers* as in the *Hesperides*, but hardly the same man. However far he may have been from the model of a clergyman in the earlier period of his history, partly no doubt from the society to which his power of song made him acceptable, I cannot believe that these later poems are the results of mood, still less the results of mere professional bias, or even sense of professional duty.

In a good many of his poems he touches the heart of truth ; in others, even those of epigrammatic form, he must be allowed to fail in point as well as in meaning. As to his art-forms, he is guilty of great offences, the result of the same passion for lawless figures and similitudes which Dr. Donne so freely indulged. But his verses are brightened by a certain almost childishly quaint and innocent humour ; while the tenderness of some of them rises on the reader like the aurora of the coming sun of George Herbert. I do not forget that, even if some of his poems were printed in 1639, years before that George Herbert had done his work and gone home : my figure stands in relation to the order I have adopted.

Some of his verse is homelier than even George Herbert's homeliest. One of its most remarkable traits is a quaint thanksgiving for the commonest things by name—not the less real that it is sometimes even queer. For instance:

God gives not only corn for need,
But likewise superabundant seed;
Bread for our service, bread for show;
Meat for our meals, and fragments too:
He gives not poorly, taking some
Between the finger and the thumb,
But for our glut, and for our store,
Fine flour pressed down, and running o'er.

Here is another, delightful in its oddity. We can fancy the merry yet gracious poet chuckling over the vision of the child and the fancy of his words.

A GRACE FOR A CHILD.

Here a little child I stand,
Heaving up my either hand;
Cold as paddocks though they be, *frogs.*
Here I lift them up to thee,
For a benison to fall
On our meat, and on us all. *Amen.*

I shall now give two or three of his longer poems, which are not long, and then a few of his short ones. The best known is the following, but it is not so well known that I must therefore omit it.

HIS LITANY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When I lie within my bed,
Sick in heart, and sick in head,
And with doubts discomforted,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the house doth sigh and weep,
And the world is drowned in sleep,
Yet mine eyes the watch do keep,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the artless doctor sees *without skill.*
No one hope, but of his fees,
And his skill runs on the lees,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When his potion and his pill,
His or none or little skill,
Meet for nothing but to kill,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the passing-bell doth toll,
And the furies in a shoal
Come to fright a parting soul,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the tapers now burn blue,
And the comforters are few,
And that number more than true,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the priest his last hath prayed.
And I nod to what is said,
'Cause my speech is now decayed,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When God knows I'm tossed about,
Either with despair or doubt,
Yet, before the glass be out,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the tempter me pursu'th
With the sins of all my youth,
And half damns me with untruth,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the flames and hellish cries
Fright mine ears and fright mine eyes,
And all terrors me surprise,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

When the judgment is revealed,
And that opened which was sealed;
When to thee I have appealed,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

THE WHITE ISLAND, OR PLACE OF THE BLEST.

In this world, the Isle of Dreams,
While we sit by sorrow's streams,
Tears and terrors are our themes,
Reciting;

But when once from hence we fly,
More and more approaching nigh
Unto young eternity,
Uniting;

In that whiter island, where
Things are evermore sincere;
Candour here and lustre there,
Delighting:

There no monstrous fancies shall
Out of hell an horror call,
To create, or cause at all,
Affrighting.

There, in calm and cooling sleep
We our eyes shall never steep,
But eternal watch shall keep,
Attending

Pleasures such as shall pursue
Me immortalized and you;
And fresh joys, as never too
Have ending.

TO DEATH.

Thou bid'st me come away;
And I'll no longer stay
Than for to shed some tears
For faults of former years;
And to repent some crimes
Done in the present times;
And next, to take a bit
Of bread, and wine with it;
To don my robes of love,
Fit for the place above;
To gird my loins about
With charity throughout,
And so to travel hence
With feet of innocence:
These done, I'll only cry,
"God, mercy!" and so die.

ETERNITY.

O years and age, farewell!
Behold I go
Where I do know
Infinity to dwell.

And these mine eyes shall see
All times, how they
Are lost i' th' sea
Of vast eternity,

Where never moon shall sway
The stars; but she
And night shall be
Drowned in one endless day.

THE GOODNESS OF HIS GOD.

When winds and seas do rage,
And threaten to undo me,
Thou dost their wrath assuage,
If I but call unto thee.

A mighty storm last night
  Did seek my soul to swallow;
But by the peep of light
  A gentle calm did follow.

What need I then despair
  Though ills stand round about me;
Since mischiefs neither dare
  To bark or bite without thee?

TO GOD.

Lord, I am like to mistletoe,
Which has no root, and cannot grow
Or prosper, but by that same tree
It clings about: so I by thee.
What need I then to fear at all
So long as I about thee crawl?
But if that tree should fall and die,
Tumble shall heaven, and down will I.

Here are now a few chosen from many that—to borrow a term from Crashaw—might be called

DIVINE EPIGRAMS.

God, when he's angry here with any one,
His wrath is free from perturbation;
And when we think his looks are sour and grim,
The alteration is in us, not him.

God can't be wrathful; but we may conclude
Wrathful he may be by similitude:
God's wrathful said to be when he doth do
That without wrath, which wrath doth force us to.

'Tis hard to find God; but to comprehend
Him as he is, is labour without end.

God's rod doth watch while men do sleep, and then
The rod doth sleep while vigilant are men.

A man's trangression God does then remit,
When man he makes a penitent for it.

God, when he takes my goods and chattels hence,
Gives me a portion, giving patience:
What is in God is God: if so it be
He patience gives, he gives himself to me.

Humble we must be, if to heaven we go;
High is the roof there, but the gate is low.

God who's in heaven, will hear from thence,
If not to the sound, yet to the sense.

The same who crowns the conqueror, will be
A coadjutor in the agony.

God is so potent, as his power can *that.*
Draw out of bad a sovereign good to man.

Paradise is, as from the learn'd I gather,
A choir of blest souls circling in the Father.

Heaven is not given for our good works here;
Yet it is given to the labourer.

One more for the sake of Martha, smiled at by so many because they are incapable either of her blame or her sister's praise.

The repetition of the name, made known
No other than Christ's full affection.

And so farewell to the very lovable Robert Herrick.

Francis Quarles was born in 1592. I have not much to say about him, popular as he was in his own day, for a large portion of his writing takes the shape of satire, which I consider only an active form of negation. I doubt much if mere opposition to the false is of any benefit. Convince a man by argument that the thing he has been taught is false, and you leave his house empty, swept, and garnished; but the expulsion of the falsehood is no protection against its re-entrance in another mask, with seven worse than itself in its company. The right effort of the teacher is to give the positive—to present, as he may, the vision of reality, for the perception of which, and not for the discovery of falsehood, is man created. This will not only cast out the demon, but so people the house that he will not dare return. If a man might disprove all the untruths in creation, he would hardly be a hair's breadth nearer the end of his own making. It is better to hold honestly one fragment of truth in the midst of immeasurable error, than to sit alone, if that were possible, in the midst of an absolute vision, clear as the hyaline, but only repellent of falsehood, not receptive of truth. It is the positive by which a man shall live. Truth is his life. The refusal of the false is not the reception of the true. A man may deny himself into a spiritual lethargy, without denying one truth, simply by spending his strength for that which is not bread, until he has none left wherewith to search for the truth, which

alone can feed him. Only when subjected to the positive does the negative find its true vocation.

I am jealous of the living force cast into the slough of satire. No doubt, either indignant or loving rebuke has its end and does its work, but I fear that wit, while rousing the admiration of the spiteful or the like witty, comes in only to destroy its dignity. At the same time, I am not sure whether there might not be such a judicious combination of the elements as to render my remarks inapplicable.

At all events, poetry favours the positive, and from the *Emblems* named of Quarles I shall choose one in which it fully predominates. There is something in it remarkably fine.

PHOSPHOR, BRING THE DAY.

Will 't ne'er be morning? Will that promised light
Ne'er break, and clear those clouds of night?
Sweet Phosphor, bring the day,
Whose conquering ray
May chase these fogs: sweet Phosphor, bring the day.

How long, how long shall these benighted eyes
Languish in shades, like feeble flies
Expecting spring? How long shall darkness soil
The face of earth, and thus beguile
Our souls of sprightful actiön? When, when will day
Begin to dawn, whose new-born ray
May gild the weathercocks of our devotion,
And give our unsouled souls new motion?
Sweet Phosphor, bring the day:
The light will fray
These horrid mists: sweet Phosphor, bring the day.

* * * *

Let those whose eyes, like owls, abhor the light—
Let those have night that love the night:
Sweet Phosphor, bring the day.
How sad delay
Afflicts dull hopes! Sweet Phosphor, bring the day.

Alas! my light-in-vain-expecting eyes
Can find no objects but what rise
From this poor mortal blaze, a dying spark
Of Vulcan's forge, whose flames are dark,—
A dangerous, dull, blue-burning light,
As melancholy as the night:
Here's all the suns that glister in the sphere
Of earth: Ah me! what comfort's here!
Sweet Phosphor, bring the day.
Haste, haste away
Heaven's loitering lamp: sweet Phosphor, bring the day.

Blow, Ignorance. O thou, whose idle knee
Rocks earth into a lethargy,
And with thy sooty fingers hast benight
The world's fair cheeks, blow, blow thy spite;
Since thou hast puffed our greater taper, do
Puff on, and out the lesser too.
If e'er that breath-exiléd flame return,
Thou hast not blown as it will burn.
Sweet Phosphor, bring the day:
Light will repay
The wrongs of night: sweet Phosphor, bring the day.

With honoured, thrice honoured George Herbert waiting at the door, I cannot ask Francis Quarles to remain longer: I can part with him without regret, worthy man and fair poet as he is.

CHAPTER XIII.

GEORGE HERBERT.

BUT, with my hand on the lock, I shrink from opening the door. Here comes a poet indeed! and how am I to show him due honour? With his book humbly, doubtfully offered, with the ashes of the poems of his youth fluttering in the wind of his priestly garments, he crosses the threshold. Or rather, for I had forgotten the symbol of my book, let us all go from our chapel to the choir, and humbly ask him to sing that he may make us worthy of his song.

In George Herbert there is poetry enough and to spare: it is the household bread of his being. If I begin with that which first in the nature of things ought to be demanded of a poet, namely, Truth, Revelation—George Herbert offers us measure pressed down and running over. But let me speak first of that which first in time or order of appearance we demand of a poet, namely music. For inasmuch as verse is for the ear, not for the eye, we demand a good hearing first. Let no one undervalue it. The heart of poetry is indeed truth, but its garments are music, and the garments come first in the process of revelation. The

music of a poem is its meaning in sound as distinguished from word — its meaning in solution, as it were, uncrystallized by articulation. The music goes before the fuller revelation, preparing its way. The sound of a verse is the harbinger of the truth contained therein. If it be a right poem, this will be true. Herein Herbert excels. It will be found impossible to separate the music of his words from the music of the thought which takes shape in their sound.

I got me flowers to strow thy way,
  I got me boughs off many a tree;
But thou wast up by break of day,
  And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

And the gift it enwraps at once and reveals is, I have said, truth of the deepest. Hear this song of divine service. In every song he sings a spiritual fact will be found its fundamental life, although I may quote this or that merely to illustrate some peculiarity of mode.

The Elixir was an imagined liquid sought by the old physical investigators, in order that by its means they might turn every common metal into gold, a pursuit not quite so absurd as it has since appeared. They called this something, when regarded as a solid, *the Philosopher's Stone.* In the poem it is also called a *tincture.*

THE ELIXIR.

Teach me, my God and King,
  In all things thee to see;
And what I do in anything,
  To do it as for thee;

Not rudely, as a beast,
To run into an action ;
But still to make thee prepossest,
And give it his perfection. *its.*

A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye ;
Or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven spy.

All may of thee partake :
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with his tincture—*for thy sake*— *its.*
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine :
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold ;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

With a conscience tender as a child's, almost diseased in its tenderness, and a heart loving as a woman's, his intellect is none the less powerful. Its movements are as the sword-play of an alert, poised, well-knit, strong-wristed fencer with the rapier, in which the skill impresses one more than the force, while without the force the skill would be valueless, even hurtful, to its possessor. There is a graceful humour with it occasionally, even in his most serious poems adding much to their charm. To illustrate all this, take the following, the title of which means *The Retort.*

THE QUIP.

The merry World did on a day
With his train-bands and mates agree
To meet together where I lay,
And all in sport to jeer at me.

First Beauty crept into a rose;
Which when I plucked not—"Sir," said she,
"Tell me, I pray, whose hands are those?"[1]
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Then Money came, and, chinking still—
"What tune is this, poor man?" said he:
"I heard in music you had skill."
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Then came brave Glory puffing by
In silks that whistled—who but he?
He scarce allowed me half an eye;
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Then came quick Wit-and-Conversation,
And he would needs a comfort be,
And, to be short, make an oration:
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Yet when the hour of thy design
To answer these fine things, shall come,
Speak not at large—say I am thine;
And then they have their answer home.

Here is another instance of his humour. It is the first stanza of a poem to *Death*. He is glorying over Death as personified in a skeleton.

Death, thou wast once an uncouth, hideous thing—
Nothing but bones,
The sad effect of sadder groans:
Thy mouth was open, but thou couldst not sing.

[1] Equivalent to "What are those hands of yours for?"

No writer before him has shown such a love to God, such a childlike confidence in him. The love is like the love of those whose verses came first in my volume. But the nation had learned to think more, and new difficulties had consequently arisen. These, again, had to be undermined by deeper thought, and the discovery of yet deeper truth had been the reward. Hence, the love itself, if it had not strengthened, had at least grown deeper. And George Herbert had had difficulty enough in himself; for, born of high family, by nature fitted to shine in that society where elegance of mind, person, carriage, and utterance is most appreciated, and having indeed enjoyed something of the life of a courtier, he had forsaken all in obedience to the voice of his higher nature. Hence the struggle between his tastes and his duties would come and come again, augmented probably by such austere notions as every conscientious man must entertain in proportion to his inability to find God in that in which he might find him. From this inability, inseparable in its varying degrees from the very nature of growth, springs all the asceticism of good men, whose love to God will be the greater as their growing insight reveals him in his world, and their growing faith approaches to the giving of thanks in everything.

When we have discovered the truth that whatsoever is not of faith is sin, the way to meet it is not to forsake the human law, but so to obey it as to thank God for it. To leave the world and go into the desert is not thus to give thanks: it may have been the only

way for this or that man, in his blameless blindness, to take. The divine mind of George Herbert, however, was in the main bent upon discovering God everywhere.

The poem I give next, powerfully sets forth the struggle between liking and duty of which I have spoken. It is at the same time an instance of wonderful art in construction, all the force of the germinal thought kept in reserve, to burst forth at the last. He calls it—meaning by the word, *God's Restraint*—

THE COLLAR.

I struck the board, and cried "No more!—
I will abroad.
What! shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free—free as the road,
Loose as the wind, as large as store.
Shall I be still in suit?
Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me blood, and not restore
What I have lost with cordial fruit?
Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did dry it! There was corn
Before my tears did drown it!
Is the year only lost to me?
Have I no bays to crown it?
No flowers, no garlands gay? All blasted?
All wasted?
Not so, my heart; but there is fruit,
And thou hast hands.
Recover all thy sigh-blown age
On double pleasures. Leave thy cold dispute
Of what is fit, and not. Forsake thy cage,
Thy rope of sands,
Which petty thoughts have made—and made to thee
Good cable, to enforce and draw,
And be thy law,
While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.

Away! Take heed—
I will abroad.
Call in thy death's-head there. Tie up thy fears.
He that forbears
To suit and serve his need,
Deserves his load."
But as I raved, and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methought I heard one calling "*Child!*"
And I replied, "*My Lord!*"

Coming now to speak of his art, let me say something first about his use of homeliest imagery for highest thought. This, I think, is in itself enough to class him with the highest *kind* of poets. If my reader will refer to *The Elixir*, he will see an instance in the third stanza, "You may look at the glass, or at the sky:" "You may regard your action only, or that action as the will of God." Again, let him listen to the pathos and simplicity of this one stanza, from a poem he calls *The Flower*. He has been in trouble; his times have been evil; he has felt a spiritual old age creeping upon him; but he is once more awake.

And now in age[1] I bud again;
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing. O my only light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night!

Again:

Some may dream merrily, but when they wake
They dress themselves and come to thee.

[1] He was but thirty-nine when he died.

He has an exquisite feeling of lyrical art. Not only does he keep to one idea in it, but he finishes the poem like a cameo. Here is an instance wherein he outdoes the elaboration of a Norman trouvère; for not merely does each line in each stanza end with the same sound as the corresponding line in every other stanza, but it ends with the very same word. I shall hardly care to defend this if my reader chooses to call it a whim; but I do say that a large degree of the peculiar musical effect of the poem—subservient to the thought, keeping it dimly chiming in the head until it breaks out clear and triumphant like a silver bell in the last—is owing to this use of the same column of words at the line-ends of every stanza. Let him who doubts it, read the poem aloud.

AARON.

Holiness on the head;
Light and perfections on the breast;
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead,
To lead them unto life and rest—
Thus are true Aarons drest.

Profaneness in my head;
Defects and darkness in my breast;
A noise of passions ringing me for dead
Unto a place where is no rest—
Poor priest, thus am I drest!

Only another head
I have, another heart and breast,
Another music, making live, not dead,
Without whom I could have no rest—
In him I am well drest.

Christ is my only head,
My alone only heart and breast,
My only music, striking me even dead,
That to the old man I may rest,
And be in him new drest.

So, holy in my head,
Perfect and light in my dear breast,
My doctrine turned by Christ, who is not dead,
But lives in me while I do rest—
Come, people: Aaron's drest.

Note the flow and the ebb of the lines of each stanza—from six to eight to ten syllables, and back through eight to six, the number of stanzas corresponding to the number of lines in each; only the poem itself begins with the ebb, and ends with a full spring-flow of energy. Note also the perfect antithesis in their parts between the first and second stanzas, and how the last line of the poem clenches the whole in revealing its idea—that for the sake of which it was written. In a word, note the *unity*.

Born in 1593, notwithstanding his exquisite art, he could not escape being influenced by the faulty tendencies of his age, borne in upon his youth by the example of his mother's friend, Dr. Donne. A man must be a giant like Shakspere or Milton to cast off his age's faults. Indeed no man has more of the "quips and cranks and wanton wiles" of the poetic spirit of his time than George Herbert, but with this difference from the rest of Dr. Donne's school, that such is the indwelling potency that it causes even these to shine with a radiance such that we wish them still to burn and not be consumed. His muse is

seldom other than graceful, even when her motions are grotesque, and he is always a gentleman, which cannot be said of his master. We could not bear to part with his most fantastic oddities, they are so interpenetrated with his genius as well as his art.

In relation to the use he makes of these faulty forms, and to show that even herein he has exercised a refraining judgment, though indeed fancying he has quite discarded in only somewhat reforming it, I recommend the study of two poems, each of which he calls *Jordan*, though why I have not yet with certainty discovered.

It is possible that not many of his readers have observed the following instances of the freakish in his rhyming art, which however result well. When I say so, I would not be supposed to approve of the freak, but only to acknowledge the success of the poet in his immediate intent. They are related to a certain tendency to mechanical contrivance not seldom associated with a love of art: it is art operating in the physical understanding. In the poem called *Home*, every stanza is perfectly finished till the last: in it, with an access of art or artfulness, he destroys the rhyme. I shall not quarrel with my reader if he calls it the latter, and regards it as art run to seed. And yet—and yet—— I confess I have a latent liking for the trick. I shall give one or two stanzas out of the rather long poem, to lead up to the change in the last.

> Come, Lord; my head doth burn, my heart is sick,
> While thou dost ever, ever stay;

Thy long deferrings wound me to the quick;
My spirit gaspeth night and day.
O show thyself to me,
Or take me up to thee.

Nothing but drought and dearth, but bush and brake,
Which way soe'er I look I see:
Some may dream merrily, but when they wake
They dress themselves and come to thee.
O show thyself to me,
Or take me up to thee.

Come, dearest Lord, pass not this holy season,
My flesh and bones and joints do pray;
And even my verse, when by the rhyme and reason
The word is *stay*,[1] says ever *come*.
O show thyself to me,
Or take me up to thee.

Balancing this, my second instance is of the converse. In all the stanzas but the last, the last line in each hangs unrhymed: in the last the rhyming is fulfilled. The poem is called *Denial*. I give only a part of it.

When my devotions could not pierce
Thy silent ears,
Then was my heart broken as was my verse;
My breast was full of fears
And disorder.

O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue
To cry to thee,
And then not hear it crying! All day long
My heart was in my knee:
But no hearing!

[1] To rhyme with *pray* in the second line.

Therefore my soul lay out of sight,
Untuned, unstrung;
My feeble spirit, unable to look right,
Like a nipt blossom, hung
Discontented.

O cheer and tune my heartless breast—
Defer no time;
That so thy favours granting my request,
They and my mind may chime,
And mend my rhyme.

It had been hardly worth the space to point out these, were not the matter itself precious.

Before making further remark on George Herbert, let me present one of his poems in which the oddity of the visual fancy is only equalled by the beauty of the result.

THE PULLEY.

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessing standing by,
"Let us," said he, "pour on him all we can:
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span."

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flowed; then wisdom, honour, pleasure.
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

"For if I should," said he,
"Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in nature, not the God of nature:
So both should losers be.

"Yet let him keep the rest—
But keep them with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and weary, that, at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast."

Is it not the story of the world written with the point of a diamond?

There can hardly be a doubt that his tendency to unnatural forms was encouraged by the increase of respect to symbol and ceremony shown at this period by some of the external powers of the church—Bishop Laud in particular. Had all, however, who delight in symbols, a power, like George Herbert's, of setting even within the horn-lanterns of the more arbitrary of them, such a light of poetry and devotion that their dull sides vanish in its piercing shine, and we forget the symbol utterly in the truth which it cannot obscure, then indeed our part would be to take and be thankful. But there never has been even a living true symbol which the dulness of those who will see the truth only in the symbol has not degraded into the very cockatrice-egg of sectarianism. The symbol is by such always more or less idolized, and the light within more or less patronized. If the truth, for the sake of which all symbols exist, were indeed the delight of those who claim it, the sectarianism of the church would vanish. But men on all sides call that *the truth* which is but its form or outward sign—material or verbal, true or arbitrary, it matters not which—and hence come strifes and divisions.

Although George Herbert, however, could thus illumine all with his divine inspiration, we cannot help wondering whether, if he had betaken himself yet more to vital and less to half artificial symbols, the change would not have been a breaking of the

pitcher and an outshining of the lamp. For a symbol may remind us of the truth, and at the same time obscure it—present it, and dull its effect. It is the temple of nature and not the temple of the church, the things made by the hands of God and not the things made by the hands of man, that afford the truest symbols of truth.

I am anxious to be understood. The chief symbol of our faith, *the Cross*, it may be said, is not one of these natural symbols. I answer—No; but neither is it an arbitrary symbol. It is not a symbol of *a truth* at all, but of *a fact*, of the infinitely grandest fact in the universe, which is itself the outcome and symbol of the grandest Truth. *The Cross* is an historical *sign*, not properly *a symbol*, except through the facts it reminds us of. On the other hand, *baptism* and the *eucharist* are symbols of the loftiest and profoundest kind, true to nature and all its meanings, as well as to the facts of which they remind us. They are in themselves symbols of the truths involved in the facts they commemorate.

Of Nature's symbols George Herbert has made large use; but he would have been yet a greater poet if he had made a larger use of them still. Then at least we might have got rid of such oddities as the stanzas for steps up to the church-door, the first at the bottom of the page; of the lines shaped into ugly altar-form; and of the absurd Easter wings, made of ever lengthening lines. This would not have been much, I confess, nor the gain by their loss great; but not to mention the larger supply of images

graceful with the grace of God, who when he had made them said they were good, it would have led to the further purification of his taste, perhaps even to the casting out of all that could untimely move our mirth; until possibly (for illustration), instead of this lovely stanza, he would have given us even a lovelier:

> Listen, sweet dove, unto my song,
> And spread thy golden wings on me;
> Hatching my tender heart so long,
> Till it get wing, and fly away with thee.

The stanza is indeed lovely, and true and tender and clever as well; yet who can help smiling at the notion of the incubation of the heart-egg, although what the poet means is so good that the smile almost vanishes in a sigh?

There is no doubt that the works of man's hands will also afford many true symbols; but I do think that, in proportion as a man gives himself to those instead of studying Truth's wardrobe of forms in nature, so will he decline from the high calling of the poet. George Herbert was too great to be himself much injured by the narrowness of the field whence he gathered his symbols; but his song will be the worse for it in the ears of all but those who, having lost sight of or having never beheld the oneness of the God whose creation exists in virtue of his redemption, feel safer in a low-browed crypt than under "the high embowed roof."

When the desire after system or order degenerates from a need into a passion, or ruling idea, it closes, as

may be seen in many women who are especial housekeepers, like an unyielding skin over the mind, to the death of all development from impulse and aspiration. The same thing holds in the church: anxiety about order and system will kill the life. This did not go near to being the result with George Herbert: his life was hid with Christ in God; but the influence of his *profession,* as distinguished from his work, was hurtful to his calling as a poet. He of all men would scorn to claim social rank for spiritual service; he of all men would not commit the blunder of supposing that prayer and praise are that service of God: they are *prayer* and *praise,* not *service;* he knew that God can be served only through loving ministration to his sons and daughters, all needy of commonest human help: but, as the most devout of clergymen will be the readiest to confess, there is even a danger to their souls in the unvarying recurrence of the outward obligations of their service; and, in like manner, the poet will fare ill if the conventions from which the holiest system is not free send him soaring with sealed eyes. George Herbert's were but a little blinded thus; yet something, we must allow, his poetry was injured by his profession. All that I say on this point, however, so far from diminishing his praise, adds thereto, setting forth only that he was such a poet as might have been greater yet, had the divine gift had free course. But again I rebuke myself and say, "Thank God for George Herbert."

To rid our spiritual palates of the clinging flavour of criticism, let me choose another song from his

precious legacy—one less read, I presume, than many. It shows his tendency to asceticism—the fancy of forsaking God's world in order to serve him; it has besides many of the faults of the age, even to that of punning; yet it is a lovely bit of art as well as a rich embodiment of tenderness.

THE THANKSGIVING.

Oh King of grief! a title strange yet true,
To thee of all kings only due!
Oh King of wounds! how shall I grieve for thee,
Who in all grief preventest me? *goest before me.*
Shall I weep blood? Why, thou hast wept such store,
That all thy body was one gore.
Shall I be scourgéd, flouted, boxéd, sold?
'Tis but to tell the tale is told.
My God, my God, why dost thou part from me?
Was such a grief as cannot be.
Shall I then sing, skipping thy doleful story,
And side with thy triumphant glory?
Shall thy strokes be my stroking? thorns my flower?
Thy rod, my posy?[1] cross, my bower?
But how then shall I imitate thee, and
Copy thy fair, though bloody hand?
Surely I will revenge me on thy love,
And try who shall victorious prove.
If thou dost give me wealth, I will restore
All back unto thee by the poor.
If thou dost give me honour, men shall see
The honour doth belong to thee.
I will not marry; or if she be mine,
She and her children shall be thine.
My bosom-friend, if he blaspheme thy name,
I will tear thence his love and fame.
One half of me being gone, the rest I give
Unto some chapel—die or live.

Bunch of flowers. He was thinking of Aaron's rod, perhaps.

As for my Passion[1]—But of that anon,
When with the other I have done.
For thy Predestination, I'll contrive
That, three years hence, if I survive,[2]
I'll build a spital, or mend common ways,
But mend my own without delays.
Then I will use the works of thy creation,
As if I used them but for fashion.
The world and I will quarrel; and the year
Shall not perceive that I am here.
My music shall find thee, and every string
Shall have his attribute to sing, *its.*
That all together may accord in thee,
And prove one God, one harmony.
If thou shalt give me wit, it shall appear;
If thou hast given it me, 'tis here.
Nay, I will read thy book,[3] and never move
Till I have found therein thy love—
Thy art of love, which I'll turn back on thee:
O my dear Saviour, Victory!
Then for my Passion—I will do for that—
Alas, my God! I know not what.

With the preceding must be taken the following, which comes immediately after it.

THE REPRISAL.

I have considered it, and find
There is no dealing with thy mighty Passion;
For though I die for thee, I am behind:
My sins deserve the condemnation.

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[1] To correspond to that of Christ.

[2] Again a touch of holy humour: to match his Master's predestination, he will contrive something three years beforehand, with an *if.*

[3] The *here* in the preceding line means *his book;* hence the *thy book* is antithetical.

O make me innocent, that I
May give a disentangled state and free;
And yet thy wounds still my attempts defy,
For by thy death I die for thee.

Ah! was it not enough that thou
By thy eternal glory didst outgo me?
Couldst thou not grief's sad conquest me allow,
But in all victories overthrow me?

Yet by confession will I come
Into the conquest: though I can do nought
Against thee, in thee I will overcome
The man who once against thee fought.

Even embracing the feet of Jesus, Mary Magdalene or George Herbert must rise and go forth to do his will.

It will be observed how much George Herbert goes beyond all that have preceded him, in the expression of feeling as it flows from individual conditions, in the analysis of his own moods, in the logic of worship, if I may say so. His utterance is not merely of personal love and grief, but of the peculiar love and grief in the heart of George Herbert. There may be disease in such a mind; but, if there be, it is a disease that will burn itself out. Such disease is, for men constituted like him, the only path to health. By health I mean that simple regard to the truth, to the will of God, which will turn away a man's eyes from his own conditions, and leave God free to work his perfection in him—free, that is, of the interference of the man's self-consciousness and anxiety. To this perfection St. Paul had come when he no longer cried out against the body of his death, no more judged

his own self, but left all to the Father, caring only to do his will. It was enough to him then that God should judge him, for his will is the one good thing securing all good things. Amongst the keener delights of the life which is at the door, I look for the face of George Herbert, with whom to talk humbly would be in bliss a higher bliss.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN MILTON.

JOHN MILTON, born in 1608, was twenty-four years of age when George Herbert died. Hardly might two good men present a greater contrast than these. In power and size, Milton greatly excels. If George Herbert's utterance is like the sword-play of one skilful with the rapier, that of Milton is like the sword-play of an old knight, flashing his huge but keen-cutting blade in lightnings about his head. Compared with Herbert, Milton was a man in health. He never *shows*, at least, any diseased regard of himself. His eye is fixed on the truth, and he knows of no ill-faring. While a man looks thitherward, all the movements of his spirit reveal themselves only in peace.

Everything conspired, or, should I not rather say? everything was freely given, to make Milton a great poet. Leaving the original seed of melody, the primordial song in the soul which all his life was an effort to utter, let us regard for a moment the circumstances that favoured its development.

From childhood he had listened to the sounds of the organ; doubtless himself often gave breath to the

soundboard with his hands on the lever of the bellows, while his father's

> volant touch,
> Instinct through all proportions low and high,
> Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue ;

and the father's organ-harmony we yet hear in the son's verse as in none but his. Those organ-sounds he has taken for the very breath of his speech, and articulated them. He had education and leisure, freedom to think, to travel, to observe : he was more than thirty before he had to earn a mouthful of bread by his own labour. Rushing at length into freedom's battle, he stood in its storm with his hand on the wheel of the nation's rudder, shouting many a bold word for God and the Truth, until, fulfilled of experience as of knowledge, God set up before him a canvas of utter darkness : he had to fill it with creatures of radiance. God blinded him with his hand, that, like the nightingale, he might "sing darkling." Beyond all, his life was pure from his childhood, without which such poetry as his could never have come to the birth. It is the pure in heart who shall see God at length ; the pure in heart who now hear his harmonies. More than all yet, he devoted himself from the first to the will of God, and his prayer that he might write a great poem was heard.

The unity of his being is the strength of Milton. He is harmony, sweet and bold, throughout. Not Philip Sidney, not George Herbert loved words and their melodies more than he ; while in their use he

is more serious than either, and harder to please, uttering a music they have rarely approached. Yet even when speaking with "most miraculous organ," with a grandeur never heard till then, he overflows in speech more like that of other men than theirs—he utters himself more simply, straightforwardly, dignifiedly, than they. His modes are larger and more human, more near to the forms of primary thought. Faithful and obedient to his art, he spends his power in no diversions. Like Shakspere, he can be silent, never hesitating to sweep away the finest lines should they mar the intent, progress, and flow of his poem. Even while he sings most abandonedly, it is ever with a care of his speech, it is ever with ordered words: not one shall dull the clarity of his verse by unlicensed, that is, needless presence. But let not my reader fancy that this implies laborious utterance and strained endeavour. It is weakness only which by the agony of visible effort enhances the magnitude of victory. The trained athlete will move with the grace of a child, for he has not to seek how to effect that which he means to perform. Milton has only to take good heed, and with no greater effort than it costs the ordinary man to avoid talking like a fool, he sings like an archangel.

But I must not enlarge my remarks, for of his verse even I can find room for only a few lyrics. In them, however, we shall still find the simplest truth, the absolute of life, the poet's aim. He is ever soaring towards the region beyond perturbation, the true condition of soul; that is, wherein a man shall

see things even as God would have him see them. He has no time to droop his pinions, and sit moody even on the highest pine: the sun is above him; he must fly upwards.

The youth who at three-and-twenty could write the following sonnet, might well at five-and-forty be capable of writing the one that follows:

> How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
> Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
> My hasting days fly on with full career,
> But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
> Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
> That I to manhood am arrived so near;
> And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
> That some more timely happy spirits endu'th
> Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
> It shall be still in strictest measure even
> To that same lot, however mean or high,
> Toward which time leads me and the will of heaven:
> All is—if I have grace to use it so
> As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

The *It* which is the subject of the last six lines is his *Ripeness:* it will keep pace with his approaching lot; when it arrives he will be ready for it, whatever it may be. The will of heaven is his happy fate. Even at three-and-twenty, "he that believeth shall not make haste." Calm and open-eyed, he works to be ripe, and waits for the work that shall follow.

At forty-five, then, he writes thus concerning his blindness:

> When I consider how my life is spent
> Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
> And that one talent, which is death to hide,

Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide—
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent *foolishly.*
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts: who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

That is, "stand and wait, ready to go when they are called." Everybody knows the sonnet, but how could I omit it? Both sonnets will grow more and more luminous as they are regarded.

The following I incline to think the finest of his short poems, certainly the grandest of them. It is a little ode, written *to be set on a clock-case.*

ON TIME.

Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race.
Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,
Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace,
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours-
Which is no more than what is false and vain,
And merely mortal dross:
So little is our loss!
So little is thy gain!
For whenas each thing bad thou hast entombed,
And last of all thy greedy self consumed,
Then long eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss; *that cannot be divided—*
And joy shall overtake us as a flood; [*eternal.*
When everything that is sincerely good,
And perfectly divine
With truth and peace and love, shall ever shine

About the supreme throne
Of him to whose happy-making sight alone
When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,
Then, all this earthy grossness quit,
Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit
Triumphing over Death and Chance and thee, O Time.

The next I give is likewise an ode—a more *beautiful* one. Observe in both the fine effect of the short lines, essential to the nature of the ode, being that which gives its solemnity the character yet of a song, or rather, perhaps, of a chant.

In this he calls upon Voice and Verse to rouse and raise our imagination until we hear the choral song of heaven, and hearing become able to sing in tuneful response.

AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce—
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbéd song of pure concent[1]
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee;
Where the bright seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow;
And the cherubic host in thousand choirs,
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly;

[1] *Concent* is a singing together, or harmoniously.

That we on earth, with undiscording voice,
May rightly answer that melodious noise—
As once we did, till disproportioned[1] Sin
Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason,[2] whilst they stood
In first obedience and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial consort[3] us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light!

Music was the symbol of all Truth to Milton. He would count it falsehood to write an unmusical verse. I allow that some of his blank lines may appear unrhythmical; but Experience, especially if she bring with her a knowledge of Dante, will elucidate all their movements. I exhort my younger friends to read Milton aloud when they are alone, and thus learn the worth of word-sounds. They will find him even in this an educating force. The last ode ought to be thus read for the magnificent dance-march of its motion, as well as for its melody.

Show me one who delights in the *Hymn on the Nativity*, and I will show you one who may never indeed be a singer in this world, but who is already a listener to the best. But how different it is from anything of George Herbert's! It sets forth no feeling peculiar to Milton; it is an outburst of the gladness of the company of believers. Every one has at least read

[1] Music depends all on proportions.
[2] The diapason is the octave. Therefore "all notes true." See note 2, p. 205.

the glorious poem ; but were I to leave it out I should have lost, not the sapphire of aspiration, not the topaz of praise, not the emerald of holiness, but the carbuncle of delight from the high priest's breast-plate. And I must give the introduction too : it is the cloudy grove of an overture, whence rushes the torrent of song.

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the son of heaven's eternal king,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring ;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious form, that light insufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he wont[1] at heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of trinal unity,
He laid aside, and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain
To welcome him to this his new abode,
Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how, from far upon the eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet !
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,

[1] An intransitive verb : *he was wont.*

And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet;
And join thy voice unto the angel choir,
From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

THE HYMN.

It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow;
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded that her maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace.
She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hookéd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the arméd throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye, *awe-filled.*
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began ;
The winds, with wonder whist, *silent.*
Smoothly the water kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild Oceän,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm[1] sit brooding on the charméd wave.

The stars with deep amaze
Stand fixed in stedfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence ;
And will not take their flight
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer,[2] that often warned them thence ;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new enlightened world no more should need :
He saw a greater sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axle-tree could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or e'er the point of dawn, *ere ever.*
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row :
Full little thought they than *then.*
That the mighty Pan[3]
Was kindly come to live with them below ;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

---

[1] The birds called *halcyons* were said to build their nests on the water, and, while they were brooding, to keep it calm.

[2] The morning star.

[3] The God of shepherds especially, but the God of all nature—the All in all, for *Pan* means the *All.*

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortal finger strook—
Divinely warbled voice
Answering the stringéd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loath to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

Nature, that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat[1] the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling:
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shame-faced night arrayed;
The helméd cherubim
And sworded seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn choir,
With unexpressive[2] notes to heaven's new-born heir.

Such music, as 'tis said,
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,[3]
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

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1 Milton here uses the old Ptolemaic theory of a succession of solid crystal concentric spheres, in which the heavenly bodies were fixed, and which revolving carried these with them. The lowest or innermost of these spheres was that of the moon. "The hollow round of Cynthia's seat" is, therefore, this sphere in which the moon sits.

2 That cannot be expressed or described.

3 By *hinges* he means the axis of the earth, on which it turns as on a hinge. The origin of *hinge* is *hang*. It is what anything hangs on.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres;
Once bless our human ears—
If ye have power to touch our senses so;[1]
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;
And, with your ninefold harmony,
Make up full consort[2] to the angelic symphony.[3]

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the age of gold;
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon and die;[4]
And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould;
And hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

Yea, truth and justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,

---

[1] This is an apostrophe to the nine spheres (*see former note*), which were believed by the ancients to send forth in their revolutions a grand harmony, too loud for mortals to hear. But no music of the lower region can make up full harmony without the bass of heaven's organ. The *music of the spheres* was to Milton the embodiment of the theory of the universe. He uses the symbol often.

[2] *Consort* is the right word scientifically. It means the *fitting together* of sounds according to their nature. *Concert*, however, is not wrong. It is even more poetic than *consort*, for it means a *striving together*, which is the idea of all peace: the strife is *together*, and not of one against the other. All harmony is an ordered, a divine strife. In the contest of music, every tone restrains its foot and bows its head to the rest in holy dance.

[3] *Symphony* is here used for *chorus*, and quite correctly; for *symphony* is a *voicing together*. To this symphony of the angels the spheres and the heavenly organ are the accompaniment.

[4] Die of the music.

With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering ;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

But wisest Fate says "No ;
This must not yet be so."
The babe lies yet in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
So both himself and us to glorify.
Yet first, to those y-chained in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep,

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbrake :
The agéd earth, aghast
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the centre shake,
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is :
But now begins ; for from this happy day,
The old dragon, under ground
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway ;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges[1] the scaly horror of his folded tail.[2]

The oracles are dumb :[3]
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archéd roof in words deceiving ;

[1] Not merely *swings*, but *lashes about.*

[2] Full of folds or coils.

[3] The legend concerning this cessation of the oracles associates it with the Crucifixion. Milton in *The Nativity* represents it as the consequence of the very presence of the infant Saviour. War and lying are banished together.

Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving;
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting genius[1] is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn,
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures[2] moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the flamens[3] at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Baälim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-battered god of Palestine;
And moonéd Ashtaroth, *the Assyrian Venus.*
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn;[4]
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz[5] mourn.

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[1] The *genius* is the local god, the god of the place as a place.

[2] The *Lars* were the protecting spirits of the ancestors of the family; the *Lemures* were evil spirits, spectres, or bad ghosts. But the notions were somewhat indefinite.

[3] *Flamen* was the word used for *priest* when the Romans spoke of the priest of any particular divinity. Hence the *peculiar power* in the last line of the stanza.

[4] Jupiter Ammon, worshipped in Libya, in the north of Africa, under the form of a goat. "He draws in his horn."

[5] The Syrian Adonis.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol, all of blackest hue :
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly[1] king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue.
The brutish gods of Nile as fast—
Iris and Orus and the dog Anubis—haste.

Nor is Osiris[2] seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered[3] grass with lowings loud ;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest ;
Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud;
In vain, with timbrelled anthems dark,
The sable-stoléd sorcerers bear his worshipped ark :

He feels, from Judah's land,
The dreaded infant's hand ;
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn.
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide—
Not Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine :
Our babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnéd crew.

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail—
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave ;
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

---

[1] Frightful, horrible, as, *a grisly bear.*

[2] Isis, Orus, Anubis, and Osiris, all Egyptian divinities—the last worshipped in the form of a bull.

[3] No rain falls in Egypt.

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest:
Time is our tedious song should here have ending;
Heaven's youngest-teemed star[1]
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed[2] angels sit, in order serviceable.[3]

If my reader should think some of the rhymes bad, and some of the wordso ddly used, I would remind him that both pronunciations and meanings have altered since: the probability is, that the older forms in both are the better. Milton will not use a wrong word or a bad rhyme. With regard to the form of the poem, let him observe the variety of length of line in the stanza, and how skilfully the varied lines are associated—two of six syllables and one of ten; then the same repeated; then one of eight and one of twelve—no two, except of the shortest, coming together of the same length. Its stanza is its own: I do not know another poem written in the same; and its music is exquisite. The probability is that, if the reader note any fact in the poem, however trifling it might seem to the careless eye, it will repay him by unfolding both individual and related beauty. Then let him ponder the pictures given: the sudden arraying of the shamefaced night in long beams; the amazed kings silent on their thrones; the birds brooding on the sea: he will find many such. Let him consider the clear-cut

[1] Last-born: the star in the east. [2] Bright-armoured.
[3] Ready for what service may arise.

epithets, so full of meaning. A true poet may be at once known by the justice and force of the adjectives he uses, especially when he compounds them,—that is, makes one out of two. Here are some examples: *meek-eyed Peace; pale-eyed priest; speckled vanity; smouldering clouds; hideous hum; dismal dance; dusky eyne:* there are many such, each almost a poem in itself. The whole is a succession of pictures set in the loveliest music for the utterance of grandest thoughts.

No doubt there are in the poem instances of such faults in style as were common in the age in which his verse was rooted: for my own part, I never liked the first two stanzas of the hymn. But such instances are few; while for a right feeling of the marvel of this poem and of the two preceding it, we must remember that Milton was only twenty-one when he wrote them.

Apparently to make one of a set with the *Nativity*, he began to write an ode on the *Passion*, but, finding the subject "above the years he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished." The fragment is full of unworthy, though skilful, and, for such, powerful conceits, but is especially interesting as showing how even Milton, trying to write about what he felt, but without yet having generated thoughts enow concerning the subject itself, could only fall back on conventionalities. Happy the young poet the wisdom of whose earliest years was such that he recognized his mistake almost at the outset, and dropped the attempt! Amongst

the stanzas there is, however, one of exceeding loveliness:

> He, sovereign priest, stooping his regal head,
> That dropped with odorous oil down his fair eyes,
> Poor fleshly tabernacle entered,
> His starry front low-roofed beneath the skies.
> Oh what a masque was there! what a disguise!
> Yet more! the stroke of death he must abide;
> Then lies him meekly down fast by his brethren's side.

In this it will be seen that he has left the jubilant measure of the *Hymn*, and returned to the more stately and solemn rhyme-royal of its overture, as more suited to his subject. Milton could not be wrong in his music, even when he found the quarry of his thought too hard to work.

CHAPTER XV.

EDMUND WALLER, THOMAS BROWN, AND JEREMY TAYLOR.

EDMUND WALLER, born in 1605, was three years older than Milton; but I had a fancy for not dividing Herbert and Milton. As a poet he had a high reputation for many years, gained chiefly, I think, by a regard to literary proprieties, combined with wit. He is graceful sometimes; but what in his writings would with many pass for grace, is only smoothness and the absence of faults. His horses were not difficult to drive. He dares little and succeeds in proportion—occasionally, however, flashing out into true song. In politics he had no character—let us hope from weakness rather than from selfishness; yet, towards the close of his life, he wrote some poems which reveal a man not unaccustomed to ponder sacred things, and able to express his thoughts concerning them with force and justice. From a poem called *Of Divine Love*, I gather the following very remarkable passages: I wish they had been enforced by greater nobility of character. Still they are in themselves true. Even where we have no proof of repentance, we may see plentiful signs of

a growth towards it. We cannot tell how long the truth may of necessity require to interpenetrate the ramifications of a man's nature. By slow degrees he discovers that here it is not, and there it is not. Again and again, and yet again, a man finds that he must be born with a new birth.

The fear of hell, or aiming to be blest,
Savours too much of private interest:
This moved not Moses, nor the zealous Paul,
Who for their friends abandoned soul and all;
A greater yet from heaven to hell descends,
To save and make his enemies his friends.

* * * * *

That early love of creatures yet unmade,
To frame the world the Almighty did persuade.
For love it was that first created light,
Moved on the waters, chased away the night
From the rude chaos; and bestowed new grace
On things disposed of to their proper place—
Some to rest here, and some to shine above:
Earth, sea, and heaven, were all the effects of love.

* * * * *

Not willing terror should his image move,
He gives a pattern of eternal love:
His son descends, to treat a peace with those
Which were, and must have ever been, his foes.
Poor he became, and left his glorious seat,
To make us humble, and to make us great;
His business here was happiness to give
To those whose malice could not let him live.

* * * * *

He to proud potentates would not be known:
Of those that loved him, he was hid from none.
Till love appear, we live in anxious doubt;
But smoke will vanish when that flame breaks out:
This is the fire that would consume our dross,
Refine, and make us richer by the loss.

* * * * *

Who for himself no miracle would make,
Dispensed with [1] several for the people's sake.
He that, long-fasting, would no wonder show,
Made loaves and fishes, as they eat them, grow.
Of all his power, which boundless was above,
Here he used none but to express his love;
And such a love would make our joy exceed,
Not when our own, but others' mouths we feed.

* * * * *

Love as he loved! A love so unconfined
With arms extended would embrace mankind.
Self-love would cease, or be dilated, when
We should behold as many selfs as men;
All of one family, in blood allied,
His precious blood that for our ransom died.

* * * * *

Amazed at once and comforted, to find
A boundless power so infinitely kind,
The soul contending to that light to fly
From her dark cell, we practise how to die,
Employing thus the poet's wingéd art
To reach this love, and grave it in our heart.
Joy so complete, so solid, and severe,
Would leave no place for meaner pleasures there:
Pale they would look, as stars that must be gone
When from the east the rising sun comes on.

* * * * *

To that and some other poems he adds the following—a kind of epilogue.

ON THE FOREGOING DIVINE POEMS.

When we for age could neither read nor write,
The subject made us able to indite:
The soul with nobler resolutions decked,
The body stooping, does herself erect:
No mortal parts are requisite to raise
Her that unbodied can her Maker praise.

[1] The *with* we should now omit, for when we use it we mean the opposite of what is meant here.

The seas are quiet when the winds give o'er:
So calm are we when passions are no more;
For then we know how vain it was to boast
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.
Clouds of affection from our younger eyes *passion.*
Conceal that emptiness which age descries.
The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light, through chinks that time has made:
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

It would be a poor victory where age was the sole conqueror. But I doubt if age ever gains the victory alone. Let Waller, however, have this praise: his song soars with his subject. It is a true praise. There are men who write well until they try the noble, and then they fare like the falling star, which, when sought where it fell, is, according to an old fancy, discovered a poor jelly.

Sir Thomas Brown, a physician, whose prose writings are as peculiar as they are valuable, was of the same age as Waller. He partakes to a considerable degree of the mysticism which was so much followed in his day, only in his case it influences his literature most —his mode of utterance more than his mode of thought. His *True Christian Morals* is a very valuable book, notwithstanding the obscurity that sometimes arises in that, as in all his writings, from his fondness for Latin words. The following fine hymn occurs in his *Religio Medici*, in which he gives an account of his opinions. I am not aware of anything else that he has published in verse, though he

must probably have written more to be able to write this so well. It occurs in the midst of prose, as the prayer he says every night before he yields to the death of sleep. I follow it with the succeeding sentence of the prose.

> The night is come. Like to the day,
> Depart not thou, great God, away.
> Let not my sins, black as the night,
> Eclipse the lustre of thy light.
> Keep still in my horizon, for to me
> The sun makes not the day but thee.
> Thou whose nature cannot sleep,
> On my temples sentry keep;
> Guard me 'gainst those watchful foes
> Whose eyes are open while mine close.
> Let no dreams my head infest
> But such as Jacob's temples blest.
> While I do rest, my soul advance;
> Make my sleep a holy trance,
> That I may, my rest being wrought,
> Awake into some holy thought,
> And with as active vigour run
> My course as doth the nimble sun.
> Sleep is a death: O make me try
> By sleeping what it is to die,
> And as gently lay my head
> On my grave, as now my bed.
> Howe'er I rest, great God, let me
> Awake again at least with thee.
> And thus assured, behold I lie
> Securely, or to wake or die.
> These are my drowsy days: in vain
> I do now wake to sleep again:
> O come that hour when I shall never
> Sleep again, but wake for ever.

"This is the dormitive I take to bedward. I need no other laudanum than this to make me sleep; after

which I close mine eyes in security, content to take my leave of the sun, and sleep unto the resurrection."

Jeremy Taylor, born in 1613, was the most poetic of English prose-writers: if he had written verse equal to his prose, he would have had a lofty place amongst poets as well as amongst preachers. Taking the opposite side from Milton, than whom he was five years younger, he was, like him, conscientious and consistent, suffering while Milton's cause prospered, and advanced to one of the bishoprics hated of Milton's soul when the scales of England's politics turned in the other direction. Such men, however, are divided only by their intellects. When men say, "I must or I must not, for it is right or it is not right," then are they in reality so bound together, even should they not acknowledge it themselves, that no opposing opinions, no conflicting theories concerning what is or is not right, can really part them. It was not wonderful that a mind like that of Jeremy Taylor, best fitted for worshipping the beauty of holiness, should mourn over the disrupted order of his church, or that a mind like Milton's, best fitted for the law of life, should demand that every part of that order which had ceased to vibrate responsive to every throb of the eternal heart of truth, should fall into the ruin which its death had preceded. The church was hardly dealt with, but the rulers of the church have to bear the blame.

Here are those I judge the best of the bishop's *Festival Hymns*, printed as part of his *Golden Grove*, or *Guide to Devotion*. In the first there is a little

confusion of imagery; and in others of them will be found a little obscurity. They bear marks of the careless impatience of rhythm and rhyme of one who though ever bursting into a natural trill of song, sometimes with more rhymes apparently than he intended, would yet rather let his thoughts pour themselves out in that unmeasured chant, that "poetry in solution," which is the natural speech of the prophet-orator. He is like a full river that must flow, which rejoices in a flood, and rebels against the constraint of mole or conduit. He exults in utterance itself, caring little for the mode, which, however, the law of his indwelling melody guides though never compels. Charmingly diffuse in his prose, his verse ever sounds as if it would overflow the banks of its self-imposed restraints.

THE SECOND HYMN FOR ADVENT; OR, CHRIST'S COMING TO JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH.

Lord, come away;
Why dost thou stay?
Thy road is ready; and thy paths made straight
With longing expectation wait
The consecration of thy beauteous feet.
Ride on triumphantly: behold we lay
Our lusts and proud wills in thy way.
Hosanna! welcome to our hearts! Lord, here
Thou hast a temple too, and full as dear
As that of Sion, and as full of sin:
Nothing but thieves and robbers dwell therein.
Enter, and chase them forth, and cleanse the floor;
Crucify them, that they may never more
Profane that holy place
Where thou hast chose to set thy face.

And then if our stiff tongues shall be
Mute in the praises of thy deity,
The stones out of the temple-wall
Shall cry aloud and call
Hosanna! and thy glorious footsteps greet.

HYMN FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY; BEING A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THREE SHEPHERDS.

1. Where is this blessed babe
That hath made
All the world so full of joy;
And expectation;
That glorious boy
That crowns each nation
With a triumphant wreath of blessedness?

2. Where should he be but in the throng,
And among
His angel ministers that sing
And take wing
Just as may echo to his voice,
And rejoice,
When wing and tongue and all
May so procure their happiness?

3. But he hath other waiters now:
A poor cow
An ox and mule stand and behold,
And wonder
That a stable should enfold
Him that can thunder.

Chorus. O what a gracious God have we!
How good? How great? Even as our misery.

A HYMN FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.

Awake, my soul, and come away;
Put on thy best array,
Lest if thou longer stay,
Thou lose some minutes of so blest a day.

Go run,
And bid good-morrow to the sun;
Welcome his safe return
To Capricorn,
And that great morn
Wherein a God was born,
Whose story none can tell
But he whose every word's a miracle.

To-day Almightiness grew weak;
The Word itself was mute, and could not speak.

That Jacob's star which made the sun
To dazzle if he durst look on,
Now mantled o'er in Bethlehem's night,
Borrowed a star to show him light.

He that begirt each zone,
To whom both poles are one,
Who grasped the zodiac in his hand,
And made it move or stand,
Is now by nature man,
By stature but a span;
Eternity is now grown short;
A king is born without a court;
The water thirsts; the fountain's dry;
And life, being born, made apt to die.

Chorus. Then let our praises emulate and vie
With his humility!
Since he's exiled from skies
That we might rise,—
From low estate of men
Let's sing him up again!
Each man wind up his heart
To bear a part
In that angelic choir, and show
His glory high, as he was low.
Let's sing towards men goodwill and charity,
Peace upon earth, glory to God on high!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

THE PRAYER.

My soul doth pant towards thee,
My God, source of eternal life.
Flesh fights with me:
Oh end the strife,
And part us, that in peace I may
Unclay
My wearied spirit, and take
My flight to thy eternal spring,
Where, for his sake
Who is my king,
I may wash all my tears away,
That day.

Thou conqueror of death,
Glorious triumpher o'er the grave,
Whose holy breath
Was spent to save
Lost mankind, make me to be styled
Thy child,
And take me when I die
And go unto my dust; my soul
Above the sky
With saints enrol,
That in thy arms, for ever, I
May lie.

This last is quite regular, that is, the second stanza is arranged precisely as the first, though such will not appear to be the case without examination: the disposition of the lines, so various in length, is confusing though not confused.

In these poems will be found that love of homeliness which is characteristic of all true poets—and orators too, in as far as they are poets. The meeting of the homely and the grand is heaven. One more.

A PRAYER FOR CHARITY.

Full of mercy, full of love,
Look upon us from above;
Thou who taught'st the blind man's night
To entertain a double light,
Thine and the day's—and that thine too:
The lame away his crutches threw;
The parchéd crust of leprosy
Returned unto its infancy;
The dumb amazéd was to hear
His own unchain'd tongue strike his ear;
Thy powerful mercy did even chase
The devil from his usurpéd place,
Where thou thyself shouldst dwell, not he:
Oh let thy love our pattern be;
Let thy mercy teach one brother
To forgive and love another;
That copying thy mercy here,
Thy goodness may hereafter rear
Our souls unto thy glory, when
Our dust shall cease to be with men. *Amen.*

CHAPTER XVI.

HENRY MORE AND RICHARD BAXTER.

DR. HENRY MORE was born in the year 1614. Chiefly known for his mystical philosophy, which he cultivated in retirement at Cambridge, and taught not only in prose, but in an elaborate, occasionally poetic poem, of somewhere about a thousand Spenserian stanzas, called *A Platonic Song of the Soul*, he has left some smaller poems, from which I shall gather good store for my readers. Whatever may be thought of his theories, they belong at least to the highest order of philosophy; and it will be seen from the poems I give that they must have borne their part in lifting the soul of the man towards a lofty spiritual condition of faith and fearlessness. The mystical philosophy seems to me safe enough in the hands of a poet: with others it may degenerate into dank and dusty materialism.

RESOLUTION.

Where's now the objects of thy fears,
Needless sighs, and fruitless tears?
They be all gone like idle dream
Suggested from the body's steam.

* * * *

What's plague and prison? Loss of friends?
War, dearth, and death that all things ends?
Mere bugbears for the childish mind;
Pure panic terrors of the blind.

Collect thy soul unto one sphere
Of light, and 'bove the earth it rear;
Those wild scattered thoughts that erst
Lay loosely in the world dispersed,
Call in:—thy spirit thus knit in one
Fair lucid orb, those fears be gone
Like vain impostures of the night,
That fly before the morning bright.
Then with pure eyes thou shalt behold
How the first goodness doth infold
All things in loving tender arms;
That deeméd mischiefs are no harms,
But sovereign salves and skilful cures
Of greater woes the world endures;
That man's stout soul may win a state
Far raised above the reach of fate.

Then wilt thou say, *God rules the world,*
Though mountain over mountain hurled
Be pitched amid the foaming main
Which busy winds to wrath constrain;
* * * *
Though pitchy blasts from hell up-born
Stop the outgoings of the morn,
And Nature play her fiery games
In this forced night, with fulgurant flames:
* * * *
All this confusion cannot move
The purgéd mind, freed from the love
Of commerce with her body dear,
Cell of sad thoughts, sole spring of fear.

Whate'er I feel or hear or see
Threats but these parts that mortal be.
Nought can the honest heart dismay
Unless the love of living clay,

And long acquaintance with the light
Of this outworld, and what to sight
Those two officious beams[1] discover
Of forms that round about us hover.

Power, wisdom, goodness, sure did frame
This universe, and still guide the same.
But thoughts from passions sprung, deceive
Vain mortals. No man can contrive
A better course than what's been run
Since the first circuit of the sun.

He that beholds all from on high
Knows better what to do than I.
I'm not mine own: should I repine
If he dispose of what's not mine?
Purge but thy soul of blind self-will,
Thou straight shalt see God doth no ill.
The world he fills with the bright rays
Of his free goodness. He displays
Himself throughout. Like common air
That spirit of life through all doth fare,
Sucked in by them as vital breath
That willingly embrace not death.
But those that with that living law
Be unacquainted, cares do gnaw;
Mistrust of God's good providence
Doth daily vex their wearied sense.

Now place me on the Libyan soil,
With scorching sun and sands to toil,
Far from the view of spring or tree,
Where neither man nor house I see;

* * * *

Commit me at my next remove
To icy Hyperborean ove;
Confine me to the arctic pole,
Where the numb'd heavens do slowly roll;

[1] It is the light of the soul going out from the eyes, as certainly as the light of the world coming in at the eyes that makes things seen.

To lands where cold raw heavy mist
Sol's kindly warmth and light resists ;
Where lowering clouds full fraught with snow
Do sternly scowl ; where winds do blow
With bitter blasts, and pierce the skin,
Forcing the vital spirits in,
Which leave the body thus ill bested,
In this chill plight at least half-dead ;
Yet by an antiperistasis[1]
My inward heat more kindled is ;
And while this flesh her breath expires,
My spirit shall suck celestial fires
By deep-fetched sighs and pure devotion.
Thus waxen hot with holy motion,
At once I'll break forth in a flame ;
Above this world and worthless fame
I'll take my flight, careless that men
Know not how, where I die, or when.

Yea, though the soul should mortal prove,
So be God's life but in me move
To my last breath—I'm satisfied
A lonesome mortal God to have died.

This last paragraph is magnificent as any single passage I know in literature.

Is it lawful, after reading this, to wonder whether Henry More, the retired, and so far untried, student of Cambridge, would have been able thus to meet the alternations of suffering which he imagines? It is one thing to see reasonableness, another to be reasonable when objects have become circumstances. Would he, then, by spiritual might, have risen indeed above bodily torture? It is *possible* for a man to arrive at this perfection; it is absolutely *necessary* that a man should some day or other reach it; and

[1] The action by which a body attacked collects force by opposition.

I think the wise doctor would have proved the truth of his principles. But there are many who would gladly part with their whole bodies rather than offend, and could not yet so rise above the invasions of the senses. Here, as in less important things, our business is not to speculate what we would do in other circumstances, but to perform the duty of the moment, the one true preparation for the duty to come. Possibly, however, the right development of our human relations in the world may be a more difficult and more important task still than this condition of divine alienation. To find God in others is better than to grow *solely* in the discovery of him in ourselves, if indeed the latter were possible.

DEVOTION.

Good God, when thou thy inward grace dost shower
Into my breast,
How full of light and lively power
Is then my soul!
How am I blest!
How can I then all difficulties devour!
Thy might,
Thy spright,
With ease my cumbrous enemy control.

If thou once turn away thy face and hide
Thy cheerful look,
My feeble flesh may not abide
That dreadful stound; *hour.*
I cannot brook
Thy absence. My heart, with care and grief then gride,

[1] Cut roughly through.

Doth fail,
Doth quail;
My life steals from me at that hidden wound.

My fancy's then a burden to my mind;
Mine anxious thought
Betrays my reason, makes me blind;
Near dangers drad *dreaded.*
Make me distraught;
Surprised with fear my senses all I find:
In hell
I dwell,
Oppressed with horror, pain, and sorrow sad.

My former resolutions all are fled—
Slipped over my tongue;
My faith, my hope, and joy are dead.
Assist my heart,
Rather than my song,
My God, my Saviour! When I'm ill-bested,
Stand by,
And I
Shall bear with courage undeservéd smart.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S DEVOTION.

Sing aloud!—His praise rehearse
Who hath made the universe.
He the boundless heavens has spread,
All the vital orbs has kned, *kneaded.*
He that on Olympus high
Tends his flocks with watchful eye,
And this eye has multiplied *suns, as centres of systems.*
Midst each flock for to reside.
Thus, as round about they stray,
Toucheth[1] each with outstretched ray;
Nimble they hold on their way,
Shaping out their night and day.
Summer, winter, autumn, spring,
Their inclined axes bring.
Never slack they; none respires,
Dancing round their central fires.

[1] Intransitively used. They touch each other.

In due order as they move,
Echoes sweet be gently drove
Thorough heaven's vast hollowness,
Which unto all corners press:
Music that the heart of Jove
Moves to joy and sportful love;
Fills the listening sailers' ears
Riding on the wandering spheres:
Neither speech nor language is
Where their voice is not transmiss.

God is good, is wise, is strong,
Witness all the creature throng,
Is confessed by every tongue;
All things back from whence they sprung, *go back:* a verb.
As the thankful rivers pay
What they borrowed of the sea.

Now myself I do resign:
Take me whole: I all am thine.
Save me, God, from self-desire—
Death's pit, dark hell's raging fire—[1]
Envy, hatred, vengeance, ire;
Let not lust my soul bemire.

Quit from these, thy praise I'll sing,
Loudly sweep the trembling string.
Bear a part, O Wisdom's sons,
Freed from vain religïons!
Lo! from far I you salute,
Sweetly warbling on my lute—
India, Egypt, Araby,
Asia, Greece, and Tartary,
Carmel-tracts, and Lebanon,
With the Mountains of the Moon,
From whence muddy Nile doth run,
Or wherever else you won: *dwell.*
Breathing in one vital air,
One we are though distant far.

[1] Self-desire, which is death's pit, &c.

Rise at once;—let's sacrifice:
Odours sweet perfume the skies;
See how heavenly lightning fires
Hearts inflamed with high aspires!
All the substance of our souls
Up in clouds of incense rolls.
Leave we nothing to ourselves
Save a voice—what need we else!
Or an hand to wear and tire
On the thankful lute or lyre!

Sing aloud!—His praise rehearse
Who hath made the universe.

In this *Philosopher's Devotion* he has clearly imitated one of those psalms of George Sandys which I have given.

CHARITY AND HUMILITY.

Far have I clambered in my mind,
But nought so great as love I find:
Deep-searching wit, mount-moving might,
Are nought compared to that good sprite.
Life of delight and soul of bliss!
Sure source of lasting happiness!
Higher than heaven! lower than hell!
What is thy tent? Where may'st thou dwell?
"My mansion hight *Humility*, *is named.*
Heaven's vastest capability.
The further it doth downward tend,
The higher up it doth ascend;
If it go down to utmost nought,
It shall return with that it sought."

Lord, stretch thy tent in my strait breast;
Enlarge it downward, that sure rest
May there be pight for that pure fire *pitched.*
Wherewith thou wontest to inspire
All self-dead souls: my life is gone;
Sad solitude's my irksome won; *dwelling.*

Cut off from men and all this world,
In Lethe's lonesome ditch I'm hurled ;
Nor might nor sight doth ought me move,
Nor do I care to be above.
O feeble rays of mental light,
That best be seen in this dark night,
What are you? What is any strength
If it be not laid in one length
With pride or love? I nought desire
But a new life, or quite to expire.
Could I demolish with mine eye
Strong towers, stop the fleet stars in sky,
Bring down to earth the pale-faced moon,
Or turn black midnight to bright noon ;
Though all things were put in my hand—
As parched, as dry as the Libyan sand
Would be my life, if charity
Were wanting. But humility
Is more than my poor soul durst crave
That lies entombed in lowly grave ;
But if 'twere lawful up to send
My voice to heaven, this should it rend :
" Lord, thrust me deeper into dust,
That thou may'st raise me with the just."

There are strange things and worth pondering in all these. An occasional classical allusion seems to us quite out of place, but such things we must pass. The poems are quite different from any we have had before. There has been only a few of such writers in our nation, but I suspect those have had a good deal more influence upon the religious life of it than many thinkers suppose. They are in closest sympathy with the deeper forms of truth employed by St. Paul and St. John. This last poem, concerning humility as the house in which charity dwells, is very truth. A repentant sinner feels that he is making himself little when he prays to be made humble: the Christian

philosopher sees such a glory and spiritual wealth in humility that it appears to him almost too much to pray for.

The very essence of these mystical writers seems to me to be poetry. They use the largest figures for the largest spiritual ideas—*light* for *good, darkness* for *evil.* Such symbols are the true bodies of the true ideas. For this service mainly what we term *nature* was called into being, namely, to furnish forms for truths, for without form truth cannot be uttered. Having found their symbols, these writers next proceed to use them logically; and here begins the peculiar danger. When the logic leaves the poetry behind, it grows first presumptuous, then hard, then narrow and untrue to the original breadth of the symbol; the glory of the symbol vanishes; and the final result is a worship of the symbol, which has withered into an apple of Sodom. Witness some of the writings of the European master of the order—Swedenborg: the highest of them are rich in truth; the lowest are poverty-stricken indeed.

In 1615 was born Richard Baxter, one of the purest and wisest and devoutest of men—and no mean poet either. If ever a man sought between contending parties to do his duty, siding with each as each appeared right, opposing each as each appeared wrong, surely that man was Baxter. Hence he fared as all men too wise to be partisans must fare—he pleased neither Royalists nor Puritans. Dull of heart and sadly unlike a mother was the Church when, by the Act of Uniformity of Charles II., she

drove from her bosom such a son, with his two thousand brethren of the clergy!

He has left us a good deal of verse—too much, perhaps, if we consider the length of the poems and the value of condensation. There is in many of them a delightful fervour of the simplest love to God, uttered with a plain half poetic, half logical strength, from which sometimes the poetry breaks out clear and fine. Much that he writes is of death, from the dread of which he evidently suffered—a good thing when it drives a man to renew his confidence in his Saviour's presence. It has with him a very different origin from the vulgar fancy that to talk about death is religious. It was refuge from the fear of death he sought, and that is the part of every man who would not be a slave. The *door of death* of which he so often speaks is to him a door out of the fear of death.

The poem from which the following excerpt is made was evidently written in view of some imminent suffering for conscience-sake, probably when the Act of Uniformity was passed: twenty years after, he was imprisoned at the age of sixty-seven, and lay nearly a year and a half.—I omit many verses.

THE RESOLUTION.

It's no great matter what men deem,
  Whether they count me good or bad:
In their applause and best esteem,
  There's no contentment to be had.
Thy steps, Lord, in this dirt I see;
  And lest my soul from God should stray,
I'll bear my cross and follow thee:
  Let others choose the fairer way.

My face is meeter for the spit;
I am more suitable to shame,
And to the taunts of scornful wit:
It's no great matter for my name.

My Lord hath taught me how to want
A place wherein to put my head:
While he is mine, I'll be content
To beg or lack my daily bread.
Must I forsake the soil and air
Where first I drew my vital breath?
That way may be as near and fair:
Thence I may come to thee by death.
All countries are my Father's lands;
Thy sun, thy love, doth shine on all;
We may in all lift up pure hands,
And with acceptance on thee call.

What if in prison I must dwell?
May I not there converse with thee?
Save me from sin, thy wrath, and hell,
Call me thy child, and I am free.
No walls or bars can keep thee out;
None can confine a holy soul;
The streets of heaven it walks about;
None can its liberty control.
This flesh hath drawn my soul to sin:
If it must smart, thy will be done!
O fill me with thy joys within,
And then I'll let it grieve alone.

Frail, sinful flesh is loath to die;
Sense to the unseen world is strange;
The doubting soul dreads the Most High,
And trembleth at so great a change.
O let me not be strange at home,
Strange to the sun and life of souls,
Choosing this low and darkened room,
Familiar with worms and moles!
Am I the first that go this way?
How many saints are gone before!
How many enter every day
Into thy kingdom by this door!

Christ was once dead, and in a grave ;
  Yet conquered death, and rose again ;
And by this method he will save
  His servants that with him shall reign.
The strangeness will be quickly over,
  When once the heaven-born soul is there :
One sight of God will it recover
  From all this backwardness and fear.
To us, Christ's lowest parts, his feet,
  Union and faith must yet suffice
To guide and comfort us : it's meet
  We trust our head who hath our eves.

We see here that faith in the Lord leads Richard Baxter to the same conclusions immediately to which his faithful philosophy led Henry More.

There is much in Baxter's poems that I would gladly quote, but must leave with regret. Here is a curious, skilful, and, in a homely way, poetic ballad, embodying a good parable. I give only a few of the stanzas.

THE RETURN.

Who was it that I left behind
  When I went last from home,
That now I all disordered find
  When to myself I come ?

I left it light, but now all's dark,
  And I am fain to grope :
Were it not for one little spark
  I should be out of hope.

My Gospel-book I open left,
  Where I the promise saw ;
But now I doubt it's lost by theft :
  I find none but the Law.

The stormy rain an entrance hath
  Through the uncovered top:
How should I rest when showers of wrath
  Upon my conscience drop?

I locked my jewel in my chest;
  I'll search lest that be gone:—
If this one guest had quit my breast,
  I had been quite undone.

My treacherous Flesh had played its part,
  And opened Sin the door;
And they have spoiled and robbed my heart,
  And left it sad and poor.

Yet have I one great trusty friend
  That will procure my peace,
And all this loss and ruin mend,
  And purchase my release.

The bellows I'll yet take in hand,
  Till this small spark shall flame:
Love shall my heart and tongue command
  To praise God's holy name.

I'll mend the roof; I'll watch the door,
  And better keep the key;
I'll trust my treacherous flesh no more,
  But force it to obey.

What have I said? That I'll do this
  That am so false and weak,
And have so often done amiss,
  And did my covenants break?

I mean, Lord—all this shall be done
  If thou my heart wilt raise;
And as the work must be thine own,
  So also shall the praise.

The allegory is so good that one is absolutely sorry when it breaks down, and the poem says in plain words that which is the subject of the figures, bring-

ing truths unmasked into the midst of the maskers who represent truths—thus interrupting the pleasure of the artistic sense in the transparent illusion.

The command of metrical form in Baxter is somewhat remarkable. He has not much melody, but he keeps good time in a variety of measures.

CHAPTER XVII.

CRASHAW AND MARVELL.

I COME now to one of the loveliest of our angel-birds, Richard Crashaw. Indeed he was like a bird in more senses than one; for he belongs to that class of men who seem hardly ever to get foot-hold of this world, but are ever floating in the upper air of it.

What I said of a peculiar Æolian word-music in William Drummond applies with equal truth to Crashaw; while of our own poets, somehow or other, he reminds me of Shelley, in the silvery shine and bell-like melody both of his verse and his imagery; and in one of his poems, *Music's Duel*, the fineness of his phrase reminds me of Keats. But I must not forget that it is only with his sacred, his best poems too, that I am now concerned.

The date of his birth is not known with certainty, but it is judged about 1616, the year of Shakspere's death. He was the son of a Protestant clergyman zealous even to controversy. By a not unnatural reaction Crashaw, by that time, it is said, a popular preacher, when expelled from Oxford in 1644 by the Puritan Parliament because of his refusal to sign

their Covenant, became a Roman Catholic. He died about the age of thirty-four, a canon of the Church of Loretto. There is much in his verses of that sentimentalism which, I have already said in speaking of Southwell, is rife in modern Catholic poetry. I will give from Crashaw a specimen of the kind of it. Avoiding a more sacred object, one stanza from a poem of thirty-one, most musical, and full of lovely speech concerning the tears of Mary Magdalen, will suit my purpose.

> Hail, sister springs,
> Parents of silver-footed rills!
> Ever-bubbling things!
> Thawing crystal! Snowy hills,
> Still spending, never spent!—I mean
> Thy fair eyes, sweet Magdalene!

The poem is called *The Weeper*, and is radiant of delicate fancy. But surely such tones are not worthy of flitting moth-like about the holy sorrow of a repentant woman! Fantastically beautiful, they but play with her grief. Sorrow herself would put her shoes off her feet in approaching the weeping Magdalene. They make much of her indeed, but they show her little reverence. There is in them, notwithstanding their fervour of amorous words, a coldness like that which dwells in the ghostly beauty of icicles shining in the moon.

But I almost reproach myself for introducing Crashaw thus. I had to point out the fact, and now having done with it, I could heartily wish I had room to expatiate on his loveliness even in such poems as *The Weeper*.

His *Divine Epigrams* are not the most beautiful, but they are to me the most valuable of his verses, inasmuch as they make us feel afresh the truth which he sets forth anew. In them some of the facts of our Lord's life and teaching look out upon us as from clear windows of the past. As epigrams, too, they are excellent—pointed as a lance.

Upon the Sepulchre of our Lord.

Here, where our Lord once laid his head,
Now the grave lies buriëd.

The Widow's Mites.

Two mites, two drops, yet all her house and land,
Fall from a steady heart, though trembling hand ;
The other's wanton wealth foams high and brave :
The other cast away—she only gave.

On the Prodigal.

Tell me, bright boy ! tell me, my golden lad !
Whither away so frolic ? Why so glad ?

What ! *all* thy wealth in council ? *all* thy state ?
Are husks so dear ? Troth, 'tis a mighty rate !

I value the following as a lovely parable. Mary is not contented: to see the place is little comfort. The church itself, with all its memories of the Lord, the gospel-story, and all theory about him, is but his tomb until we find himself.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Show me himself, himself, bright sir ! Oh show
Which way my poor tears to himself may go.

Were it enough to show the place, and say,
"Look, Mary; here see where thy Lord once lay;"
Then could I show these arms of mine, and say,
"Look, Mary; here see where thy Lord once lay."

From one of eight lines, on the Mother Mary looking on her child in her lap, I take the last two, complete in themselves, and I think best alone.

This new guest to her eyes new laws hath given:
'Twas once *look up*, 'tis now *look down to heaven.*

And here is perhaps his best.

Two went up into the Temple to pray.

Two went to pray? Oh rather say,
One went to brag, the other to pray.

One stands up close, and treads on high,
Where the other dares not lend his eye.

One nearer to God's altar trod;
The other to the altar's God.

This appears to me perfect. Here is the true relation between the forms and the end of religion. The priesthood, the altar and all its ceremonies, must vanish from between the sinner and his God. When the priest forgets his mediation of a servant, his duty of a door-keeper to the temple of truth, and takes upon him the office of an intercessor, he stands between man and God, and is a Satan, an adversary. Artistically considered, the poem could hardly be improved.

Here is another containing a similar lesson.

I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.

Thy God was making haste into thy roof;
Thy humble faith and fear keeps him aloof.
He'll be thy guest: because he may not be,
He'll come—into thy house? No; into thee.

The following is a world-wide intercession for them that know not what they do. Of those that reject the truth, who can be said ever to have *truly* seen it? A man must be good to see truth. It is a thought suggested by our Lord's words, not an irreverent opposition to the truth of *them*.

But now they have seen and hated.

Seen? and yet *hated thee?* They did not see—
They saw thee not, that saw and hated thee!
No, no; they saw thee not, O Life! O Love!
Who saw aught in thee that their hate could move.

We must not be too ready to quarrel with every oddity: an oddity will sometimes just give the start to an outbreak of song. The strangeness of the following hymn rises almost into grandeur.

EASTER DAY.

Rise, heir of fresh eternity,
From thy virgin-tomb;
Rise, mighty man of wonders, and thy world with thee;
Thy tomb, the universal East—
Nature's new womb;
Thy tomb—fair Immortality's perfuméd nest.

Of all the glories[1] make noon gay
This is the morn;
This rock buds forth the fountain of the streams of day;
In joy's white annals lives this hour,
When life was born,
No cloud-scowl on his radiant lids, no tempest-lower.

[1] *Which* understood.

Life, by this light's nativity,
All creatures have ;
Death only by this day's just doom is forced to die.
Nor is death forced ; for, may he lie
Throned in thy grave,
Death will on this condition be content to die.

When we come, in the writings of one who has revealed masterdom, upon any passage that seems commonplace, or any figure that suggests nothing true, the part of wisdom is to brood over that point ; for the probability is that the barrenness lies in us, two factors being necessary for the result of sight—the thing to be seen and the eye to see it. No doubt the expression may be inadequate, but if we can compensate the deficiency by adding more vision, so much the better for us.

In the second stanza there is a strange combination of images : the rock buds ; and buds a fountain ; the fountain is light. But the images are so much one at the root, that they slide gracefully into each other, and there is no confusion or incongruity : the result is an inclined plane of development.

I now come to the most musical and most graceful, therefore most lyrical, of his poems. I have left out just three stanzas, because of the sentimentalism of which I have spoken : I would have left out more if I could have done so without spoiling the symmetry of the poem. My reader must be friendly enough to one who is so friendly to him, to let his peculiarities pass unquestioned—amongst the rest his conceits, as well as the trifling discord that the shepherds should be called, after the classical fashion—ill agreeing,

from its associations, with Christian song—Tityrus and Thyrsis.

A HYMN OF THE NATIVITY SUNG BY THE SHEPHERDS.

Chorus. Come, we shepherds, whose blest sight
Hath met love's noon in nature's night;
Come, lift we up our loftier song,
And wake the sun that lies too long.

To all our world of well-stolen[1] joy
He slept, and dreamed of no such thing,
While we found out heaven's fairer eye,
And kissed the cradle of our king:
Tell him he rises now too late
To show us aught worth looking at.

Tell him we now can show him more
Than he e'er showed to mortal sight—
Than he himself e'er saw before,
Which to be seen needs not his light:
Tell him, Tityrus, where thou hast been;
Tell him, Thyrsis, what thou hast seen.

Tityrus. Gloomy night embraced the place
Where the noble infant lay:
The babe looked up and showed his face:
In spite of darkness it was day.
It was thy day, sweet, and did rise
Not from the east, but from thy eyes.
Chorus. It was thy day, sweet, &c.

Thyrsis. Winter chid aloud, and sent
The angry north to wage his wars:
The north forgot his fierce intent,
And left perfumes instead of scars.
By those sweet eyes' persuasive powers,
Where he meant frosts, he scattered flowers.
Chorus. By those sweet eyes', &c.

[1] How unpleasant conceit can become. The joy of seeing the Saviour was *stolen* because they gained it in the absence of the sun!

Both. We saw thee in thy balmy nest,
Young dawn of our eternal day;
We saw thine eyes break from the east,
And chase the trembling shades away.
We saw thee, and we blessed the sight;
We saw thee by thine own sweet light.
Chorus. We saw thee, &c.

Tityrus. "Poor world," said I, "what wilt thou do
To entertain this starry stranger?
Is this the best thou canst bestow—
A cold and not too cleanly manger?
Contend, the powers of heaven and earth,
To fit a bed for this huge birth."
Chorus. Contend, the powers, &c.

Thyrsis. "Proud world," said I, "cease your contest,
And let the mighty babe alone:
The phœnix builds the phœnix' nest—
Love's architecture is his own.
The babe, whose birth embraves this morn,
Made his own bed ere he was born."
Chorus. The babe, whose birth, &c.

Tityrus. I saw the curl'd drops, soft and slow,
Come hovering o'er the place's head,
Offering their whitest sheets of snow
To furnish the fair infant's bed:
"Forbear," said I; "be not too bold:
Your fleece is white, but 'tis too cold."
Chorus. "Forbear," said I, &c.

Thyrsis. I saw the obsequious seraphim
Their rosy fleece of fire bestow;
For well they now can spare their wings,
Since heaven itself lies here below.
"Well done," said I; "but are you sure
Your down, so warm, will pass for pure?"
Chorus. "Well done," said I, &c.

* * * *

Full Chorus. Welcome all wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span!
Summer in winter! day in night!
Heaven in earth, and God in man!
Great little one, whose all-embracing birth
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth!

* * * *

Welcome—though not to those gay flies
Gilded i' th' beams of earthly kings—
Slippery souls in smiling eyes—
But to poor shepherds, homespun things,
Whose wealth's their flocks, whose wit's to be
Well read in their simplicity.

Yet when young April's husband showers
Shall bless the fruitful Maia's bed,
We'll bring the firstborn of her flowers
To kiss thy feet, and crown thy head:
To thee, dear Lamb! whose love must keep
The shepherds while they feed their sheep.

To thee, meek Majesty, soft king
Of simple graces and sweet loves,
Each of us his lamb will bring,
Each his pair of silver doves.
At last, in fire of thy fair eyes,
Ourselves become our own best sacrifice.

A splendid line to end with! too good for the preceding one. All temples and altars, all priesthoods and prayers, must vanish in this one and only sacrifice. Exquisite, however, as the poem is, we cannot help wishing it looked less heathenish. Its decorations are certainly meretricious.

From a few religious poems of Sir Edward Sherburne, another Roman Catholic, and a firm adherent of Charles I., I choose the following—the only one I care for.

AND THEY LAID HIM IN A MANGER.

Happy crib, that wert, alone,
To my God, bed, cradle, throne !
Whilst thy glorious vileness I
View with divine fancy's eye,
Sordid filth seems all the cost,
State, and splendour, crowns do boast.

See heaven's sacred majesty
Humbled beneath poverty ;
Swaddled up in homely rags,
On a bed of straw and flags !
He whose hands the heavens displayed,
And the world's foundations laid,
From the world 's almost exiled,
Of all ornaments despoiled.
Perfumes bathe him not, new-born ;
Persian mantles not adorn ;
Nor do the rich roofs look bright
With the jasper's orient light.

Where, O royal infant, be
The ensigns of thy majesty ;
Thy Sire's equalizing state ;
And thy sceptre that rules fate ?
Where's thy angel-guarded throne,
Whence thy laws thou didst make known—
Laws which heaven, earth, hell obeyed ?
These, ah ! these aside he laid ;
Would the emblem be—of pride
By humility outvied.

I pass by Abraham Cowley, mighty reputation as he has had, without further remark than that he is too vulgar to be admired more than occasionally, and too artificial almost to be, as a poet, loved at all.

Andrew Marvell, member of Parliament for Hull both before and after the Restoration, was twelve years younger than his friend Milton. Any one of

some half-dozen of his few poems is to my mind worth all the verse that Cowley ever made. It is a pity he wrote so little; but his was a life as diligent, I presume, as it was honourable.

ON A DROP OF DEW.

See how the orient dew,
  Shed from the bosom of the morn
    Into the blowing roses,
Yet careless of its mansion new
  For the clear region where 'twas born,
    Round in itself encloses, *used intransitively.*
  And in its little globe's extent,
Frames as it can its native element.
  How it the purple flower does slight,
    Scarce touching where it lies,
  But gazing back upon the skies,
    Shines with a mournful light,
      Like its own tear,
Because so long divided from the sphere:
  Restless it rolls, and unsecure,
    Trembling lest it grow impure,
  Till the warm sun pity its pain,
And to the skies exhale it back again.
    So the soul, that drop, that ray
Of the clear fountain of eternal day,
Could it within the human flower be seen,
  Remembering still its former height,
  Shuns the sweet leaves and blossoms green;
  And, recollecting its own light,
Does, in its pure and circling thoughts, express
The greater heaven in an heaven less.
    In how coy a figure wound,
      Every way it turns away,
    So the world excluding round,
      Yet receiving in the day;
    Dark beneath but bright above,
      Here disdaining, there in love.

How loose and easy hence to go !
How girt and ready to ascend !
Moving but on a point below,
It all about does upwards bend.
Such did the manna's sacred dew distil—
White and entire,[1] though congealed and chill—
Congealed on earth, but does, dissolving, run
Into the glories of the almighty sun.

Surely a lovely fancy of resemblance, exquisitely wrought out; an instance of the lighter play of the mystical mind, which yet shadows forth truth.

THE CORONET.

When for the thorns with which I long too long,
With many a piercing wound,
My Saviour's head have crowned,
I seek with garlands to redress that wrong,
Through every garden, every mead
I gather flowers—my fruits are only flowers—
Dismantling all the fragrant towers
That once adorned my shepherdess's head;
And now, when I have summed up all my store,
Thinking—so I myself deceive—
So rich a chaplet thence to weave
As never yet the King of glory wore;
Alas ! I find the serpent old,
That, twining in his speckled breast,
About the flowers disguised does fold,
With wreaths of fame and interest.
Ah, foolish man that wouldst debase with them
And mortal glory, heaven's diadem !
But thou who only couldst the serpent tame,
Either his slippery knots at once untie,
And disentangle all his winding snare,
Or shatter too with him my curious frame,[2]

[1] A trisyllable.

[2] His garland.

> And let these wither, that so he may die,
> Though set with skill, and chosen out with care;
> That they, while thou on both their spoils dost tread,
> May crown thy feet that could not crown thy head.

A true sacrifice of worship, if not a garland of praise! The disciple would have his works tried by the fire, not only that the gold and the precious stones may emerge relucent, but that the wood and hay and stubble may perish. The will of God alone, not what we may have effected, deserves our care. In the perishing of our deeds they fall at his feet: in our willing their loss we crown his head.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MOUNT OF VISION—HENRY VAUGHAN.

WE have now arrived at the borders of a long, dreary tract, which, happily for my readers, I can shorten for them in this my retrospect. From the heights of Henry Vaughan's verse, I look across a stony region, with a few feeble oases scattered over it, and a hazy green in the distance. It does not soften the dreariness that its stones are all laid in order, that the spaces which should be meadows are skilfully paved.

Henry Vaughan belongs to the mystical school, but his poetry rules his theories. You find no more of the mystic than the poet can easily govern; in fact, scarcely more than is necessary to the highest poetry. He develops his mysticism upwards, with relation to his higher nature alone: it blossoms into poetry. His twin-brother Thomas developed his mysticism downwards in the direction of the material sciences—a true effort still, but one in which the danger of ceasing to be true increases with increasing ratio the further it is carried.

They were born in South Wales in the year 1621. Thomas was a clergyman; Henry a doctor of medi-

cine. Both were Royalists, and both suffered in the cause—Thomas by expulsion from his living, Henry by imprisonment. Thomas died soon after the Restoration ; Henry outlived the Revolution.

Henry Vaughan was then nearly thirty years younger than George Herbert, whom he consciously and intentionally imitates. His art is not comparable to that of Herbert : hence Herbert remains the master ; for it is not the thought that makes the poet ; it is the utterance of that thought in worthy presence of speech. He is careless and somewhat rugged. If he can get his thought dressed, and thus made visible, he does not mind the dress fitting awkwardly, or even being a little out at elbows. And yet he has grander lines and phrases than any in Herbert. He has occasionally a daring success that strikes one with astonishment. In a word, he says more splendid things than Herbert, though he writes inferior poems. His thought is profound and just; the harmonies in his soul are true ; its artistic and musical ear is defective. His movements are sometimes grand, sometimes awkward. Herbert is always gracious—I use the word as meaning much more than *graceful.*

The following poem will instance Vaughan's fine mysticism and odd embodiment :

COCK-CROWING.

Father of lights ! what sunny seed,
What glance of day hast thou confined
Into this bird ? To all the breed
This busy ray thou hast assigned ;
Their magnetism works all night,
And dreams of Paradise and light.

Their eyes watch for the morning hue;
Their little grain,[1] expelling night,
So shines and sings, as if it knew
The path unto the house of light:
  It seems their candle, howe'er done,
  Was tined[2] and lighted at the sun.

If such a tincture, such a touch,
So firm a longing can empower,
Shall thy own image think it much
To watch for thy appearing hour?
  If a mere blast so fill the sail,
  Shall not the breath of God prevail?

O thou immortal Light and Heat,
Whose hand so shines through all this frame,
That by the beauty of the seat,
We plainly see who made the same!
  Seeing thy seed abides in me,
  Dwell thou in it, and I in thee.

To sleep without thee is to die;
Yea, 'tis a death partakes of hell;
For where thou dost not close the eye,
It never opens, I can tell:
  In such a dark, Egyptian border
  The shades of death dwell and disorder.

Its joys and hopes and earnest throws,
And hearts whose pulse beats still for light,
Are given to birds, who but thee knows
A love-sick soul's exalted flight?
  Can souls be tracked by any eye
  But his who gave them wings to fly?

Only this veil, which thou hast broke,
And must be broken yet in me;
This veil, I say, is all the cloak
And cloud which shadows me from thee.
  This veil thy full-eyed love denies,
  And only gleams and fractions spies.

[1] The "sunny seed" in their hearts.

[2] From *tine* or *tind*, to set on fire. Hence *tinder*.

O take it off. Make no delay,
But brush me with thy light, that I
May shine unto a perfect day,
And warm me at thy glorious eye.
O take it off; or, till it flee,
Though with no lily, stay with me.

I have no room for poems often quoted, therefore not for that lovely one beginning "They are all gone into the world of light;" but I must not omit *The Retreat,* for besides its worth, I have another reason for presenting it.

THE RETREAT.

Happy those early days when I
Shined in my angel-infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white, celestial thought;
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love,
And, looking back, at that short space
Could see a glimpse of his bright face;
When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My conscience with a sinful sound,
Or had the black art to dispense
A several sin to every sense;
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.
O how I long to travel back,
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain,
Where first I left my glorious train,
From whence the enlightened spirit sees
That shady city of palm-trees.

But ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way!
Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move;
And when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came return.

Let any one who is well acquainted with Wordsworth's grand ode—that on the *Intimations of Immortality*—turn his mind to a comparison between that and this: he will find the resemblance remarkable. Whether *The Retreat* suggested the form of the *Ode* is not of much consequence, for the *Ode* is the outcome at once and essence of all Wordsworth's theories; and whatever he may have drawn from *The Retreat* is glorified in the *Ode*. Still it is interesting to compare them. Vaughan believes with Wordsworth and some other great men that this is not our first stage of existence; that we are haunted by dim memories of a former state. This belief is not necessary, however, to sympathy with the poem, for whether the present be our first life or no, we have come from God, and bring from him conscience and a thousand godlike gifts.—"Happy those early days," Vaughan begins: "There was a time," begins Wordsworth, "when the earth seemed apparelled in celestial light." "Before I understood this place," continues Vaughan: "Blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realized," says Wordsworth. "A white celestial thought," says Vaughan: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," says Wordsworth. "A mile or two off, I could see his face," says Vaughan: "Trailing clouds of glory do we

come," says Wordsworth. "On some gilded cloud or flower, my gazing soul would dwell an hour," says Vaughan: "The hour of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower," says Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's poem is the profounder in its philosophy, as well as far the grander and lovelier in its poetry; but in the moral relation, Vaughan's poem is the more definite of the two, and gives us in its close, poor as that is compared with the rest of it, just what we feel is wanting in Wordsworth's—the hope of return to the bliss of childhood. We may be comforted for what we lose by what we gain; but that is not a recompense large enough to be divine: we want both. Vaughan will be a child again. For the movements of man's life are in spirals: we go back whence we came, ever returning on our former traces, only upon a higher level, on the next upward coil of the spiral, so that it is a going back and a going forward ever and both at once. Life is, as it were, a constant repentance, or thinking of it again: the childhood of the kingdom takes the place of the childhood of the brain, but comprises all that was lovely in the former delight. The heavenly children will subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, wax valiant in fight, rout the armies of the aliens, merry of heart as when in the nursery of this world they fought their fancied frigates, and defended their toy-battlements.

Here are the beginning and end of another of similar purport:

CHILDHOOD.

I cannot reach it; and my striving eye
Dazzles at it, as at eternity.
Were now that chronicle alive,
Those white designs which children drive,
And the thoughts of each harmless hour,
With their content too in my power,
Quickly would I make my path even,
And by mere playing go to heaven.

* * * * *

An age of mysteries! which he
Must live twice that would God's face see;
Which angels guard, and with it play—
Angels which foul men drive away.

How do I study now, and scan
Thee more than e'er I studied man,
And only see, through a long night,
Thy edges and thy bordering light!
O for thy centre and mid-day!
For sure that is the narrow way!

Many a true thought comes out by the help of a fancy or half-playful exercise of the thinking power. There is a good deal of such fancy in the following poem, but in the end it rises to the height of the purest and best mysticism. We must not forget that the deepest man can utter, will be but the type or symbol of a something deeper yet, of which he can perceive only a doubtful glimmer. This will serve for general remark upon the mystical mode, as well as for comment explanatory of the close of the poem.

THE NIGHT.

JOHN iii. 2.

Through that pure virgin-shrine,
That sacred veil[1] drawn o'er thy glorious noon,
That men might look and live, as glowworms shine,
And face the moon,
Wise Nicodemus saw such light
As made him know his God by night.

Most blest believer he,
Who in that land of darkness and blind eyes,
Thy long-expected healing wings could see
When thou didst rise!
And, what can never more be done,
Did at midnight speak with the sun!

O who will tell me where
He found thee at that dead and silent hour?
What hallowed solitary ground did bear
So rare a flower,
Within whose sacred leaves did lie
The fulness of the Deity?

No mercy-seat of gold,
No dead and dusty cherub, nor carved stone,
But his own living works did my Lord hold
And lodge alone,
Where trees and herbs did watch and peep
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.

Dear night! this world's defeat;
The stop to busy fools; care's check and curb,
The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat
Which none disturb!
Christ's progress, and his prayer time,[2]
The hours to which high heaven doth chime![3]

---

[1] The body of Jesus.

[2] Mark i. 35; Luke xxi. 37. The word *time* must be associated both with *progress* and *prayer*—his walking-time and prayer-time.

[3] This is an allusion to the sphere-music: the great heavens is a clock whose hours are those when Jesus retires to his Father; and to these hours the sphere-music gives the chime.

God's silent, searching flight;[1]
When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night,
His still, soft call;
His knocking time;[2] the soul's dumb watch,
When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil[3] days
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark tent,
Whose peace but by some angel's wing or voice
Is seldom rent,
Then I in heaven all the long year
Would keep, and never wander here.

But living where the sun
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tire
Themselves and others, I consent and run
To every mire;
And by this world's ill guiding light,
Err more than I can do by night.

There is in God, some say,
A deep but dazzling darkness; as men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear:
O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim!

This is glorious; and its lesson of quiet and retirement we need more than ever in these hurried days upon which we have fallen. If men would but be still enough in themselves to hear, through all the noises of the busy light, the voice that is ever talking on in the dusky chambers of their hearts! Look at his love for Nature, too; and read the fourth stanza in connexion with my previous remarks upon symbolism.

[1] He continues his poetic synonyms for the night.
[2] "Behold I stand at the door and knock."
[3] A monosyllable.

I think this poem *grander* than any of George Herbert's. I use the word with intended precision.

Here is one, the end of which is not so good, poetically considered, as the magnificent beginning, but which contains striking lines throughout :—

THE DAWNING.

Ah! what time wilt thou come? When shall that cry,
The Bridegroom's coming, fill the sky?
Shall it in the evening run
When our words and works are done?
Or will thy all-surprising light
Break at midnight,
When either sleep or some dark pleasure
Possesseth mad man without measure?
Or shall these early, fragrant hours
Unlock thy bowers,[1]
And with their blush of light descry
Thy locks crowned with eternity?
Indeed, it is the only time
That with thy glory doth best chime:
All now are stirring; every field
Full hymns doth yield;
The whole creation shakes off night,
And for thy shadow looks the light;[2]
Stars now vanish without number;
Sleepy planets set and slumber;
The pursy clouds disband and scatter;—
All expect some sudden matter;
Not one beam triumphs, but, from far,
That morning-star.

O, at what time soever thou,
Unknown to us, the heavens wilt bow,
And, with thy angels in the van,
Descend to judge poor careless man,

[1] Often used for *chambers*.

[2] "The creation looks for the light, thy shadow?" Or, "The light looks for thy shadow, the sun"?

Grant I may not like puddle lie
In a corrupt security,
Where, if a traveller water crave,
He finds it dead, and in a grave ;
But as this restless, vocal spring
All day and night doth run and sing,
And though here born, yet is acquainted
Elsewhere, and, flowing, keeps untainted,
So let me all my busy age
In thy free services engage ;
And though, while here, of force,[1] I must
Have commerce sometimes with poor dust,[2]
And in my flesh, though vile and low,
As this doth in her channel, flow,
Yet let my course, my aim, my love,
And chief acquaintance be above.
So when that day and hour shall come,
In which thyself will be the sun,
Thou'lt find me drest and on my way,
Watching the break of thy great day.

I do not think that description of the dawn has ever been surpassed. The verse "All expect some sudden matter," is wondrously fine. The water "dead and in a grave," because stagnant, is a true fancy ; and the "acquainted elsewhere" of the running stream, is a masterly phrase. I need not point out the symbolism of the poem.

I do not know a writer, Wordsworth not excepted, who reveals more delight in the visions of Nature than Henry Vaughan. He is a true forerunner of Wordsworth, inasmuch as the latter sets forth with only greater profundity and more art than he, the relations between Nature and Human Nature ; while,

[1] *Perforce:* of necessity.
[2] He does not mean his fellows, but his bodily nature.

on the other hand, he is the forerunner as well of some one that must yet do what Wordsworth has left almost unattempted, namely—set forth the sympathy of Nature with the aspirations of the spirit that is born of God, born again, I mean, in the recognition of the child's relation to the Father. Both Herbert and Vaughan have thus read Nature, the latter turning many leaves which few besides have turned. In this he has struck upon a deeper and richer lode than even Wordsworth, although he has not wrought it with half his skill. In any history of the development of the love of the present age for Nature, Vaughan, although I fear his influence would be found to have been small as yet, must be represented as the Phosphor of coming dawn. Beside him, Thomson is cold, artistic, and gray: although larger in scope, he is not to be compared with him in sympathetic sight. It is this insight that makes Vaughan a mystic. He can see one thing everywhere, and all things the same—yet each with a thousand sides that radiate crossing lights, even as the airy particles around us. For him everything is the expression of, and points back to, some fact in the Divine Thought. Along the line of every ray he looks towards its radiating centre—the heart of the Maker.

I could give many instances of Vaughan's power in reading the heart of Nature, but I may not dwell upon this phase. Almost all the poems I give and have given will afford such.

I walked the other day, to spend my hour,
Into a field,
Where I sometimes had seen the soil to yield
A gallant flower;
But winter now had ruffled all the bower
And curious store
I knew there heretofore.

Yet I whose search loved not to peep and peer
I' th' face of things,
Thought with myself, there might be other springs
Besides this here,
Which, like cold friends, sees us but once a year;
And so the flower
Might have some other bower.

Then taking up what I could nearest spy,
I digged about
That place where I had seen him to grow out:
And by and by
I saw the warm recluse alone to lie,
Where fresh and green
He lived of us unseen.

Many a question intricate and rare
Did I there strow;
But all I could extort was, that he now
Did there repair
Such losses as befell him in this air,
And would ere long
Come forth most fair and young.

This past, I threw the clothes quite o'er his head;
And, stung with fear
Of my own frailty, dropped down many a tear
Upon his bed;
Then sighing, whispered, *Happy are the dead!*
What peace doth now
Rock him asleep below!

And yet, how few believe such doctrine springs
From a poor root
Which all the winter sleeps here under foot,
And hath no wings
To raise it to the truth and light of things,
But is still trod
By every wandering clod!

O thou, whose spirit did at first inflame
And warm the dead!
And by a sacred incubation fed
With life this frame,
Which once had neither being, form, nor name!
Grant I may so
Thy steps track here below,

That in these masks and shadows I may see
Thy sacred way;
And by those hid ascents climb to that day
Which breaks from thee,
Who art in all things, though invisibly:
Show me thy peace,
Thy mercy, love, and ease.

And from this care, where dreams and sorrows reign,
Lead me above,
Where light, joy, leisure, and true comforts move
Without all pain:
There, hid in thee, show me his life again
At whose dumb urn
Thus all the year I mourn.

There are several amongst his poems lamenting, like this, the death of some dear friend—perhaps his twin-brother, whom he outlived thirty years.

According to what a man is capable of seeing in nature, he becomes either a man of appliance, a man of science, a mystic, or a poet.

I must now give two that are simple in thought, con-

struction, and music. The latter ought to be popular, from the nature of its rhythmic movement, and the holy merriment it carries. But in the former, note how the major key of gladness changes in the third stanza to the minor key of aspiration, which has always some sadness in it; a sadness which deepens to grief in the next stanza at the consciousness of unfitness for Christ's company, but is lifted by hope almost again to gladness in the last.

CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

Awake, glad heart! Get up, and sing!
It is the birthday of thy king!
Awake! awake!
The sun doth shake
Light from his locks, and, all the way
Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.

Awake! awake! Hark how the wood rings!
Winds whisper, and the busy springs
A concert make:
Awake! awake!
Man is their high-priest, and should rise
To offer up the sacrifice.

I would I were some bird or star,
Fluttering in woods, or lifted far
Above this inn
And road of sin!
Then either star or bird should be
Shining or singing still to thee.

I would I had in my best part
Fit rooms for thee! or that my heart
Were so clean as
Thy manger was!
But I am all filth, and obscene;
Yet, if thou wilt, thou canst make clean.

Sweet Jesu! will then. Let no more
This leper haunt and soil thy door.
Cure him, ease him;
O release him!
And let once more, by mystic birth,
The Lord of life be born in earth.

The fitting companion to this is his

EASTER HYMN.

Death and darkness, get you packing:
Nothing now to man is lacking.
All your triumphs now are ended,
And what Adam marred is mended.
Graves are beds now for the weary;
Death a nap, to wake more merry;
Youth now, full of pious duty,
Seeks in thee for perfect beauty;
The weak and aged, tired with length
Of days, from thee look for new strength;
And infants with thy pangs contest,
As pleasant as if with the breast.
Then unto him who thus hath thrown
Even to contempt thy kingdom down,
And by his blood did us advance
Unto his own inheritance—
To him be glory, power, praise,
From this unto the last of days!

We must now descend from this height of true utterance into the Valley of Humiliation, and cannot do better than console ourselves by listening to the boy in mean clothes, of the fresh and well-favoured countenance, whom Christiana and her fellow-pilgrims hear singing in that valley.

He that is down, needs fear no fall;
  He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
  Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
  Little be it or much;
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
  Because thou savest[1] such.

Fulness to such a burden is
  That go on pilgrimage;
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
  Is best from age to age.

I could not have my book without one word in it of John Bunyan, the tinker, probably the gipsy, who although born only and not made a poet, like his great brother, John Milton, has uttered in prose a wealth of poetic thought. He was born in 1628, twenty years after Milton. I must not, however, remark on this noble Bohemian of literature and prophecy; but leaving at length these flowery hills and meadows behind me, step on my way across the desert.—England had now fallen under the influence of France instead of Italy, and that influence has never been for good to our literature, at least. Thence its chief aim grew to be a desirable trimness of speech and logical arrangement of matter—good external qualities purchased at a fearful price with the loss of all that makes poetry precious. The poets of England, with John Dryden at their head, ceased almost for a time to deal with the truths of humanity, and gave themselves to the facts and relations of

[1] *Savourest?*

society. The nation which could recall the family of the Stuarts must necessarily fall into such a decay of spiritual life as should render its literature only respectable at the best, and its religious utterances essentially vulgar. But the decay is gradual.

Bishop Ken, born in 1637, is known chiefly by his hymns for the morning and evening, deservedly popular. He has, however, written a great many besides—too many, indeed, for variety or excellence. He seems to have set himself to write them as acts of worship. They present many signs of a perversion of taste which, though not in them so remarkable, rose to a height before long. He annoys us besides by the constant recurrence of certain phrases, one or two of which are not admirable, and by using, in the midst of a simple style, odd Latin words. Here are portions of, I think, one of his best, and good it is.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

* * * * *

Lord, 'tis thyself who hast impressed
In native light on human breast,
That their Creator all
Mankind should Father call:
A father's love all mortals know,
And the love filial which they owe.

Our Father gives us heavenly light,
And to be happy, ghostly sight;
He blesses, guides, sustains;
He eases us in pains;
Abatements for our weakness makes,
And never a true child forsakes.

He waits till the hard heart relents;
Our self-damnation he laments;
He sweetly them invites
To share in heaven's delights;
His arms he opens to receive
All who for past transgressions grieve.

My Father! O that name is sweet
To sinners mourning in retreat.
God's heart paternal yearns
When he a change discerns;
He to his favour them restores;
He heals their most inveterate sores.

* * * * *

Religious honour, humble awe;
Obedience to our Father's law;
A lively grateful sense
Of tenderness immense;
Full trust on God's paternal cares;
Submission which chastisement bears;

Grief, when his goodness we offend;
Zeal, to his likeness to ascend;
Will, from the world refined,
To his sole will resigned:
These graces in God's children shine,
Reflections of the love divine.

* * * * *

God's Son co-equal taught us all
In prayer his Father ours to call:
With confidence in need,
We to our Father speed:
Of his own Son the language dear
Intenerates the Father's ear. *makes tender.*

Thou Father art, though to my shame,
I often forfeit that dear name;
But since for sin I grieve,
Me father-like receive;
O melt me into filial tears,
To pay of love my vast arrears.

* * * * *

O Spirit of Adoption! spread
Thy wings enamouring o'er my head;
O Filial love immense!
Raise me to love intense;
O Father, source of love divine,
My powers to love and hymn incline!

While God my Father I revere,
Nor all hell powers, nor death I fear;
I am my Father's care;
His succours present are.
All comes from my loved Father's will,
And that sweet name intends no ill.

God's Son his soul, when life he closed,
In his dear Father's hands reposed:
I'll, when my last I breathe,
My soul to God bequeath;
And panting for the joys on high,
Invoking Love Paternal, die.

Born in 1657, one of the later English Platonists, John Norris, who, with how many incumbents between I do not know, succeeded George Herbert in the cure of Bemerton, has left a few poems, which would have been better if he had not been possessed with the common admiration for the rough-shod rhythms of Abraham Cowley.

Here is one in which the peculiarities of his theories show themselves very prominently. There is a constant tendency in such to wander into the region half-spiritual, half-material.

THE ASPIRATION.

How long, great God, how long must I
Immured in this dark prison lie;
My soul must watch to have intelligence;
Where at the grates and avenues of sense

Where but faint gleams of thee salute my sight,
Like doubtful moonshine in a cloudy night?
When shall I leave this magic sphere,
And be all mind, all eye, all ear?

How cold this clime! And yet my sense
Perceives even here thy influence.
Even here thy strong magnetic charms I feel,
And pant and tremble like the amorous steel.
To lower good, and beauties less divine,
Sometimes my erroneous needle does decline,
But yet, so strong the sympathy,
It turns, and points again to thee.

I long to see this excellence
Which at such distance strikes my sense.
My impatient soul struggles to disengage
Her wings from the confinement of her cage.
Wouldst thou, great Love, this prisoner once set free,
How would she hasten to be linked to thee!
She'd for no angels' conduct stay,
But fly, and love on all the way.

THE RETURN.

Dear Contemplation! my divinest joy!
When I thy sacred mount ascend,
What heavenly sweets my soul employ!
Why can't I there my days for ever spend?
When I have conquered thy steep heights with pain,
What pity 'tis that I must down again!

And yet I must: my passions would rebel
Should I too long continue here:
No, here I must not think to dwell,
But mind the duties of my proper sphere.
So angels, though they heaven's glories know,
Forget not to attend their charge below.

The old hermits thought to overcome their impulses by retiring from the world: our Platonist has

discovered for himself that the world of duty is the only sphere in which they can be combated. Never perhaps is a saint more in danger of giving way to impulse, let it be anger or what it may, than in the moment when he has just descended from this mount of contemplation.

We find ourselves now in the zone of *hymn*-writing. From this period, that is, from towards the close of the seventeenth century, a large amount of the fervour of the country finds vent in hymns: they are innumerable. With them the scope of my book would not permit me to deal, even had I inclination thitherward, and knowledge enough to undertake their history. But I am not therefore precluded from presenting any hymn whose literary excellence makes it worthy.

It is with especial pleasure that I refer to a little book which was once a household treasure in a multitude of families,[1] the *Spiritual Songs* of John Mason, a clergyman in the county of Buckingham. The date of his birth does not appear to be known, but the first edition of these songs [2] was published in 1683. Dr. Watts was very fond of them: would that he had written with similar modesty of style! A few

[1] The first I ever saw of its hymns was on a broad-sheet of Christmas Carols, with coloured pictures, printed in Seven Dials.

[2] They passed through twenty editions, not to mention one lately published (*by Daniel Sedgwick, of* 81, *Sun-street, Bishopsgate, a man who, concerning hymns and their writers, knows more than any other man I have met*), from which, carefully edited, I have gathered all my *information*, although I had known the book itself for many years.

of them are still popular in congregational singing. Here is the first in the book:

A GENERAL SONG OF PRAISE TO ALMIGHTY GOD.

How shall I sing that Majesty
  Which angels do admire?
Let dust in dust and silence lie;
  Sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.
Thousands of thousands stand around
  Thy throne, O God most high;
Ten thousand times ten thousand sound
  Thy praise; but who am I?

Thy brightness unto them appears,
  Whilst I thy footsteps trace;
A sound of God comes to my ears;
  But they behold thy face.
They sing because thou art their sun:
  Lord, send a beam on me;
For where heaven is but once begun,
  There hallelujahs be.

Enlighten with faith's light my heart;
  Enflame it with love's fire;
Then shall I sing and bear a part
  With that celestial choir.
I shall, I fear, be dark and cold,
  With all my fire and light;
Yet when thou dost accept their gold,
  Lord, treasure up my mite.

How great a being, Lord, is thine,
  Which doth all beings keep!
Thy knowledge is the only line
  To sound so vast a deep.
Thou art a sea without a shore,
  A sun without a sphere;
Thy time is now and evermore,
  Thy place is everywhere.

How good art thou, whose goodness is
Our parent, nurse, and guide!
Whose streams do water Paradise,
And all the earth beside!
Thine upper and thy nether springs
Make both thy worlds to thrive;
Under thy warm and sheltering wings
Thou keep'st two broods alive.

Thy arm of might, most mighty king
Both rocks and hearts doth break:
My God, thou canst do everything
But what should show thee weak.
Thou canst not cross thyself, or be
Less than thyself, or poor;
But whatsoever pleaseth thee,
That canst thou do, and more.

Who would not fear thy searching eye,
Witness to all that's true!
Dark Hell, and deep Hypocrisy
Lie plain before its view.
Motions and thoughts before they grow,
Thy knowledge doth espy;
What unborn ages are to do,
Is done before thine eye.

Thy wisdom which both makes and mends,
We ever much admire:
Creation all our wit transcends;
Redemption rises higher.
Thy wisdom guides strayed sinners home,
'Twill make the dead world rise,
And bring those prisoners to their doom:
Its paths are mysteries.

Great is thy truth, and shall prevail
To unbelievers' shame:
Thy truth and years do never fail;
Thou ever art the same.
Unbelief is a raging wave
Dashing against a rock:
If God doth not his Israel save,
Then let Egyptians mock.

Most pure and holy are thine eyes,
  Most holy is thy name ;
Thy saints, and laws, and penalties,
  Thy holiness proclaim.
This is the devil's scourge and sting,
  This is the angels' song,
Who *holy, holy, holy* sing,
  In heavenly Canaan's tongue.

Mercy, that shining attribute,
  The sinner's hope and plea !
Huge hosts of sins in their pursuit,
  Are drowned in thy Red Sea.
Mercy is God's memorial,
  And in all ages praised :
My God, thine only Son did fall,
  That Mercy might be raised.

Thy bright back-parts, O God of grace,
  I humbly here adore :
Show me thy glory and thy face,
  That I may praise thee more.
Since none can see thy face and live,
  For me to die is best :
Through Jordan's streams who would not dive,
  To land at Canaan's rest ?

To these *Songs of Praise* is appended another series called *Penitential Cries*, by the Rev. Thomas Shepherd, who, for a short time a clergyman in Buckinghamshire, became the minister of the Congregational church at Northampton, afterwards under the care of Doddridge. Although he was an imitator of Mason, some of his hymns are admirable. The following I think one of the best :—

FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD.

Alas, my God, that we should be
  Such strangers to each other !
O that as friends we might agree,
  And walk and talk together !

Thou know'st my soul does dearly love
The place of thine abode;
No music drops so sweet a sound
As these two words, *My God.*

* * * *

May I taste that communion, Lord,
Thy people have with thee?
Thy spirit daily talks with them,
O let it talk with me!
Like Enoch, let me walk with God,
And thus walk out my day,
Attended with the heavenly guards,
Upon the king's highway.

When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?
O come, my Lord most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still:
I'm well when thou art near.

* * * *

When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?
For, till thou dost appear,
I count each moment for a day,
Each minute for a year.

* * * *

There's no such thing as pleasure here;
My Jesus is my all:
As thou dost shine or disappear,
My pleasures rise and fall.
Come, spread thy savour on my frame—
No sweetness is so sweet;
Till I get up to sing thy name
Where all thy singers meet.

In the writings of both we recognize a straightforwardness of expression equal to that of Wither, and a quaint simplicity of thought and form like that of Herrick; while the very charm of some of the best lines is their spontaneity. The men have just enough mysticism to afford them homeliest figures for deepest feelings.

I turn to the accomplished Joseph Addison.

He was born in 1672. His religious poems are so well known, and are for the greater part so ordinary in everything but their simplicity of composition, that I should hardly have cared to choose one, had it not been that we owe him much gratitude for what he did, in the reigns of Anne and George I., to purify the moral taste of the English people at a time when the influence of the clergy was not for elevation, and to teach the love of a higher literature when Milton was little known and less esteemed. Especially are we indebted to him for his modest and admirable criticism of the *Paradise Lost* in the *Spectator*.

Of those few poems to which I have referred, I choose the best known, because it is the best. It has to me a charm for which I can hardly account.

Yet I imagine I see in it a sign of the poetic times: a flatness of spirit, arising from the evanishment of the mystical element, begins to result in a worship of power. Neither power nor wisdom, though infinite both, could constitute a God worthy of the worship of a human soul; and the worship of such a God must sink to the level of that fancied divinity. Small wonder is it then that the lyric should now droop its wings and moult the feathers of its praise. I do not say that God's more glorious attributes are already forgotten, but that the tendency of the Christian lyric is now to laudation of power—and knowledge, a form of the same—as *the* essential of Godhead. This indicates no recalling of metaphysical

questions, such as we have met in foregoing verse, but a decline towards system; a rising passion—if anything so cold may be called *a passion*—for the reduction of all things to the forms of the understanding, a declension which has prepared the way for the present worship of science, and its refusal, if not denial, of all that cannot be proved in forms of the intellect.

The hymn which has led to these remarks is still good, although, like the loveliness of the red and lowering west, it gives sign of a gray and cheerless dawn, under whose dreariness the child will first doubt if his father loves him, and next doubt if he has a father at all, and is not a mere foundling that Nature has lifted from her path.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue etherial sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun from day to day
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale;
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets, in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?

In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing as they shine :
"The hand that made us is divine."

The very use of the words *spangled* and *frame* seems—to my fancy only, it may be—to indicate a tendency towards the unworthy and theatrical. Yet the second stanza is lovely beyond a doubt; and the whole is most artistic, although after a tame fashion. Whether indeed the heavenly bodies *teach* what he says, or whether we should read divinity worthy of the name in them at all, without the human revelation which healed men, I doubt much. That divinity is there—*Yes;* that we could read it there without having seen the face of the Son of Man first, I think —*No.* I do not therefore dare imagine that no revelation dimly leading towards such result glimmered in the hearts of God's chosen amongst Jews and Gentiles before he came. What I say is, that power and order, although of God, and preparing the way for him, are not his revealers unto men. No doubt King David compares the perfection of God's law to the glory of the heavens, but he did not learn that perfection from the heavens, but from the law itself, revealed in his own heart through the life-teaching of God. When he had learned it he saw that the heavens were like it.

To unveil God, only manhood like our own will serve. And he has taken the form of man that he might reveal the manhood in him from awful eternity.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLAIN.

BUT Addison's tameness is wonderfully lovely beside the fervours of a man of honoured name,—Dr. Isaac Watts, born in 1674. The result must be dreadful where fervour will poetize without the aidful restraints of art and modesty. If any man would look upon absurdity in the garb of sobriety, let him search Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis:* Dr. Watts's *Lyrics* are as bad; they are fantastic to utter folly. An admiration of "the incomparable Mr. Cowley" did the sense of them more injury than the imitation of his rough-cantering ode could do their rhythm. The sentimentalities of Roman Catholic writers towards our Lord and his mother, are not half so offensive as the courtier-like flatteries Dr. Watts offers to the Most High. To say nothing of the irreverence, the vulgarity is offensive. He affords another instance amongst thousands how little the form in which feeling is expressed has to do with the feeling itself. In him the thought is true, the form of its utterance false; the feeling lovely, the word, often to a degree, repulsive. The ugly web is

crossed now and then by a fine line, and even damasked with an occasional good poem: I have found two, and only two, in the whole of his seventy-five *Lyrics sacred to Devotion.* His objectivity and boldness of thought, and his freedom of utterance, cause us ever and anon to lament that he had not the humility and faith of an artist as well as of a Christian.

Almost all his symbols indicate a worship of power and of outward show.

I give the best of the two good poems I have mentioned, and very good it is.

HAPPY FRAILTY.

" How meanly dwells the immortal mind!
  How vile these bodies are!
Why was a clod of earth designed
  To enclose a heavenly star?

" Weak cottage where our souls reside!
  This flesh a tottering wall!
With frightful breaches gaping wide,
  The building bends to fall.

" All round it storms of trouble blow,
  And waves of sorrow roll;
Cold waves and winter storms beat through,
  And pain the tenant-soul.

" Alas, how frail our state!" said I,
  And thus went mourning on;
Till sudden from the cleaving sky
  A gleam of glory shone.

My soul all felt the glory come,
  And breathed her native air;
Then she remembered heaven her home,
  And she a prisoner here.

Straight she began to change her key;
And, joyful in her pains,
She sang the frailty of her clay
In pleasurable strains.

"How weak the prison is where I dwell!
Flesh but a tottering wall!
The breaches cheerfully foretell
The house must shortly fall.

"No more, my friends, shall I complain,
Though all my heart-strings ache;
Welcome disease, and every pain
That makes the cottage shake!

"Now let the tempest blow all round,
Now swell the surges high,
And beat this house of bondage down
To let the stranger fly!

"I have a mansion built above
By the eternal hand;
And should the earth's old basis move,
My heavenly house must stand.

"Yes, for 'tis there my Saviour reigns—
I long to see the God—
And his immortal strength sustains
The courts that cost him blood.

"Hark! from on high my Saviour calls:
I come, my Lord, my Love!
Devotion breaks the prison-walls,
And speeds my last remove."

His psalms and hymns are immeasurably better than his lyrics. Dreadful some of them are; and I doubt if there is one from which we would not wish stanzas, lines, and words absent. But some are very fine. The man who could write such verses as these ought not to have written as he has written:—

Had I a glance of thee, my God,
  Kingdoms and men would vanish soon;
Vanish as though I saw them not,
  As a dim candle dies at noon.

Then they might fight and rage and rave:
  I should perceive the noise no more
Than we can hear a shaking leaf
  While rattling thunders round us roar.

Some of his hymns will be sung, I fancy, so long as men praise God together; for most heartily do I grant that of all hymns I know he has produced the best for public use; but these bear a very small proportion indeed to the mass of his labour. We cannot help wishing that he had written about the twentieth part. We could not have too much of his best, such as this:

Be earth with all her scenes withdrawn;
Let noise and vanity begone:
In secret silence of the mind
My heaven, and there my God, I find;

but there is no occasion for the best to be so plentiful: a little of it will go a great way. And as our best moments are so few, how could any man write six hundred religious poems, and produce quality in proportion to quantity save in an inverse ratio?

Dr. Thomas Parnell, the well-known poet, a clergyman, born in Dublin in 1679, has written a few religious verses. The following have a certain touch of imagination and consequent grace, which distinguishes them above the swampy level of the time.

HYMN FOR EVENING.

The beam-repelling mists arise,
And evening spreads obscurer skies;
The twilight will the night forerun,
And night itself be soon begun.
Upon thy knees devoutly bow,
And pray the Lord of glory now
To fill thy breast, or deadly sin
May cause a blinder night within.
And whether pleasing vapours rise,
Which gently dim the closing eyes,
Which make the weary members blest
With sweet refreshment in their rest;
Or whether spirits[1] in the brain
Dispel their soft embrace again,
And on my watchful bed I stay,
Forsook by sleep, and waiting day;
Be God for ever in my view,
And never he forsake me too;
But still as day concludes in night,
To break again with new-born light,
His wondrous bounty let me find
With still a more enlightened mind.

* * * *

Thou that hast thy palace far
Above the moon and every star;
Thou that sittest on a throne
To which the night was never known,
Regard my voice, and make me blest
By kindly granting its request.
If thoughts on thee my soul employ,
My darkness will afford me joy,
Till thou shalt call and I shall soar,
And part with darkness evermore.

Many long and elaborate religious poems I have not even mentioned, because I cannot favour extracts,

[1] The *animal spirits* of the old physiologists.

especially in heroic couplets or blank verse. They would only make my book heavy, and destroy the song-idea. I must here pass by one of the best of such poems, *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts* of Dr. Young; nor is there anything else of his I care to quote.

I must give just one poem of Pope, born in 1688, the year of the Revolution. The flamboyant style of his *Messiah* is to me detestable: nothing can be more unlike the simplicity of Christianity. All such, equally with those by whatever hand that would be religious by being miserable, I reject at once, along with all that are merely commonplace religious exercises. But this at least is very unlike the rest of Pope's compositions: it is as simple in utterance as it is large in scope and practical in bearing. The name *Jove* may be unpleasant to some ears: it is to mine—not because it is the name given to their deity by men who had had little outward revelation, but because of the associations which the wanton poets, not the good philosophers, have gathered about it. Here let it stand, as Pope meant it, for one of the names of the Unknown God.

THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER.

Father of all! in every age,
  In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
  Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!

Thou great First Cause, least understood!
  Who all my sense confined
To know but this, that thou art good,
  And that myself am blind

Yet gave me, in this dark estate,
To see the good from ill;
And, binding Nature fast in Fate,
Left free the human will:

What Conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do—
This, teach me more than hell to shun,
That, more than heaven pursue.

What blessings thy free bounty gives,
Let me not cast away;
For God is paid when man receives:
To enjoy is to obey.

Yet not to earth's contracted span
Thy goodness let me bound,
Or think thee Lord alone of man,
When thousand worlds are round.

Let not this weak, unknowing hand
Presume thy bolts to throw,
And deal damnation round the land
On each I judge thy foe.

If I am right, thy grace impart
Still in the right to stay;
If I am wrong, O teach my heart
To find that better way.

Save me alike from foolish pride
Or impious discontent,
At aught thy wisdom has denied,
Or aught thy goodness lent.

Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see:
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.

Mean though I am—not wholly so,
Since quickened by thy breath:—
O lead me wheresoe'er I go,
Through this day's life or death.

This day, be bread and peace my lot:
All else beneath the sun
Thou know'st if best bestowed or not,
And let thy will be done.

To thee, whose temple is all space,
Whose altar, earth, sea, skies,
One chorus let all being raise!
All Nature's incense rise!

And now we come upon a strange little well in the desert. Few flowers indeed shine upon its brink, and it flows with a somewhat unmusical ripple: it is a well of the water of life notwithstanding, for its song tells of the love and truth which are the grand power of God.

John Byrom, born in Manchester in the year 1691, a man whose strength of thought and perception of truth greatly surpassed his poetic gifts, yet delighted so entirely in the poetic form that he wrote much and chiefly in it. After leaving Cambridge, he gained his livelihood for some time by teaching a shorthand of his own invention, but was so distinguished as a man of learning generally that he was chosen an F.R.S. in 1723. Coming under the influence, probably through William Law, of the writings of Jacob Böhme, the marvellous shoemaker of Görlitz in Silesia, who lived in the time of our Shakspere, and heartily adopting many of his views, he has left us a number of religious poems, which are seldom so sweet in music as they are profound in the metaphysics of religion. Here we have yet again a mystical thread running radiant athwart both warp and woof of our poetic web: the mystical thinker will ever be found the reviver of

religious poetry; and although some of the seed had come from afar both in time and space, Byrom's verse is of indigenous growth. Much of the thought of the present day will be found in his verses. Here is a specimen of his metrical argumentation. It is taken from a series of *Meditations for every Day in Passion Week.*

WEDNESDAY.

Christ satisfieth the justice of God by fulfilling all righteousness.

Justice demandeth satisfaction—yes;
And ought to have it where injustice is:
But there is none in God—it cannot mean
Demand of justice where it has full reign:
To dwell in man it rightfully demands,
Such as he came from his Creator's hands.

Man had departed from a righteous state,
Which he at first must have, if God create:
'Tis therefore called God's righteousness, and must
Be satisfied by man's becoming just;
Must exercise good vengeance upon men,
Till it regain its rights in them again.

This was the justice for which Christ became
A man to satisfy its righteous claim;
Became Redeemer of the human race,
That sin in them to justice might give place:
To satisfy a just and righteous will,
Is neither more nor less than to fulfil.

* * * *

Here are two stanzas of one of more mystical reflection:

A PENITENTIAL SOLILOQUY.

What though no objects strike upon the sight!
Thy sacred presence is an inward light.
What though no sounds shall penetrate the ear!
To listening thought the voice of truth is clear.
Sincere devotion needs no outward shrine;
The centre of an humble soul is thine.

There may I worship ! and there mayst thou place
Thy seat of mercy, and thy throne of grace !
Yea, fix, if Christ my advocate appear,
The dread tribunal of thy justice there !
Let each vain thought, let each impure desire
Meet in thy wrath with a consuming fire.

And here are two of more lyrical favour.

THE SOUL'S TENDENCY TOWARDS ITS TRUE CENTRE.

Stones towards the earth descend ;
  Rivers to the ocean roll ;
Every motion has some end :
  What is thine, beloved soul ?

" Mine is, where my Saviour is ;
  There with him I hope to dwell :
Jesu is the central bliss ;
  Love the force that doth impel."

Truly thou hast answered right :
  Now may heaven's attractive grace
Towards the source of thy delight
  Speed along thy quickening pace !

" Thank thee for thy generous care :
  Heaven, that did the wish inspire,
Through thy instrumental prayer,
  Plumes the wings of my desire.

" Now, methinks, aloft I fly ;
  Now with angels bear a part :
Glory be to God on high !
  Peace to every Christian heart ! "

THE ANSWER TO THE DESPONDING SOUL.

Cheer up, desponding soul ;
  Thy longing pleased I see :
'Tis part of that great whole
  Wherewith I longed for thee.

Wherewith I longed for thee,
And left my Father's throne,
From death to set thee free,
To claim thee for my own.

To claim thee for my own,
I suffered on the cross:
O! were my love but known,
No soul could fear its loss.

No soul could fear its loss,
But, filled with love divine,
Would die on its own cross,
And rise for ever mine.

Surely there is poetry as well as truth in this. But, certainly in general, his thought is far in excess of his poetry.

Here are a few verses which I shall once more entitle

DIVINE EPIGRAMS.

With peaceful mind thy race of duty run:
God nothing does, or suffers to be done,
But what thou wouldst thyself, if thou couldst see
Through all events of things as well as he.

Think, and be careful what thou art within,
For there is sin in the desire of sin:
Think and be thankful, in a different case,
For there is grace in the desire of grace.

An heated fancy or imagination
May be mistaken for an inspiration;
True; but is this conclusion fair to make—
That inspiration must be all mistake?
A pebble-stone is not a diamond: true;
But must a diamond be a pebble too?

To own a God who does not speak to men,
Is first to own, and then disown again;
Of all idolatry the total sum
Is having gods that are both deaf and dumb.

What is more tender than a mother's love
  To the sweet infant fondling in her arms?
What arguments need her compassion move
  To hear its cries, and help it in its harms?
Now, if the tenderest mother were possessed
Of all the love within her single breast
Of all the mothers since the world began,
'Tis nothing to the love of God to man.

Faith, Hope, and Love were questioned what they thought
Of future glory which Religion taught:
Now Faith believed it firmly to be true,
And Hope expected so to find it too:
Love answered, smiling with a conscious glow,
"Believe? Expect? I *know* it to be so."

CHAPTER XX.

THE ROOTS OF THE HILLS.

IN the poems of James Thomson, we find two hymns to the God of Creation—one in blank verse, the other in stanzas. They are of the kind which from him we should look for. The one in blank verse, which is as an epilogue to his great poem, *The Seasons*, I prefer.

We owe much to Thomson. Born (in Scotland) in the year 1700, he is the leading priest in a solemn procession to find God—not in the laws by which he has ordered his creation, but in the beauty which is the outcome of those laws. I do not say there is much of the relation of man to nature in his writing; but thitherward it tends. He is true about the outsides of God; and in Thomson we begin to feel that the revelation of God as *meaning* and therefore *being* the loveliness of nature, is about to be recognized. I do not say—to change my simile—that he is the first visible root in our literature whence we can follow the outburst of the flowers and foliage of our delight in nature: I could show a hundred fibres leading from the depths of our old literature up to the great root.

Nor is it surprising that, with his age about him, he too should be found tending to magnify, not God's Word, but his works, above all his name: we have beauty for loveliness; beneficence for tenderness. I have wondered whether one great part of Napoleon's mission was not to wake people from this idolatry of the power of God to the adoration of his love.

The *Hymn* holds a kind of middle place between the *Morning Hymn* in the 5th Book of the *Paradise Lost* and the *Hymn in the Vale of Chamouni.* It would be interesting and instructive to compare the three; but we have not time. Thomson has been influenced by Milton, and Coleridge by both. We have delight in Milton; art in Thomson; heart, including both, in Coleridge.

HYMN.

These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God. The rolling year
Is full of thee. Forth in the pleasing Spring
Thy beauty walks, thy tenderness and love.
Wide flush the fields; the softening air is balm;
Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;
And every sense and every heart is joy.
Then comes thy glory in the Summer months,
With light and heat refulgent. Then thy sun
Shoots full perfection through the swelling year
And oft thy voice in dreadful thunder speaks,
And oft at dawn, deep noon, or falling eve,
By brooks and groves, in hollow-whispering gales.[1]

[1] In the following five lines I have adopted the reading of the first edition, which, although a little florid, I prefer to the scanty two lines of the later.

A yellow-floating pomp, thy bounty shines
In Autumn unconfined. Thrown from thy lap,
Profuse o'er nature, falls the lucid shower
Of beamy fruits; and, in a radiant stream,
Into the stores of sterile Winter pours.
In winter awful thou! with clouds and storms
Around thee thrown—tempest o'er tempest rolled.
Majestic darkness! on the whirlwind's wing
Riding sublime, thou bidst the world adore,[1]
And humblest nature with thy northern blast.

Mysterious round! what skill, what force divine
Deep felt, in these appear! a simple train,
Yet so delightful mixed, with such kind art,
Such beauty and beneficence combined!
Shade unperceived so softening into shade!
And all so forming an harmonious whole,
That, as they still succeed, they ravish still.

* * * *

Nature attend! Join, every living soul,
Beneath the spacious temple of the sky—
In adoration join; and, ardent, raise
One general song! To him, ye vocal gales,
Breathe soft, whose spirit in your freshness breathes;
Oh! talk of him in solitary glooms,
Where, o'er the rock, the scarcely waving pine
Fills the brown shade with a religious awe;
And ye, whose bolder note is heard afar,
Who shake the astonished world, lift high to heaven
The impetuous song, and say from whom you rage.
His praise, ye brooks, attune,—ye trembling rills,
And let me catch it as I muse along.
Ye headlong torrents, rapid and profound;
Ye softer floods, that lead the humid maze
Along the vale; and thou, majestic main,
A secret world of wonders in thyself,
Sound his stupendous praise, whose greater voice
Or bids you roar, or bids your roarings fall.

[1] False in feeling, nor like God at all, although a ready pagan representation of him. There is much of the pagan left in many Christians —poets too.

Soft roll your incense, herbs, and fruits, and flowers,
In mingled clouds to him whose sun exalts,
Whose breath perfumes you, and whose pencil paints
Ye forests, bend, ye harvests, wave to him;
Breathe your still song into the reaper's heart,
As home he goes beneath the joyous moon.

* * * *

Bleat out afresh, ye hills! ye mossy rocks,
Retain the sound; the broad responsive low,
Ye valleys raise; for the great Shepherd reigns,
And his unsuffering kingdom yet will come.

* * * *

Ye chief, for whom the whole creation smiles,
At once the head, the heart, and tongue of all,
Crown the great hymn! in swarming cities vast,
Assembled men, to the deep organ join
The long-resounding voice, oft breaking clear,
At solemn pauses, through the swelling base;
And, as each mingling flame increases each,
In one united ardour rise to heaven.

* * * *

Should fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on the Atlantic isles, 'tis nought to me,
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full;
And where he vital breathes there must be joy.

* * * *

The worship of intellectual power in laws and inventions is the main delight of the song; not the living presence of creative love, which never sings its own praises, but spends itself in giving. Still, although there has passed away a glory from the world of song, although the fervour of childlike worship has vanished for a season, there are signs in these verses

of a new dawn of devotion. Even the exclusive and therefore blind worship of science will, when it has turned the coil of the ascending spiral, result in a new song to "him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." But first, for a long time, the worship of power will go on. There is one sonnet by Kirke White, eighty-five years younger than Thomson, which is quite pagan in its mode of glorifying the power of the Deity.

But about the same time when Thomson's *Seasons* was published, which was in 1730, the third year of George II., that life which had burned on in the hidden corners of the church in spite of the worldliness and sensuality of its rulers, began to show a flame destined to enlarge and spread until it should have lighted up the mass with an outburst of Christian faith and hope. I refer to the movement called Methodism, in the midst of which, at an early stage of its history, arose the directing energies of John Wesley, a man sent of God to deepen at once and purify its motive influences. What he and his friends taught, would, I presume, in its essence, amount mainly to this: that acquiescence in the doctrines of the church is no fulfilment of duty—or anything, indeed, short of an obedient recognition of personal relation to God, who has sent every man the message of present salvation in his Son. A new life began to bud and blossom from the dry stem of the church. The spirit moved upon the waters of feeling, and the new undulation broke on the shores of thought in an outburst of new song. For while John Wesley

roused the hearts of the people to sing, his brother Charles put songs in their mouths.

I do not say that many of these songs possess much literary merit, but many of them are real lyrics: they have that essential element, song, in them. The following, however, is a very fine poem. That certain expressions in it may not seem offensive, it is necessary to keep the allegory of Jacob and the Angel in full view — even better in view, perhaps, than the writer does himself.

WRESTLING JACOB.

Come, O thou traveller unknown,
  Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
  And I am left alone with thee!
With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day!

I need not tell thee who I am,
  My misery or sin declare;
Thyself hast called me by my name:
  Look on my hands, and read it there!
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

In vain thou strugglest to get free:
  I never will unloose my hold.
Art thou the man that died for me?
  The secret of thy love unfold.
Wrestling, I will not let thee go
Till I thy name, thy nature know.

* * *

What though my sinking flesh complain,
  And murmur to contend so long!

I rise superior to my pain :
  When I am weak, then I am strong ;
And when my all of strength shall fail,
I shall with the God-man prevail.

My strength is gone ; my nature dies ;
  I sink beneath thy weighty hand :
Faint to revive, and fall to rise ;
  I fall, and yet by faith I stand—
I stand, and will not let thee go
Till I thy name, thy nature know.

Yield to me now, for I am weak,
  But confident in self-despair ;
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak ;
  Be conquered by my instant[1] prayer.
Speak, or thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me if thy name is Love.

'Tis Love ! 'tis Love ! Thou diedst for me !
  I hear thy whisper in my heart !
The morning breaks ; the shadows flee :
  Pure universal Love thou art !
To me, to all, thy bowels move :
Thy nature and thy name is Love !

My prayer hath power with God ; the grace
  Unspeakable I now receive ;
Through faith I see thee face to face—
  I see thee face to face, and live :
In vain I have not wept and strove ;
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

I know thee, Saviour—who thou art—
  Jesus, the feeble sinner's friend !
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
  But stay and love me to the end !
Thy mercies never shall remove :
Thy nature and thy name is Love !

* * *

Contented now, upon my thigh
  I halt till life's short journey end ;

[1] *Insisting—persistent.*

All helplessness, all weakness, I
  On thee alone for strength depend;
Nor have I power from thee to move:
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

Lame as I am, I take the prey;
  Hell, earth, and sin, with ease o'ercome;
I leap for joy, pursue my way,
  And as a bounding hart fly home;
Through all eternity to prove
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

It seems to me that the art with which his very difficult end in the management of the allegory is reached, is admirable. I have omitted three stanzas.

I cannot give much from William Cowper. His poems — graceful always, and often devout even when playful—have few amongst them that are expressly religious, while the best of his hymns are known to every reader of such. Born in 1731, he was greatly influenced by the narrow theology that prevailed in his circle; and most of his hymns are marred by the exclusiveness which belonged to the system and not to the man. There is little of it in the following:—

Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
  From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still
  His most successful war.

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
  With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by thy sweet bounty made
  For those who follow thee.

There if thy spirit touch the soul,
  And grace her mean abode,
Oh with what peace, and joy, and love,
  She communes with her God!

There, like the nightingale, she pours
  Her solitary lays,
Nor asks a witness of her song,
  Nor thirsts for human praise.

Author and guardian of my life,
  Sweet source of light divine,
And—all harmonious names in one—
  My Saviour, thou art mine!

What thanks I owe thee, and what love—
  A boundless, endless store—
Shall echo through the realms above
  When time shall be no more.

Sad as was Cowper's history, with the vapours of a low insanity, if not always filling his garden, yet ever brooding on the hill-tops of his horizon, he was, through his faith in God, however darkened by the introversions of a neat, poverty-stricken theology, yet able to lead his life to the end. It is delightful to discover that, when science, which is the anatomy of nature, had poisoned the theology of the country, in creating a demand for clean-cut theory in infinite affairs, the loveliness and truth of the countenance of living nature could calm the mind which this theology had irritated to the very borders of madness, and give a peace and hope which the man was altogether right in attributing to the Spirit of God. How many have been thus comforted, who knew not, like Wordsworth, the immediate channel of their comfort; or even, with Cowper, recognized its source! God gives while men sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE NEW VISION.

WILLIAM BLAKE, the painter of many strange and fantastic but often powerful—sometimes very beautiful pictures—wrote poems of an equally remarkable kind. Some of them are as lovely as they are careless, while many present a curious contrast in the apparent incoherence of the simplest language. He was born in 1757, towards the close of the reign of George II. Possibly if he had been sent to an age more capable of understanding him, his genius would not have been tempted to utter itself with such a wildness as appears to indicate hopeless indifference to being understood. We cannot tell sometimes whether to attribute the bewilderment the poems cause in us to a mysticism run wild, or to regard it as the reflex of madness in the writer. Here is a lyrical gem, however, although not cut with mathematical precision.

DAYBREAK.

To find the western path,
Right through the gates of wrath
I urge my way;
Sweet morning leads me on:
With soft repentant moan,
I see the break of day.

The war of swords and spears,
Melted by dewy tears,
Exhales on high;
The sun is freed from fears,
And with soft grateful tears,
Ascends the sky.

The following is full of truth most quaintly expressed, with a homeliness of phrase quite delicious. It is one of the *Songs of Innocence*, published, as we learn from Gilchrist's Life of Blake, in the year 1789. They were engraved on copper with illustrations by Blake, and printed and bound by his wife. When we consider them in respect of the time when they were produced, we find them marvellous for their originality and simplicity.

ON ANOTHER'S SORROW.

Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
No, no; never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

And can he, who smiles on all,
Hear the wren, with sorrows small—
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast?
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear?

And not sit both night and day,
Wiping all our tears away?
Oh, no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

He doth give his joy to all';
He becomes an infant small;
He becomes a man of woe;
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

Oh! he gives to us his joy,
That our grief he may destroy:
Till our grief is fled and gone,
He doth sit by us and moan.

There is our mystic yet again leading the way.

A supreme regard for science, and the worship of power, go hand in hand: that knowledge is power has been esteemed the grandest incitement to study. Yet the antidote to the disproportionate cultivation of science, is simply power in its crude form—breaking out, that is, as brute force. When science, isolated and glorified, has produced a contempt, not only for vulgar errors, but for the truths which are incapable of scientific proof, then, as we see in the French Revolution, the wild beast in man breaks from its den, and chaos returns. But all the noblest minds in Europe looked for grand things in the aurora of this uprising of the people. To the terrible disappointment that followed, we are indebted for the training of Wordsworth to the priesthood of nature's temple. So was he possessed with the hope of a coming deliverance for

the nations, that he spent many months in France during the Revolution. At length he was forced to seek safety at home. Dejected even to hopelessness for a time, he believed in nothing. How could there be a God that ruled in the earth when such a rising sun of promise was permitted to set in such a sea! But for man to worship himself is a far more terrible thing than that blood should flow like water: the righteous plague of God allowed things to go as they would for a time. But the power of God came upon Wordsworth—I cannot say as it had never come before, but with an added insight which made him recognize in the fresh gift all that he had known and felt of such in the past. To him, as to Cowper, the benignities of nature restored peace and calmness and hope—sufficient to enable him to look back and gather wisdom. He was first troubled, then quieted, and then taught. Such presence of the Father has been an infinitely more active power in the redemption of men than men have yet become capable of perceiving. The divine expressions of Nature, that is, the face of the Father therein visible, began to heal the plague which the worship of knowledge had bred. And the power of her teaching grew from comfort to prayer, as will be seen in the poem I shall give. Higher than all that Nature can do in the way of direct lessoning, is the production of such holy moods as result in hope, conscience of duty, and supplication. Those who have never felt it have to be told there is in her such a power—yielding to which, the meek inherit the earth.

NINTH EVENING VOLUNTARY.

Composed upon an evening of extraordinary splendour and beauty.

I.

Had this effulgence disappeared
With flying haste, I might have sent
Among the speechless clouds a look
Of blank astonishment;
But 'tis endued with power to stay,
And sanctify one closing day,
That frail Mortality may see—
What is?—ah no, but what *can* be!
Time was when field and watery cove
With modulated echoes rang,
While choirs of fervent angels sang
Their vespers in the grove;
Or, crowning, star-like, each some sovereign height,
Warbled, for heaven above and earth below,
Strains suitable to both.—Such holy rite,
Methinks, if audibly repeated now
From hill or valley could not move
Sublimer transport, purer love,
Than doth this silent spectacle—the gleam—
The shadow—and the peace supreme!

II.

No sound is uttered,—but a deep
And solemn harmony pervades
The hollow vale from steep to steep,
And penetrates the glades.
Far distant images draw nigh,
Called forth by wondrous potency
Of beamy radiance, that imbues
Whate'er it strikes with gem-like hues.
In vision exquisitely clear,
Herds range along the mountain side,
And glistening antlers are descried,
And gilded flocks appear.

Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!
But long as godlike wish or hope divine
Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe
That this magnificence is wholly thine!
From worlds nor quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won;
An intermingling of heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread!

III.

And if there be whom broken ties
Afflict, or injuries assail,
Yon hazy ridges to their eyes
Present a glorious scale[1]
Climbing suffused with sunny air,
To stop—no record hath told where;
And tempting Fancy to ascend,
And with immortal spirits blend!
—Wings at my shoulders seem to play!
But, rooted here, I stand and gaze
On those bright steps that heavenward raise
Their practicable way.
Come forth, ye drooping old men, look abroad,
And see to what fair countries ye are bound!
And if some traveller, weary of his road,
Hath slept since noontide on the grassy ground,
Ye genii, to his covert speed,
And wake him with such gentle heed
As may attune his soul to meet the dower
Bestowed on this transcendent hour.

IV.

Such hues from their celestial urn
Were wont to stream before mine eye
Where'er it wandered in the morn
Of blissful infancy.
This glimpse of glory, why renewed?
Nay, rather speak with gratitude;

[1] Great cloudy ridges, one rising above the other, like a grand stair up to the heavens. *See Wordsworth's note.*

For, if a vestige of those gleams
Survived, 'twas only in my dreams.
Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve
No less than nature's threatening voice,
If aught unworthy be my choice,
From THEE if I would swerve;
Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light
Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
Which, at this moment, on my waking sight
Appears to shine, by miracle restored:
My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth!
—'Tis past; the visionary splendour fades;
And night approaches with her shades.

Although I have mentioned Wordsworth before Coleridge because he was two years older, yet Coleridge had much to do with the opening of Wordsworth's eyes to such visions; as, indeed, more than any man in our times, he has opened the eyes of the English people to see wonderful things. There is little of a directly religious kind in his poetry; yet we find in him what we miss in Wordsworth, an inclined plane from the revelation in nature to the culminating revelation in the Son of Man. Somehow, I say, perhaps because we find it in his prose, we feel more of this in Coleridge's verse.

Coleridge is a sage, and Wordsworth is a seer; yet when the sage sees, that is, when, like the son of Beor, he falls into a trance having his eyes open, or, when feeling and sight are one and philosophy is in abeyance, the ecstasy is even loftier in Coleridge than in Wordsworth. In their highest moods they seem almost to change places—Wordsworth to become sage, and Coleridge seer. Perhaps the grandest hymn

of praise which man, the mouth-piece of Nature, utters for her, is the hymn of Mont Blanc.

HYMN

Before sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni.

Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star
In his steep course—so long he seems to pause
On thy bald awful head, O sovran Blanc?
The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form!
Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
How silently! Around thee and above
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it
As with a wedge! But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity!
O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
Yea, with my life and life's own secret joy;
Till the dilating soul, enwrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing—there
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven!

Awake, my soul! Not only passive praise
Thou owest! Not alone these swelling tears,
Mute thanks and secret ecstasy! Awake,
Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!
Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my hymn.

Thou first and chief, sole sovran[1] of the Vale!
O struggling with the darkness all the night,

[1] The mountain.

And visited all night by troops of stars,[1]
Or when they climb the sky or when they sink!
Companion of the morning-star at dawn,
Thyself earth's rosy star, and of the dawn[2]
Co-herald! wake, O wake, and utter praise!
Who sank thy sunless pillars deep in earth?
Who filled thy countenance with rosy light?
Who made thee parent of perpetual streams?

And you, ye five wild torrents fiercely glad!
Who called you forth from night and utter death,
From dark and icy caverns called you forth,[3]
Down those precipitous, black, jagged rocks,
For ever shattered, and the same for ever?
Who gave you your invulnerable life,
Your strength, your speed, your fury, and your joy,
Unceasing thunder, and eternal foam?
And who commanded—and the silence came—
Here let the billows stiffen, and have rest?[4]

Ye ice-falls! ye that from the mountain's brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain—
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!—
Motionless torrents! silent cataracts!
Who made you glorious as the gates of heaven
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?—
God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, *God!*
God! sing, ye meadow-streams, with gladsome voice!
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, *God!*

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[1] These two lines are just the symbol for the life of their author.

[2] From the rose-light on the snow of its peak.

[3] They all flow from under the glaciers, fed by their constant melting.

[4] Turning for contrast to the glaciers, which he apostrophizes in the next line.

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost!
Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest!
Ye eagles, playmates of the mountain-storm!
Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds!
Ye signs and wonders of the element!
Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise.

Thou too, hoar Mount! with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose[1] feet the avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene
Into the depth of clouds that veil thy breast—
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That, as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration—upward from thy base
Slow-travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears—
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me! rise, O ever rise;
Rise like a cloud of incense from the earth!
Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills!
Thou dread ambassador from earth to heaven!
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.

Here is one little poem I think most valuable, both from its fulness of meaning, and the form, as clear as condensed, in which that is embodied.

ON AN INFANT

Which died before baptism.

"*Be* rather than *be called* a child of God,"
Death whispered. With assenting nod,
Its head upon its mother's breast
The baby bowed without demur—
Of the kingdom of the blest
Possessor, not inheritor.

[1] Antecedent, *peaks*.

Next the father let me place the gifted son, Hartley Coleridge. He was born in 1796, and died in 1849. Strange, wayward, and in one respect faulty, as his life was, his poetry—strange, and exceedingly wayward too—is often very lovely. The following sonnet is all I can find room for:—

"SHE LOVED MUCH."

She sat and wept beside his feet. The weight
Of sin oppressed her heart; for all the blame,
And the poor malice of the worldly shame,
To her was past, extinct, and out of date;
Only the *sin* remained—the leprous state.
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.
She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blest to touch;
And he wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
I am a sinner, full of doubts and fears:
Make me a humble thing of love and tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FERVOUR OF THE IMPLICIT. INSIGHT OF THE HEART.

THE late Dean Milman, born in 1791, best known by his very valuable labours in history, may be taken as representing a class of writers in whom the poetic fire is ever on the point, and only on the point, of breaking into a flame. His composition is admirable — refined, scholarly, sometimes rich and even gorgeous in expression—yet lacking that radiance of the unutterable to which the loftiest words owe their grandest power. Perhaps the best representative of his style is the hymn on the Incarnation, in his dramatic poem, *The Fall of Jerusulem.* But as an extract it is tolerably known. I prefer giving one from his few *Hymns for Church Service.*

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

When God came down from heaven—the living God—
  What signs and wonders marked his stately way?
Brake out the winds in music where he trod?
  Shone o'er the heavens a brighter, softer day?

The dumb began to speak, the blind to see,
  And the lame leaped, and pain and paleness fled;
The mourner's sunken eye grew bright with glee,
  And from the tomb awoke the wondering dead.

When God went back to heaven—the living God—
  Rode he the heavens upon a fiery car?
Waved seraph-wings along his glorious road?
  Stood still to wonder each bright wandering star?

Upon the cross he hung, and bowed his head,
  And prayed for them that smote, and them that curst;
And, drop by drop, his slow life-blood was shed,
  And his last hour of suffering was his worst.

The Christian Year of the Rev. John Keble (born in 1800) is perhaps better known in England than any other work of similar church character. I must confess I have never been able to enter into the enthusiasm of its admirers. Excellent, both in regard of their literary and religious merits, true in feeling and thorough in finish, the poems always remind me of Berlin work in iron—hard and delicate. Here is a portion of one of the best of them.

ST. MATTHEW.

Ye hermits blest, ye holy maids,
  The nearest heaven on earth,
Who talk with God in shadowy glades,
  Free from rude care and mirth;
To whom some viewless teacher brings
  The secret lore of rural things,
The moral of each fleeting cloud and gale,
The whispers from above, that haunt the twilight vale:

Say, when in pity ye have gazed
  On the wreath'd smoke afar,
That o'er some town, like mist upraised,
  Hung hiding sun and star;
Then as ye turned your weary eye
  To the green earth and open sky,
Were ye not fain to doubt how Faith could dwell
Amid that dreary glare, in this world's citadel?

But Love's a flower that will not die
For lack of leafy screen,
And Christian Hope can cheer the eye
That ne'er saw vernal green:
Then be ye sure that Love can bless
Even in this crowded loneliness,
Where ever-moving myriads seem to say,
Go—thou art nought to us, nor we to thee—away!

There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

There are here some indications of that strong reaction of the present century towards ancient forms of church life. This reaction seems to me a further consequence of that admiration of power of which I have spoken. For, finding the progress of discovery in the laws of nature constantly bring an assurance most satisfactory to the intellect, men began to demand a similar assurance in other matters; and whatever department of human thought could not be subjected to experiment or did not admit of logical proof began to be regarded with suspicion. The highest realms of human thought — where indeed only grand conviction, and that the result not of research, but of obedience to the voice within, can be had—came to be by such regarded as regions where, no scientific assurance being procurable, it was only to his loss that a man should go wandering: the whole affair was unworthy of him. And

if there be no guide of humanity but the intellect, and nothing worthy of its regard but what that intellect can isolate and describe in the forms peculiar to its operations,—that is, if a man has relations to nothing beyond his definition, is not a creature of the immeasurable,—then these men are right. But there have appeared along with them other thinkers who could not thus be satisfied—men who had in their souls a hunger which the neatest laws of nature could not content, who could not live on chemistry, or mathematics, or even on geology, without the primal law of *their* many dim-dawning wonders—that is, the Being, if such there might be, who thought their laws first and then embodied them in a world of æonian growth. These indeed seek law likewise, but a perfect law—a law they can believe perfect beyond the comprehension of powers of whose imperfection they are too painfully conscious. They feel in their highest moments a helplessness that drives them to search after some Power with a heart deeper than his power, who cares for the troubled creatures he has made. But still under the influence of that faithless hunger for intellectual certainty, they look about and divide into two parties: both would gladly receive the reported revelation in Jesus, the one if they could have evidence enough from without, the other if they could only get rid of the difficulties it raises within. I am aware that I distinguish in the mass, and that both sides would be found more or less influenced by the same difficulties —but *more* and *less*, and therefore thus classified by

the driving predominance. Those of the one party, then, finding no proof to be had but that in testimony, and anxious to have all they can—delighting too in a certain holy wilfulness of intellectual self-immolation, accept the testimony in the mass, and become Roman Catholics. Nor is it difficult to see how they then find rest. It is not the dogma, but the contact with Christ the truth, with Christ the man, which the dogma, in pacifying the troubles of the intellect—if only by a soporific, has aided them in reaching, that gives them peace: it is the truth itself that makes them free.

The worshippers of science will themselves allow, that when they cannot gain observations enough to satisfy them upon any point in which a law of nature is involved, they must, if possible, institute experiments. I say therefore to those whose observation has not satisfied them concerning the phenomenon Christianity,—"Where is your experiment? Why do you not thus try the utterance claiming to be the law of life? Call it a hypothesis, and experiment upon it. Carry into practice, well justified of your conscience, the words which the Man spoke, for therein he says himself lies the possibility of your acceptance of his mission; and if, after reasonable time thus spent, you are not yet convinced enough to give testimony—I will not annoy you by saying *to facts*, but—to conviction, I think neither will you be ready to abandon the continuous experiment." These Roman Catholics have thus met with Jesus, come into personal contact with him: by the doing

of what he tells us, and by nothing else, are they blessed. What if their theories show to me like a burning of the temple and a looking for the god in the ashes? They know in whom they have believed. And if some of us think we have a more excellent way, we shall be blessed indeed if the result be no less excellent than in such men as Faber, Newman, and Aubrey de Vere. No man needs be afraid that to speak the truth concerning such will hasten the dominance of alien and oppressive powers; the truth is free, and to be just is to be strong. Should the time come again when Liberty is in danger, those who have defended the truth even in her adversaries, if such there be, will be found the readiest to draw the sword for her, and, hating not, yet smite for the liberty to do even them justice. To give the justice we claim for ourselves is, if there be a Christ, the law of Christ, to obey which is eternally better than truest theory.

I should like to give many of the hymns of Dr. Faber. Some of them are grand, others very lovely, and some, of course, to my mind considerably repulsive. He seems to me to go wrong nowhere in originating—he produces nothing unworthy except when he reproduces what he never could have entertained but for the pressure of acknowledged authority. Even such things, however, he has enclosed in pearls, as the oyster its incommoding sand-grains.

His hymn on *The Greatness of God* is profound; that on *The Will of God* is very wise; that to *The God of my Childhood* is full of quite womanly tender-

ness: all are most simple in speech, reminding us in this respect of John Mason. In him, no doubt, as in all of his class, we find traces of that sentimentalism in the use of epithets—small words, as distinguished from homely, applied to great things—of which I have spoken more than once; but criticism is not to be indulged in the reception of great gifts—of such a gift as this, for instance :—

THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

O Lord! my heart is sick,
Sick of this everlasting change;
And life runs tediously quick
Through its unresting race and varied range:
Change finds no likeness to itself in Thee,
And wakes no echo in Thy mute eternity.

Dear Lord! my heart is sick
Of this perpetual lapsing time,
So slow in grief, in joy so quick,
Yet ever casting shadows so sublime:
Time of all creatures is least like to Thee,
And yet it is our share of Thine eternity.

Oh change and time are storms
For lives so thin and frail as ours;
For change the work of grace deforms
With love that soils, and help that overpowers;
And time is strong, and, like some chafing sea,
It seems to fret the shores of Thine eternity.

Weak, weak, for ever weak!
We cannot hold what we possess;
Youth cannot find, age will not seek,—
Oh weakness is the heart's worst weariness:
But weakest hearts can lift their thoughts to Thee;
It makes us strong to think of Thine eternity.

Thou hadst no youth, great God!
An Unbeginning End Thou art;
Thy glory in itself abode,
And still abides in its own tranquil heart:
No age can heap its outward years on Thee:
Dear God! Thou art Thyself Thine own eternity!

Without an end or bound
Thy life lies all outspread in light;
Our lives feel Thy life all around,
Making our weakness strong, our darkness bright;
Yet is it neither wilderness nor sea,
But the calm gladness of a full eternity.

Oh Thou art very great
To set Thyself so far above!
But we partake of Thine estate,
Established in Thy strength and in Thy love:
That love hath made eternal room for me
In the sweet vastness of its own eternity.

Oh Thou art very meek
To overshade Thy creatures thus!
Thy grandeur is the shade we seek;
To be eternal is Thy use to us:
Ah, Blessed God! what joy it is to me
To lose all thought of self in Thine eternity!

Self-wearied, Lord! I come;
For I have lived my life too fast:
Now that years bring me nearer home
Grace must be slowly used to make it last;
When my heart beats too quick I think of Thee,
And of the leisure of Thy long eternity.

Farewell, vain joys of earth!
Farewell, all love that is not His!
Dear God! be Thou my only mirth,
Thy majesty my single timid bliss!
Oh in the bosom of eternity
Thou dost not weary of Thyself, nor we of Thee!

How easily his words flow, even when he is saying the deepest things! The poem is full of the elements of the finest mystical metaphysics, and yet there is no effort in their expression. The tendency to find God beyond, rather than in our daily human conditions, is discernible; but only as a tendency.

What a pity that the sects are so slow to become acquainted with the grand best in each other!

I do not find in Dr. Newman either a depth or a precision equal to that of Dr. Faber. His earlier poems indicate a less healthy condition of mind. His *Dream of Gerontius* is, however, a finer, as more ambitious poem than any of Faber's. In my judgment there are weak passages in it, with others of real grandeur. But I am perfectly aware of the difficulty, almost impossibility, of doing justice to men from some of whose forms of thought I am greatly repelled, who creep from the sunshine into every ruined archway, attracted by the brilliance with which the light from its loophole glows in its caverned gloom, and the hope of discovering within it the first steps of a stair winding up into the blue heaven. I apologize for the unavoidable rudeness of a critic who would fain be honest if he might; and I humbly thank all such as Dr. Newman, whose verses, revealing their saintship, make us long to be holier men.

Of his, as of Faber's, I have room for no more than one. It was written off Sardinia.

DESOLATION.

O say not thou art left of God,
  Because His tokens in the sky
Thou canst not read: this earth He trod
  To teach thee He was ever nigh.

He sees, beneath the fig-tree green,
  Nathaniel con His sacred lore;
Shouldst thou thy chamber seek, unseen
  He enters through the unopened door.

And when thou liest, by slumber bound,
  Outwearied in the Christian fight,
In glory, girt with saints around,
  He stands above thee through the night.

When friends to Emmaus bend their course,
  He joins, although He holds their eyes:
Or, shouldst thou feel some fever's force,
  He takes thy hand, He bids thee rise.

Or on a voyage, when calms prevail,
  And prison thee upon the sea,
He walks the waves, He wings the sail,
  The shore is gained, and thou art free.

Sir Aubrey de Vere is a poet profound in feeling, and gracefully tender in utterance. I give one short poem and one sonnet.

REALITY.

Love thy God, and love Him only:
And thy breast will ne'er be lonely.
In that one great Spirit meet
All things mighty, grave, and sweet.
Vainly strives the soul to mingle
With a being of our kind:
Vainly hearts with hearts are twined:
For the deepest still is single.
An impalpable resistance
Holds like natures still at distance.
Mortal! love that Holy One!
Or dwell for aye alone.

I respond most heartily to the last two lines; but I venture to add, with regard to the preceding six, "Love that holy One, and the impalpable resistance will vanish; for when thou seest him enter to sup with thy neighbour, thou wilt love that neighbour as thyself."

SONNET.

Ye praise the humble: of the meek ye say,
"Happy they live among their lowly bowers;
"The mountains, and the mountain-storms are ours."
Thus, self-deceivers, filled with pride alway,
Reluctant homage to the good ye pay,
Mingled with scorn like poison sucked from flowers—
Revere the humble; godlike are their powers:
No mendicants for praise of men are they.
The child who prays in faith "Thy will be done"
Is blended with that Will Supreme which moves
A wilderness of worlds by Thought untrod;
He shares the starry sceptre, and the throne:
The man who as himself his neighbour loves
Looks down on all things with the eyes of God!

Is it a fancy that, in the midst of all this devotion and lovely thought, I hear the mingled mournful tone of such as have cut off a right hand and plucked out a right eye, which had *not* caused them to offend? This is tenfold better than to have spared offending members; but the true Christian ambition is to fill the divine scheme of humanity—abridging nothing, ignoring nothing, denying nothing, calling nothing unclean, but burning everything a thank-offering in the flame of life upon the altar of absolute devotion to the Father and Saviour of men. We must not throw

away half his gifts, that we may carry the other half in both hands to his altar.

But sacred fervour is confined to no sect. Here it is of the profoundest, and uttered with a homely tenderness equal to that of the earliest writers. Mrs. Browning, the princess of poets, was no partisan. If my work were mainly critical, I should feel bound to remark upon her false theory of English rhyme, and her use of strange words. That she is careless too in her general utterance I cannot deny; but in idea she is noble, and in phrase magnificent. Some of her sonnets are worthy of being ranged with the best in our language—those of Milton and Wordsworth.

BEREAVEMENT.

When some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonied fell, and could not pray,
A thought within me to myself did say,
"Is God less God that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him! in this sackcloth spun,
As in that purple!"—But I answer, Nay!
What child his filial heart in words can loose,
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? Can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

COMFORT.

Speak low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet,
From out the hallelujahs sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss thee so,
Who art not missed by any that entreat.

Speak to me as to Mary at thy feet—
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
In reach of thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth
To lose the sense of losing! As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth;
Till sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

Gladly would I next give myself to the exposition of several of the poems of her husband, Robert Browning, especially the *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day;* in the first of which he sets forth in marvellous rhymes the necessity both for widest sympathy with the varied forms of Christianity, and for individual choice in regard to communion; in the latter, what it is to choose the world and lose the life. But this would take many pages, and would be inconsistent with the plan of my book.

When I have given two precious stanzas, most wise as well as most lyrical and lovely, from the poems of our honoured Charles Kingsley, I shall turn to the other of the classes into which the devout thinkers of the day have divided.

A FAREWELL.

My fairest child, I have no song to give you;
No lark could pipe to skies so dull and grey;
Yet, ere we part, one lesson I can leave you
For every day.

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long;
And so make life, death, and that vast for-ever
One grand, sweet song.

Surely these last, who have not accepted tradition in the mass, who believe that we must, as our Lord demanded of the Jews, of our own selves judge what is right, because therein his spirit works with our spirit,—worship the Truth not less devotedly than they who rejoice in holy tyranny over their intellects.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE QUESTIONING FERVOUR.

AND now I turn to the other class—that which, while the former has fled to tradition for refuge from doubt, sets its face towards the spiritual east, and in prayer and sorrow and hope looks for a dawn—the noble band of reverent doubters—as unlike those of the last century who scoffed, as those of the present who pass on the other side. They too would know; but they know enough already to know further, that it is from the hills and not from the mines their aid must come. They know that a perfect intellectual proof would leave them doubting all the same; that their high questions cannot be answered to the intellect alone, for their whole nature is the questioner; that the answers can only come as questioners and their questions grow towards them. Hence, growing hope, blossoming ever and anon into the white flower of confidence, is their answer as yet; their hope—the Beatific Vision—the *happy-making sight*, as Milton renders the word of the mystics.

It is strange how gentle a certain large class of the priesthood will be with those who, believing there

is a God, find it hard to trust him, and how fierce with those who, unable, from the lack of harmony around and in them, to say they are sure there is a God, would yet, could they find him, trust him indeed. "Ah, but," answer such of the clergy and their followers, "you want a God of your own making." "Certainly," the doubters reply, "we do not want a God of your making: that would be to turn the universe into a hell, and you into its torturing demons. We want a God like that man whose name is so often on your lips, but whose spirit you understand so little —so like him that he shall be the bread of life to *all* our hunger—not that hunger only already satisfied in you, who take the limit of your present consciousness for that of the race, and say, 'This is all the world needs:' we know the bitterness of our own hearts, and your incapacity for intermeddling with its joy. We

> have another mountain-range, from whence
> Bursteth a sun unutterably bright;

nor for us only, but for you also, who will not have the truth except it come to you in a system authorized of man."

I have attributed a general utterance to these men, widely different from each other as I know they are.

Here is a voice from one of them, Arthur Hugh Clough, who died in 1861, well beloved. It follows upon two fine poems, called *The Questioning Spirit*, and *Bethesda*, in which is represented the condition of many of the finest minds of the pre-

sent century. Let us receive it as spoken by one in the foremost ranks of these doubters, men reviled by their brethren who dare not doubt for fear of offending the God to whom they attribute their own jealousy. But God is assuredly pleased with those who will neither lie for him, quench their dim vision of himself, nor count *that* his mind which they would despise in a man of his making.

Across the sea, along the shore,
In numbers more and ever more,
From lonely hut and busy town,
The valley through, the mountain down,
What was it ye went out to see,
Ye silly folk of Galilee?
The reed that in the wind doth shake?
The weed that washes in the lake?
The reeds that waver, the weeds that float?—
A young man preaching in a boat.

What was it ye went out to hear
By sea and land, from far and near?
A teacher? Rather seek the feet
Of those who sit in Moses' seat.
Go humbly seek, and bow to them,
Far off in great Jerusalem.
From them that in her courts ye saw,
Her perfect doctors of the law,
What is it came ye here to note?—
A young man preaching in a boat.

A prophet! Boys and women weak!
Declare, or cease to rave:
Whence is it he hath learned to speak?
Say, who his doctrine gave?
A prophet? Prophet wherefore he
Of all in Israel tribes?—
He teacheth with authority,
And not as do the Scribes.

Here is another from one who will not be offended if I class him with this school—the finest of critics as one of the most finished of poets—Matthew Arnold. Only my reader must remember that of none of my poets am I free to choose that which is most characteristic: I have the scope of my volume to restrain me.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH THE KID.

He saves the sheep; the goats he doth not save!
So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side
Of that unpitying Phrygian sect which cried:
"Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,
Who sins, once washed by the baptismal wave!"
So spake the fierce Tertullian. But she sighed,
The infant Church: of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.
And then she smiled, and in the Catacombs,
With eye suffused but heart inspired true,
On those walls subterranean, where she hid
Her head in ignominy, death, and tombs,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew;
And on his shoulders, not a lamb, a kid.

Of these writers, Tennyson is the foremost: he has written *the* poem of the hoping doubters, *the* poem of our age, the grand minor organ-fugue of *In Memoriam.* It is the cry of the bereaved Psyche into the dark infinite after the vanished Love. His friend is nowhere in his sight, and God is silent. Death, God's final compulsion to prayer, in its dread, its gloom, its utter stillness, its apparent nothingness, urges the cry. Moanings over the dead are mingled with profoundest questionings of philosophy, the signs of nature, and the story of Jesus, while now and then

the star of the morning, bright Phosphor, flashes a few rays through the shifting cloudy dark. And if the sun has not arisen on the close of the book, yet the Aurora of the coming dawn gives light enough to make the onward journey possible and hopeful: who dares say that he walks in the full light? that the counsels of God are to him not a matter of faith, but of vision?

Bewildered in the perplexities of nature's enigmas, and driven by an awful pain of need, Tennyson betakes himself to the God of nature, thus:

LIV.

The wish, that of the living whole
  No life may fail beyond the grave;
  Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
  That Nature lends such evil dreams,
  So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere
  Her secret meaning in her deeds,
  And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear;

I falter where I firmly trod,
  And falling with my weight of cares
  Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God;

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
  And gather dust and chaff, and call
  To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

Once more, this is how he uses the gospel-tale: Mary has returned home from the sepulchre, with Lazarus so late its prey, and her sister and Jesus :—

XXXII.

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
  Nor other thought her mind admits
  But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
  All other, when her ardent gaze
  Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
  Borne down by gladness so complete,
  She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

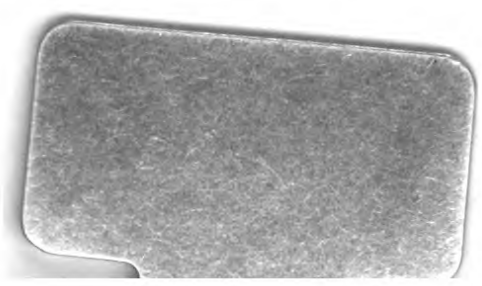
Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
  Whose loves in higher love endure ;
  What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

I have thus traced—how slightly!—the course of the religious poetry of England, from simple song, lovingly regardful of sacred story and legend, through the chant of philosophy, to the full-toned lyric of adoration. I have shown how the stream sinks in the sands of an evil taste generated by the worship of power and knowledge, and that a new growth of the

love of nature—beauty counteracting not contradicting science—has led it by a fair channel back to the simplicities of faith in some, and to a holy questioning in others; the one class having for its faith, the other for its hope, that the heart of the Father is a heart like ours, a heart that will receive into its noon the song that ascends from the twilighted hearts of his children.

Gladly would I have prayed for the voices of many more of the singers of our country's psalms. Especially do I regret the arrival of the hour, because of the voices of living men and women. But the time is over and gone. The twilight has already embrowned the gray glooms of the cathedral arches, and is driving us forth to part at the door.

But the singers will yet sing on to him that hath ears to hear. When he returns to seek them, the shadowy door will open to his touch, the long-drawn aisles receding will guide his eye to the carven choir, and there they still stand, the sweet singers, content to repeat ancient psalm and new song to the prayer of the humblest whose heart would join in England's Antiphon.

THE END.

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