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Tennyson to Chaucer, by James Baldwin**

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Title: Six Centuries of English Poetry: Tennyson to Chaucer

Author: James Baldwin

Release Date: October 11, 2009 [EBook #30235]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Charles Aldarondo, Lisa Reigel, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net>

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TENNYSON TO CHAUCER ***

Transcriber's Notes: Some typographical and punctuation errors have been corrected. A complete [list](#) as well as other notes follows the text.

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Select English Classics

[1]

**SIX CENTURIES OF ENGLISH
POETRY**

TENNYSON TO CHAUCER

***TYPICAL SELECTIONS FROM THE GREAT
POETS***

BY

JAMES BALDWIN, PH.D.

**AUTHOR OF "THE BOOK LOVER"
ETC., ETC.**

SILVER, BURDETT & COMPANY

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[2]

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

[3]

This is the first volume of a series of SELECT ENGLISH CLASSICS which the publishers have in course of preparation. The series will include an extensive variety of selections chosen from the different departments of English literature, and arranged and annotated for the use of classes in schools. It will embrace, among other things, representative specimens from all the best English writers, whether of poetry or of prose; selections from English dramatic literature, especially of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; choice extracts from the writings of the great essayists; selections from famous English allegories; a volume of elegies and elegiacal poetry; studies of English prose fiction, with illustrative specimens, etc. Each volume will contain copious notes, critical, explanatory, and biographical, besides the necessary vocabularies, glossaries, and indexes; and the series when complete will present a varied and comprehensive view of all that is best in English literature. For supplementary reading, as well as for systematic class instruction, the books will possess many peculiarly valuable as well as novel features; while their attractive appearance, combined with the sterling quality of their contents, will commend them for general reading and make them desirable acquisitions for every library.

TO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.

[4]

There is but one study more interesting than the history of literature, and that is the study of literature itself. That the former should often be mistaken for the latter is scarcely to be wondered at when we consider the intimate and almost indivisible relationship existing between them. Yet, in truth, they are as capable of separate consideration as are music and the history of music.

Any careful investigation of the history of English poetry would naturally begin at a point of time some six or seven hundred years earlier than that of Chaucer. From such investigation we should learn that even as early as the ninth century—perhaps, indeed, the eighth—there were in England some composers of verse in the Anglo-Saxon tongue; that the songs of these poets were chiefly of religion or of war, and that being written in a language very different from our modern English they can scarcely be considered as belonging properly to our literature; that among them, however, is a noble poem, "Beowulf," the oldest epic of any modern people, which was probably sung or recited by pagan minstrels long before it was written down in permanent form; that, after the conquest of England by the Normans, the early language of the English people underwent a long and tedious process of transition,—a blending, in a certain sense, with the Latinized and more polished tongue of their conquerors,—and that the result was the language which we now call English and are proud to claim as our own; that it was about three hundred years after the Norman Conquest, namely, in 1362, that this new tongue was officially recognized and authorized to be used in the courts at law throughout the land; and that about the same time Geoffrey Chaucer composed and wrote his first poems. We should learn, moreover, that, during the transition period mentioned above, there were many attempts at writing poetry, resulting in the production of tedious metrical romances (chiefly translated from the French) and interminable rhyming chronicles, pleasing, of course, to the people of that time, but wholly devoid of poetic excellence and unspeakably dull to modern readers; that these poems, so called, were little better than rhymed doggerels, written in couplets of eight-syllabled lines and having for their subjects the miraculous deeds of saints and heroes and the occurrence of supernatural or impossible phenomena; that the composers of these metrical romances and chronicles, although giving free rein to the imagination, were utterly destitute of poetic fancy and hence produced no true poetry; that, nevertheless, some writer was now and then inspired by a flash of real poetic fire, producing a few lines of remarkable freshness and beauty,—little lyrics shining forth like gems in the great mass of verbiage and rubbish and foretelling the glorious possibilities which were to be realized in the future.

**Anglo-Saxon
Poetry.****The Transition
Period.**

[5]

Continuing this most interesting study, we should learn that just at the time that Chaucer was beginning the composition of his immortal works, there appeared an allegorical poem of considerable length, so earnest in tone, so richly imaginative, so full of picturesque descriptions, that it seemed rather a fulfilment than a prophecy; that this poem—called "The Vision of William concerning Piers Ploughman," and written by an obscure monk whose name was probably William Langland—was the greatest poem

**Piers
Ploughman.**

and the most popular that had ever been written in England, and yet that it failed in many ways of being true English poetry: its metre was irregular, and its rhythm was imperfect; its verses instead of rhyming were constructed in accordance with certain rules of alliteration; its subjects, while interesting, no doubt, to those for whom it was written, were not such as bring into play the highest powers of the imagination or incite the poetic fancy to its noblest flights. Then we should learn that while the ink from good Langland's pen was yet scarcely dry after his third revision of "Piers Ploughman," Geoffrey Chaucer came forward with his sweet imaginings bodied in immortal verse, his tuneful numbers, his "well of English undefiled,"—and English poetry, which now for more than five centuries has been the chief glory of our literature, had its true beginning.

Pursuing the study on lines which would now be more distinctly marked, we should observe that Chaucer's best poetry, as well as that of the poets who followed him in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was distinguished by its truthfulness to nature, by its expression in hearty and harmonious words of the finer emotions of the soul, and by the freedom and elasticity of its versification. We should learn that in the seventeenth century this style of poetry—sometimes called the romantic—was succeeded by another and very different fashion in poetic composition, introduced into England in imitation of continental and classical models: that this new style of versification—ignoring nature and making everything subservient to art—was purely artificial, characterized by "an oratorical pomp, a classical correctness, a theatrical dressing, abundance of moralizing"; and that, with Waller for its sponsor and Dryden and Pope for its high priests, it remained for a century and a half the favorite of the literary world, the model of poetic diction, the standard of poetic taste. We should learn that, towards the end of the eighteenth century, certain writers began to perceive that although attention to artistic rules in composition may be necessary to the best poetry, yet natural feeling, a cultivated imagination, and a fancy unrestrained by merely arbitrary limitations are even more indispensable; that these writers, rebelling against the established order of things, taught that there are elements of true poetry in the popular ballads of earlier times, that even the wearisome metrical romances of the Middle Ages are rich in suggestiveness and in materials for a nobler poetry, and that, instead of going to the classics and to society for subjects and models, the poet may find them in nature, in the life which is about him, and in a thousand sources never before suspected. Finally, we should learn that, at the very time when great revolutions in politics and philosophy were being inaugurated, a new spirit thus began to manifest itself in our literature,—a spirit of revolt against artificial restrictions and traditional methods,—which produced a glorious revival in English poetic composition and ushered in a third great school of poetry, distinguished for its breadth and freedom, as that which it superseded had been known for its elegance and precision. [6:1]

Three Schools of Poetry.

[6]

A study of the development of English poetry such as we have outlined above would involve a knowledge of the history of the English people and of the various circumstances and events which from time to time influenced our language and literature. It would also embrace many other topics, biographical, philological, rhetorical, and speculative, which have only a secondary relationship to the central idea of poetry. In fact, it would be a study not of poetry, but about poetry,—of the circumstances which suggested it, of the men who produced it, and of the origin of the word-forms and methods of versification which distinguish it. Such a study, altogether interesting and eminently profitable though it be, should not be undertaken by any student until he has acquired an extensive personal acquaintance with poetry itself. We may enjoy the beautiful creations of Tennyson, of Shelley, of Burns, even of Chaucer, without knowing one word of the history of poetry, without so much as knowing the names of the writers or the circumstances under which they wrote. But, on the other hand, to him who knows nothing of the masterpieces of our literature, save at second hand, the history of English letters must of necessity be dull, uninteresting, and often unintelligible. While to him who has prepared himself for its study by fitting himself for an appreciation of these noble creations and becoming thoroughly imbued with their spirit, what a field of delightful study does it offer!

The History of English Poetry.

[7]

The object of the present compilation is to aid in this preparatory work,—that is, to offer a plan for promoting the study OF poetry before the broader but less important study ABOUT poetry is undertaken. To this end we present for the student's consideration a few representative poems written at different times and by men of widely different tastes and talents during the six centuries which may be said to have elapsed since the formation of the modern English tongue. Our chief aim is to lead to such a study of these selections as shall help the reader to perceive and appreciate their true poetic qualities and enter into full sympathy with the thoughts and feelings which their writers intended to express. The first object to be sought in the study of these poems is the perception of those characteristic excellences which have made them universally admired and placed them among the classics of our language.

Object of this Book.

Methods of Study.

To accomplish this object rationally and successfully, it is best to begin with those productions which are nearest to us in point of time and which are more in harmony with our own thoughts, and therefore easiest to understand and enjoy. An attempt to pursue these studies in chronological order, beginning with the works of Chaucer and the older poets, would oblige the student to encounter at the outset so many purely mechanical difficulties that he would fail to discern the spiritual qualities of truth, beauty, and goodness, which are the very essence of all genuine poetry. He would very naturally acquire a distaste for poetry long before he was able to understand it, and while he might attain to some considerable knowledge of the history of poetical literature, that literature itself would remain to him practically a sealed book. Hence, in

the study of this subject, as in that of other branches, the true method is to present first that which is the least difficult, to "proceed from the known to the unknown," to begin with that which is near at hand and from it to proceed to the consideration of things more remote. Not only are the most of Tennyson's poems easily understood, but their beauty is readily apparent even to the most superficial readers. By the time we have read and extracted all the sweets from three or four of these, we shall be prepared to go a step farther and undertake the study of Wordsworth's immortal productions,—productions but little more difficult and but little less poetic. Thus, step by step, we may review the six centuries of English poetry which lie behind, and when at last we reach the time of Chaucer we shall be able to take hold of his works with understanding and with the zest which is begotten of true sympathy and appreciation. After the book has been thus completed, it may be well to run through it again, reversing the order of the lessons and this time considering the subjects in strict chronological order. Our first study of the book will have introduced us to English poetry, our second study of it will have given us some insight into the history of its development.

[8]

It is well to remember, while pursuing this course, that a taste for poetry is not acquired or fostered by an analysis of grammatical forms or by any study of words merely as such. To analyze a puzzling sentence or to trace the derivation of an interesting word to its roots sometimes helps one to understand a difficult expression or to perceive in it a meaning hitherto unsuspected; but to make the study of any selection consist largely of exercises of this kind is to substitute grammar or philology for literature. So, also, should it be borne in mind that while it is often interesting and sometimes necessary to become acquainted with certain details relative to the life of an author—the date of his birth, the character of his education, the influences which shaped his life and his work—yet such knowledge belongs to biography and is in no sense literature. The study of authors should never be substituted for the study of their works, and is usually profitable only so far as it helps the student to understand the peculiarities which distinguish those works and which are the result of certain personal characteristics. And yet it is no uncommon thing to find students acquainted with the minutest particulars in the lives of the great writers, while of the masterpieces of thought and expression, which are the glory of our literature, they betray a deplorable ignorance. Nor is this the case with pupils at school alone. "For once that we take down a Milton, and read a book of that 'voice,' as Wordsworth says, 'whose sound is like the sea,' we take up fifty times a magazine with something about Milton, or about Milton's grandmother, or a book stuffed with curious facts about the houses in which he lived, and the juvenile ailments of his first wife."[\[9:1\]](#)

[9]

In the study of the selections contained in this volume, the following method is recommended:—

**Practical
Suggestions.**

1. The piece should be thoroughly committed to memory.
2. It should be recited or read by each member of the class in such manner as to bring out, if possible, his understanding of the meaning of every passage.
3. Study the poem as a whole, and let each pupil point out the beauties of thought or expression which distinguish it as a poetical composition.
4. Now study each stanza, or each independent thought, in its order, and endeavor to understand each word or expression just as the poet intended that it should be understood. The Notes appended to most of the selections are intended rather to suggest the line of study in this regard than to serve as exhaustive aids. The pupil should, so far as possible, investigate for himself and make his own discoveries. Questions concerning the derivation of words and the syntax of sentences are to be discussed only so far as they will aid in the understanding of some passage or of the piece as a whole.
5. Learn some of the most important facts connected with the author's life. What were the conditions under which he wrote this piece? What was the character of his education and of the other influences which shaped his life and distinguished his works? Learn what some of the leading critics have said concerning his works as a poet.
6. Finally, read the poem again, as a whole, and discuss its qualities as a work of literary art, and again point out its distinctive beauties and characteristic excellences.

The extracts given at the beginning of each Century will serve to keep in mind the leading peculiarities which distinguished the poetry of each period; and the lists of poets and their works will be found valuable for purposes of reference. Before beginning the study of the selections both teacher and pupils should read this Introduction carefully.

FOOTNOTES:

[\[6:1\]](#) See the quotation from Taine, page [15](#).

[\[9:1\]](#) Frederic Harrison: *On the Choice of Books*.

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SIX CENTURIES OF ENGLISH POETRY. [\[13\]](#)

The Nineteenth Century. [\[14\]](#)

"Now appeared the English romantic school, a sect of 'dissenters in poetry,' who spoke out aloud, kept themselves close together, and repelled settled minds by the audacity and novelty of their theories. They had violently broken with tradition, and leaped over all classical culture, to take their models from the Renaissance and the middle-age. They sought, in the old national ballads and ancient poetry of foreign lands, the fresh and primitive accent which had been wanting in classical literature, and whose presence seemed to them to be a sign of truth and beauty. They proposed to adapt to poetry the ordinary language of conversation, such as is spoken in the middle and lower classes, and to replace studied phrases and a lofty vocabulary by natural tones and plebeian words. In place of the classic mould, they tried stanzas, sonnets, ballads, blank verse, with the roughness and subdivisions of the primitive poets. . . . Some had culled gigantic legends, piled up dreams, ransacked the East, Greece, Arabia, the Middle Ages, and overloaded the human imagination with hues and fancies from every clime. Others had buried themselves

[\[15\]](#)

in metaphysics and moral philosophy, had mused indefatigably on the condition of man, and spent their lives on the sublime and the monotonous. Others, making a medley of crime and heroism, had conducted, through darkness and flashes of lightning, a train of contorted and terrible figures, desperate with remorse, relieved by their grandeur. Men wanted to rest after so many efforts and so much success. On the going out of the imaginative, sentimental, and Satanic school, Tennyson appeared exquisite. All the forms and ideas which had pleased them were found in him, but purified, modulated, set in a splendid style. He completed an age."—TAINÉ.

Poets of the Nineteenth Century.

[16]

William Wordsworth (1770-1850). See biographical note, page [52](#).

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). "The Lay of the Last Minstrel"; "The Lady of the Lake"; "Marmion"; "The Lord of the Isles"; short poems.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). See biographical note, page [65](#).

Robert Southey (1774-1843). "Thalaba"; "Roderick, the last of the Goths"; "Joan of Arc"; "Madoc"; "The Curse of Kehama"; numerous short poems.

Charles Lamb (1775-1834). Chiefly short poems.

Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864). "Gebir"; and other poems.

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844). "Gertrude of Wyoming"; "The Pleasures of Hope"; short poems.

Thomas Moore (1779-1852). "Irish Melodies"; "Lalla Rookh"; "Rhymes on the Road"; "The Loves of the Angels," etc.

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859). "Francesca Rimini"; "A Legend of Florence"; "Stories in Verse," etc.

Bryan Waller Procter ("Barry Cornwall") (1787-1874). "A Sicilian Story"; "English Songs," etc.

Lord Byron (George Gordon Noel) (1788-1824). "Childe Harold"; "The Giaour"; "Bride of Abydos"; "The Corsair"; "Lara"; "Hebrew Melodies"; "Siege of Corinth"; "Parisina"; "Manfred"; "Don Juan," etc.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). See biographical note, page [81](#).

John Keats (1795-1821). See biographical note, page [93](#).

Thomas Hood (1799-1845). Numerous short poems, chiefly humorous.

Lord Macaulay (1800-1859). "Lays of Ancient Rome."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1809-1861). "Prometheus Bound"; "Casa Guidi Windows"; "Sonnets from the Portuguese"; "Aurora Leigh"; "Poems before Congress"; "Last Poems."

Alfred Tennyson (Lord Tennyson) (1809-). See biographical note, page [35](#).

Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton) (1809-1885). "Historical Poems"; "Poetry for the People"; "Poems of Many Years."

Robert Browning (1812-1889). "Christmas Eve and Easter Day"; "Men and Women"; "The Ring and the Book"; "Balaustion's Adventure"; "Fifine at the Fair"; "Aristophanes' Apology," etc.

William Edmondstone Aytoun (1813-1865). "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers"; "Ballads of Scotland," etc.

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861). "The Bothie"; "Ambarvalia," etc.

Charles Kingsley (1819-1875). "Andromeda"; many short poems.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1889). "The Strayed Reveller and other Poems"; "Balder."

Adelaide Anne Procter (1825-1864). "Legends and Lyrics"; "A Chaplet of Verses."

Robert Bulwer-Lytton ("Owen Meredith") (1831-1892). "Lucile"; "Marah," etc.

Alfred Tennyson.

[17]

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

PART I.

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold¹ and meet the sky:
And through the fields the road runs by
 To many-towered Camelot²;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk³ and shiver
Through the wave that runs forever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot;
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges, trailed⁴
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed,
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
 The lady of Shalott?

[18]

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to towered Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers, "'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott."

PART II.

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web⁵ with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot:
There the river-eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls
 Pass onward from Shalott.

[19]

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,⁶
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue,
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirrored magic sights,
For often through the silent nights

A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot;
Or, when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed.
"I am half-sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.⁷

PART III.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.

A red-cross⁸ knight forever kneeled
To a lady in his shield
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

[20]

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.⁹
The bridle-bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazoned baldric¹⁰ slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor,¹¹ trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed¹² into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river¹³
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

[21]

PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote,
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—

With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turned to towered Camelot;
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
A corse between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot;
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

NOTES.

This poem was written in 1832. Considered as a picture, or as a series of pictures, its beauty is unsurpassed. The story which is here so briefly told is founded upon a touching legend connected with the romance of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Tennyson afterwards (in 1859) expanded it into the *Idyll* called "Elaine," wherein he followed more closely the original narrative as related by Sir Thomas Malory.

Sir Lancelot was the strongest and bravest of the Knights of the Round Table, and for him Elaine, "the fair maid of Astolat," conceived a hopeless passion. "Her love was platonic and pure as that of a child, but it was masterful in its strength." Having learned that Lancelot was pledged to celibacy, she pined away and died. But before her death she called her brother, and having dictated a letter which he was to write, she spake thus:

"While my body is whole, let this letter be put into my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until I be cold, and let me be put in a fair bed with all my richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed and all my rich clothes be laid with me in a chariot to the next place whereas the Thames is, and there let me be put in a barge, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barge be covered with black samite over and over.' . . . So when she was dead, the corpse and the bed and all was led the next way unto the Thames, and there all were put in a barge on the Thames, and so the man steered the barge to Westminster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro, or any man espied."^[23:A] At length the King and his Knights, coming down to the waterside, and seeing the boat and the lily maid of Astolat, they uplifted the hapless body of Elaine, and bore it to the hall.

"But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:
'Most noble Lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime called the maid of Astolat,

[22]

[23]

Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death. . . .
Pray for my soul and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless."^[24:A]

[24]

And so the maid was buried, "not as one unknown, nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies, and mass and rolling music, like a queen. And the story of her dolorous voyage was blazoned on her tomb in letters gold and azure."

1. wold. An open tract of hilly country, where but few trees are left. This word is more frequently used, however, to designate a forest or thick wood.

2. Camelot. It is supposed that this Camelot was Winchester. It was the seat of King Arthur's court, and visitors are still shown the remains of what appear to have been certain kinds of intrenchments, which the inhabitants call "King Arthur's Palace." Sir Thomas Malory says: "Sir Ballin's sword was put into marble stone, standing it upright as a great millstone, and it swam down the stream to the city of Camelot, that is, in English, Wincheste." There was another Camelot, also King Arthur's capital, on the river Camel, in Cornwall, to which Shakespeare makes reference in *King Lear*, II, ii. Tennyson, in "Gareth and Lynette," describes the appearance of the city when approached in the early morning:

"Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below:
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd."

3. dusk. Produce a ruffled surface. A very rare use of this word. The river referred to is probably the Thames.

4. trailed. Lat. *traho*, to draw; Dutch *treilen*, to tow. What picture is presented to the imagination in the first five lines of this stanza? How do the barges differ in appearance and movement from the shallop mentioned two lines below?

5. web. Anything woven. **stay.** Stop.

6. pad. An easy-going saddle-horse; a palfrey. Describe the picture which is presented in this stanza.

7. Explain the meaning of the Lady's exclamation.

8. red-cross knight. A Knight wearing a red cross. One of King Arthur's Knights. The red-cross Knight in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* symbolizes holiness. ^[25]

"And on his brest a bloodie crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead, as living ever, him ador'd;
Upon his shield the like was also scor'd,
For soveraine hope, which in his helpe he had.
Right, faithfull, true he was in deede and word;
But of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad;
Yet nothing did he dread, but ever was ydrad."

9. Galaxy. The milky-way. Gr. *gala*, *galaktos*, milk.

10. baldric. A belt thrown over the shoulder. From Lat. *balteus*.

11. bearded meteor. A shooting-star emitting rays of light in the direction in which it moves. The beard of a comet is the light which it throws out in front of it, in distinction from the tail or rays behind.

12. He flashed. His image was thrown upon and reflected from.

13. "Tirra lirra." French *tire lire*. Probably intended to imitate the note of the lark.

FOOTNOTES:

[23:A] Malory's King Arthur, Part III.

THE BROOK.

I come from haunts of coot¹ and hern,²
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker³ down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps,⁴ a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

[26]

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland⁵ set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel,
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel⁶ covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom,⁷ I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeams dance
Against my shady shallows.

[27]

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly⁸ bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

NOTES.

This little lyric forms a part of "an idyl" of the same title, published in 1855. The poet introduces it in the following manner:

"Here, by this brook, we parted; I to the East
 And he to Italy—too late—too late:
 Yet the brook he loved
 seems, as I re-listen to it,
 Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy,
 To me that loved him; for, 'O brook,' he says,
 'O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his rhyme,
 'Whence come you?' and the brook, why not? replies:
 'I come from haunts of coot and hern,'" etc.

In reading this poem, observe how strikingly the sound is made to correspond to the sense.

1. **coot.** A wild water-fowl, resembling the duck.
2. **hern.** Heron.
3. **bicker.** To move unsteadily.
4. **thorps.** Small villages. A. S. *thorpe*. From Ger. *trupp*, a troop.
5. **foreland.** A promontory.
6. **hazel covers.** Hazel thickets.
7. **gloom.** Glimmer, shine obscurely.
8. **shingly.** Gravelly.

THE LOTOS-EATERS.

[28]

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land;
 "This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
 In the afternoon they came unto a land,
 In which it seemed always afternoon.
 All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
 Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
 Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
 And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
 Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
 Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
 And some through wavering lights and shadows broke
 Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
 They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
 From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
 Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
 Stood sunset-flushed: and, dewed with showery drops,
 Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset lingered low adown
 In the red West: through mountain clefts the dale
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
 Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
 And meadow, set with slender galingale;
 A land where all things always seemed the same!
 And round about the keel with faces pale,
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
 To each, but whoso did receive of them,
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
 Far, far away did seem to mourn and rave
 On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
 And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

[29]

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
 And sweet it was to dream of Father-land,
 Of child and wife, and slave; but evermore

Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more;"
And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

CHORIC SONG.

I.

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep.
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep, [30]
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II.

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III.

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall, and cease: [31]

Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI.

[32]

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island-princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars,
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII.

But, propped on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropped eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-coloured water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

[33]

VIII.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,

Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
 But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
 Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
 Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered, down in hell
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
 Oh, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

[34]

NOTE.

"Thence for nine whole days was I borne by ruinous winds over the teeming deep; but on the tenth day we set foot on the land of the lotus-eaters, who eat a flowery food. So we stepped ashore and drew water, and straightway my company took their mid-day meal by the swift ships. Now when we had tasted meat and drink, I sent forth certain of my company to go and make search of what manner of men they were who here live upon the earth by bread, and I chose out two of my fellows, and sent a third with them as herald. Then straightway they went and mixed with the men of the lotus-eaters, and so it was that the lotus-eaters devised not death for our fellows, but gave them of the lotus to taste. Now whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotus-eating men, ever feeding on the lotus, and forgetful of his homeward way. Therefore I led them back to the ships weeping, and sore against their will, and dragged them beneath the benches, and bound them in the hollow barques. But I commanded the rest of my well-loved company to make speed and go on board the swift ships, lest haply any should eat of the lotus and be forgetful of returning."—*Homer's Odyssey*, ix, 80.

"In this poem, 'The Lotos-Eaters,' the artistic ideal of the young poet (it was written in 1830) found its most finished expression and its culminating point. Here he seems to have attained a consciousness that beyond the ideal which he had adopted there is another, larger, grander, and more satisfying. Nowhere else, perhaps, in the range of poetry, is the trance of a listless life so harmoniously married to appropriate melodies and appropriate accompaniments."—*North British Review*.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

[35]

ALFRED TENNYSON was born at Somersby, Lincolnshire, England, in 1809. His early education was received at home from his father, who was rector of Somersby and vicar of Bennington and Grimsby. He was afterwards sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, where, at the age of twenty, he received the chancellor's medal for a poem in blank verse, entitled "Timbuctoo." In 1830 he published a small volume of "Poems chiefly Lyrical." A revised edition of this volume, published in 1833, contained "The Lady of Shalott," "The Lotos-Eaters," and others of his best-known short poems. In 1850, upon the death of Wordsworth, he was appointed poet-laureate. In the same year he was married to Emily, daughter of Henry Sellwood, Esq., and niece of Sir John Franklin. Since 1851, Tennyson has resided for the greater part of the time at Farringford, Freshwater, Isle of Wight. In December, 1883, he was made Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater.

"Mr. Tennyson," says R. H. Hutton, "was an artist even before he was a poet; in other words, the eye for beauty, grace, and harmony of effect was even more emphatically one of his original gifts than the voice for poetic utterance itself. This, probably, it is which makes his very earliest pieces appear so full of effort, and sometimes even so full of affectation. They were elaborate attempts to embody what he saw, before the natural voice of the poet had come to him. I think it possible to trace not only a pre-poetic period in his art, but to date the period at which the soul was 'infused' into his poetry, and the brilliant external figures became the dwelling-places of germinating poetic thoughts creating their own music. Curiously enough, the first poem where there is any trace of those musings of the Round Table to which he has directed so much of his maturest genius, is also a confession that the poet was sick of the magic mirror of fancy and its picture-shadows, and was turning away from them to the poetry of human life. Whenever Mr. Tennyson's pictorial fancy has had it in any degree in its power to run away with the guiding and controlling mind, the richness and the workmanship have to some extent overgrown the spiritual principle of his poems. It is obvious, for instance, that even in relation to natural scenery, what his poetical faculty delights in most are rich, luxuriant landscapes, in which either nature or man has accumulated a lavish variety of effects. It is in the scenery of the mill, the garden, the chase, the down, the rich pastures, the harvest-field, the palace pleasure-grounds, the Lord of Burleigh's fair domains, the luxuriant sylvan beauty, bearing testimony to the careful hand of man, 'the summer crisp with shining woods,' that Mr. Tennyson most delights. If he strays to rarer scenes, it is almost in search of richer and more luxuriant loveliness, like the tropical splendors of 'Enoch Arden' and the enervating skies which cheated the Lotos-Eaters of their longing for home."

[36]

"Mr. Tennyson," says a writer in the *North British Review*, "deserves an especial study, not only

as a poet, but as a leader and a landmark of popular thought and feeling. As a poet, he belongs to the highest category of English writers; for poetry is the strongest and most vigorous branch of English literature. In this literature his works are evidently destined to secure a permanent place; for they express in language refined and artistic, but not unfamiliar, a large segment of the popular thought of the period over which they range. He has, moreover, a clearly marked if not strongly individualized style, which has served as a model for imitators, and as a starting-point for poets who have sought to improve upon it."

Principal Poems of Tennyson: Charge of the Light Brigade, written in 1854; Dora, 1842; The Dying Swan, 1830; Enoch Arden, 1864; Idylls of the King, 1859-1873,—to be read in the following order: The Coming of Arthur; Gareth and Lynette; Geraint and Enid; Merlin and Vivien; Lancelot and Elaine; The Holy Grail; Pelleas and Ettarre; The Last Tournament; Guinevere; The Passing of Arthur;—In Memoriam, 1850 (131 parts); Locksley Hall, 1842; Locksley Hall Sixty Years Afterwards, 1886; Maud, 1855 (3 parts); The Princess, 1847 (7 parts); Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington, 1852.

DRAMATIC PIECES: Queen Mary, 1875; Harold, 1876; The Cup, 1881; The Falcon, 1882; Becket, 1884; The Foresters: Robin Hood and Maid Marian, 1892.

REFERENCES: Stedman's *Victorian Poets*; Van Dyke's *The Poetry of Tennyson*; Taine's *History of English Literature*, vol. IV; Kingsley's *Miscellanies*; Elsdale's *Studies in the Idylls*; Buchanan's *Master Spirits*; Tainsh's *Studies in Tennyson*; Hutton's *Essays*; Chapman's *Companion to In Memoriam*; Walters's *In Tennyson Land*.

William Wordsworth.

[37]

ODE.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

The Child is father¹ of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

I.

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled² in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

[38]

III.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's³ sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.
The cataracts⁴ blow their trumpets from the steep;

No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes⁵ through the mountains throng;
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,⁶
 And all the earth is gay;
 Land and sea
 Give themselves up to jollity,⁷
 And with the heart of May⁸
 Doth every beast keep holiday.
 Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy shepherd-boy!

IV.

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
 Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
 My heart is at your festival.
 My head hath its coronal,⁹
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
 Oh evil day if I were sullen
 While Earth herself is adorning
 This sweet May morning,
 And the children are culling
 On every side,
 In a thousand valleys far and wide,
 Fresh flowers, while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up¹⁰ on his mother's arm:
 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
 —But there's a tree,¹¹ of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
 The pansy¹² at my feet
 Doth the same tale repeat.
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

[39]

V.

Our birth is but a sleep¹³ and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar;
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the East
 Must travel, still is nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

[40]

VI.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And even with something of a mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII.

Behold the child¹⁴ among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!

See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See at his feet some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art—
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath now his heart,
 And unto this he frames his song.
 Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife:
 But it will not be long
 Ere this be thrown aside,
 And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part,
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'¹⁵
With all the persons, down to palsied age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage,
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

[41]

VIII.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy soul's immensity;
Thou, best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
 Mighty prophet! seer blest!¹⁶
 On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX.

O joy, that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
 That nature yet remembers
 What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
 Not for these I raise
 The song of thanks and praise;
 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings;¹⁷
 Blank misgivings¹⁸ of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
 But for those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being

[42]

Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

[43]

X.

Then sing, ye birds! sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower?
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which, having been, must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI.

And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks, which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they:
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet:
The clouds that gather round the setting sun¹⁹
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

[44]

NOTES.

"This was composed," says Wordsworth, "during my residence at Town-End, Grasmere (1803-1806). Two years at least passed between the writing of the first four stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself, but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or experiences of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere:

'A simple child
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?'^[44:A]

"But it was not so much from the source of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came, as from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated in something of the same way to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to

think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to reality. At that time I was afraid of mere processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all [45] reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines, *Obstinate questionings*, etc. To that dream-like vividness and splendor which invests objects of sight in childhood every one, I believe, if he could look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here; but having in the poem regarded it as a presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in Revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favor. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations, and among all persons acquainted with classic literature is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet."

Lord Houghton says of this poem: "If I am asked what is the greatest poem in the English language, I never for a moment hesitate to say, Wordsworth's 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.'"

Principal Shairp says: "'The Ode on Immortality' marks the highest limit which the tide of poetic inspiration has reached in England within this century, or indeed since the days of Milton."

The idea of the pre-existence of the soul had already been treated by Henry Vaughan in "Silex Scintillans" (1655).

"Happy those infant days, when I
Shined in my angel-infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy aught
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."

Shelley, in "A Lament," hints at the same thought:

"O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before,
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—oh, never more!"

"Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—oh, never more!"

1. The child is father, etc. These lines are from a short poem by Wordsworth, entitled "My Heart leaps up":

"My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

Compare with Milton's lines in 'Paradise Regained,' Bk. IV:

"The childhood shows the man
As morning shows the day."

2. apparelled. From Fr. *pareil*, Lat. *parilis*. Other English words as *pair*, *compare*, etc., are similarly derived. To *apparel* is strictly to pair, to suit, to put like to like.

3. tabor. From Old Fr. *tabour*, Fr. *tambour*. Compare Eng. *tambourine*. Originally from the root *tap*, Gr. *tup*, to strike lightly. An ancient musical instrument,—a small one-ended drum having a handle projecting from the frame, by which it was held in the left hand, while it was beaten with a stick held in the right hand.

4. the cataracts. The poet has probably in mind the "ghills" or falls of his own lake country. The metaphor which he uses is a bold one.

5. the echoes. Compare with a similar line by Shelley:

"Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains."

—*Adonais*, 127.

6. the fields of sleep. "The yet reposeful, slumbering country side."—*Hales*. "The fields that were dark during the hours of sleep."—*Knight*.

7. jollity. Merriment. From Lat. *jovialis*. See Milton's 'L'Allegro,' 26:

"Haste thee nymph and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity."

8. May. May, with the poets, is the month of gayety. The older poetry especially is full of May raptures. Chaucer says: [47]

"For May will have no sluggardy a-night:
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleep to start."

9. coronal. A crown of flowers, a chaplet. As at the Roman banquets. On such occasions it was usual for the host to give chaplets to his guests. Festoons of flowers were also sometimes hung over their necks and breasts. The chaplet, or coronal, was regarded as a cheerful ornament and symbol of festivity.

10. the babe leaps up. That is for joy. See the poem, "My heart leaps up," on page 46.

11. there's a tree. Compare this thought with that contained in the following lines:

"Only, one little sight, one plant,
. . . whene'er the leaf grows there
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all."

—*Browning's May and Death*.

12. pansy. The flower of thought. From Fr. *pensée*, thought; *penser*, to think. "It probably derived its name, thought or fancy, from its fanciful appearance."—*Nares*. Another derivation of the word is from *panacea*, meaning *all-heal*, a name given by the Greeks to a plant which was popularly supposed to cure diseases and dispel sorrow. The notion that the pansy is a cure for grief is shown in its common English name, *heart's-ease*.

13. Our birth is but a sleep. The idea of pre-existence was a favorite one of the ancient philosophers. The doctrine of metempsychosis, a form of the same idea, was held by the ancient Egyptians and is still maintained by the Buddhists. Tennyson says:

"As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping through from state to state.

"And if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace."—*Two Voices*.

14. Behold the child. Pope gives a similar picture:

"Behold the child, by Nature's kindly law,
Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw;
Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
A little louder, but as empty quite."—*Essay on Man*.

When Wordsworth wrote of

"A six years' darling of a pigmy size,"

he probably had in mind Hartley Coleridge, who was then a child of that age. See his poem "To Hartley Coleridge, Six Years Old."

15. humorous stage. See Shakespeare's lines beginning "All the world's a stage," "As You like It," Act ii, sc. 7. The word *humorous* has here a special sense, such as is used by Ben Jonson in his "Every Man in his Humor."

16. best philosopher . . . mighty prophet! seer blest! Stopford Brooke says: "These expressions taken separately have scarcely any recognizable meaning. By taking them all together, we feel rather than see that Wordsworth intended to say that the child, having lately come from a perfect existence, in which he saw truth directly, and was at home with God, retains, unknown to us, that vision;—and, because he does, is the best philosopher, since he sees at once that which we through philosophy are endeavoring to reach; is the mighty prophet, because in his actions and speech he tells unconsciously the truths he sees, but the sight of which we have lost; is more closely haunted by God, more near to the immortal life, more purely and brightly free because he half shares in the pre-existent life and glory out of which he has come."—*Theology in the English Poets*.

17. Fallings from us, vanishings. "Fits of utter dreaminess and abstraction, when nothing material seems solid, but everything mere mist and shadow."—*Hales*.

18. Blank misgivings. Compare Tennyson, "Two Voices":

"Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams;

"Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare."

19. The clouds that gather. Compare these lines with the following from Wordsworth's "Excursion":

"Ah! why in age
Do we revert so fondly to the walks
Of childhood, but that there the soul discerns
The dear memorial footsteps unimpair'd
Of her own native vigor, thence can hear
Reverberations and a choral song,
Commingling with the incense that ascends
Undaunted toward the imperishable heavens,
From her own lonely altar?"

FOOTNOTES:

[44:A] The first stanza of *We are Seven*, said to have been written by Coleridge.

THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS.

[49]

We walked along, while bright and red
Uprose the morning sun;
And Matthew¹ stopped, he looked, and said,
'The will of God be done!'

A village schoolmaster was he,
With hair of glittering gray;
As blithe a man as you could see
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass,
And by the steaming rills,
We travelled merrily, to pass
A day among the hills.

'Our work,' said I, 'was well begun:
Then, from thy breast what thought,
Beneath so beautiful a sun,
So sad a sigh has brought?'

A second time did Matthew stop,
And fixing still his eye
Upon the eastern mountain-top,
To me he made reply:

'Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
Brings fresh into my mind
A day like this which I have left

Full thirty years behind.

And just above yon slope of corn
Such colors, and no other,
Were in the sky, that April morn,
Of this the very brother.

[50]

With rod and line I sued the sport
Which that sweet season gave,
And, to the church-yard come, stopped short
Beside my daughter's grave.

Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
The pride of all the vale:
And then she sang;—she would have been
A very nightingale.

Six feet in earth my Emma lay;
And yet I loved her more,
For so it seemed, than till that day
I e'er had loved before.

And, turning from her grave, I met,
Beside the churchyard yew,
A blooming girl, whose hair was wet
With points of morning dew.

A basket on her head she bare;
Her brow was smooth and white:
To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight!

No fountain from its rocky cave
E'er tripped with foot so free;
She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea.

There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I looked at her, and looked again:
And did not wish her mine!

[51]

Matthew is in his grave, yet now,
Methinks, I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding² in his hand.

NOTES.

This poem was written in 1799, and published the following year.

1. Matthew. This old schoolmaster is described elsewhere by Wordsworth as being "made up of several, both of his class and men of other occupations."

2. wilding. A twig from a wild apple tree.

"Ten ruddy wildings in the wood I found."—*Dryden*.

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands:

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from a cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

[52]

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, or may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH was born at Cocker-mouth, a town in Cumberland, England, April 7, 1770. He went to school at Hawkshead, Lancashire, whence in his seventeenth year he was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge. In January, 1791, he took his degree at the University, but without having distinguished himself in any way. The next fifteen or sixteen months were spent in France, just then in the first wild hopes of the Revolution. "In the aspirations and hopes of the revolutionists he was an ardent sharer; he thought that the world's great age was beginning anew; and with all his soul he hailed so splendid an era. The ultimate degradation of that great movement by wild lawlessness, and then by most selfish ambition, alienated his sympathy for it." Towards the close of 1792 he returned to England, and passed the subsequent time among his friends in London and elsewhere till he settled with his sister at Racedown, Dorsetshire, in 1796. In the following year they removed to Alfoxden. It was during this period that he made the acquaintance of Coleridge. Wordsworth had already published (1793) two little volumes of poetry, entitled *Descriptive Sketches* and *The Evening Walk*; but they showed little promise of the triumphs which were to crown his later life. In 1798 the first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* was published at Bristol, which purported to be the joint work of himself and Mr. Coleridge, but to which the latter contributed only "The Ancient Mariner" and two or three shorter poems. After some months spent in Germany, Wordsworth and his sister established themselves at Grasmere, in the lake country. In 1800 he published the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and in 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson. From 1799 to 1814 he was mainly busy with his great philosophical poem, to be called "The Recluse," "containing views of Man, Nature, and Society," of which "The Prelude" was to be the introduction and "The Excursion" the Second and main Part. He designed that his minor pieces should be so arranged in connection with this work as to "give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in Gothic churches." This plan, however, was never carried out, as of the First and Third Parts only one book was written, and it has never been published. From 1814 until his death Wordsworth lived serenely and quietly at Rydal Mount, making occasional excursions into Scotland and Wales, and a tour upon the continent. In 1843, upon the death of Southey, he was appointed Poet-Laureate. His life was a long one, of steady work and much happiness. He died April 23, 1850.

[53]

The distinguishing feature of Wordsworth's poetry is well set forth in his own words:

"The moving accident is not my trade,
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts;
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts."

—*Hart-Leap Well, Part II.*

"Every great poet," he said, "is a teacher; I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing."

[54]

And he avowed that the purpose of his poetry was "to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age *to see, to think and feel*, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous."

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
His daily teachings had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

"Wordsworth," says John Campbell Shairp, "was the first who, both in theory and practice, shook

off the trammels of the so-called poetic diction which had tyrannized over English poetry for more than a century. This diction of course exactly represented the half-courtly, half-classical mode of thinking and feeling. As Wordsworth rebelled against this conventionality of spirit, so against the outward expression of it. The whole of the stock phrases and used-up metaphors he discarded, and returned to living language of natural feeling, as it is used by men, instead of the dead form of it which had got stereotyped in books. And just as in his subjects he had taken in from the waste much virgin soil, so in his diction he appropriated for poetic use a large amount of words, idioms, metaphors, till then by the poets disallowed. His shorter poems, both the earlier and the later, are, for the most part, very models of natural, powerful, and yet sensitive English; the language being, like a garment, woven out of, and transparent with, the thought."

Other Poems to be Read: We are Seven; The Pet Lamb; To a Highland Girl; Laodamia; Matthew; The Fountain; The Wishing Gate; To the Small Celandine; "Three Years She Grew"; "She was a Phantom of Delight"; At the Grave of Burns.

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Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

[55]

CHRISTABEL.

PART I.

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awaken'd the crowing cock,
Tu—whit!—Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

[56]

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
Dreams that made her moan and leap
As on her bed she lay in sleep;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,

And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

[57]

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck and arms were bare;
Her blue-vein'd feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glitter'd here and there,
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

"Mary, mother, save me now!"
(Said Christabel,) "And who art thou?"

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
"Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!"
Said Christabel, "How camest thou here?"
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—
"My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yesternorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we cross'd the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some mutter'd words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand" (thus ended she),
"And help a wretched maid to flee."

[58]

Then Christabel stretch'd forth her hand

And comforted fair Geraldine;
"O well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall."

She rose: and forth with steps they pass'd [59]
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
"All our household are at rest,
The hall is silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awaken'd be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me."

They cross'd the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she open'd straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was iron'd within and without,
Where an army in battle array had march'd out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They cross'd the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side;
"Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!"
"Alas, alas!" said Geraldine,
"I cannot speak for weariness."
So free from danger, free from fear, [60]
They cross'd the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she utter'd yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They pass'd the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady pass'd, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
"O softly tread," said Christabel,
"My father seldom sleepeth well."

Sweet Christabel her feet both bare,
And, jealous of the listening air,
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
And still as death, with stifled breath!
And now have reach'd her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down [61]
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fasten'd to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimm'd the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

"O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?"
Christabel answered—"Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the gray-hair'd friar tell,
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!"
"I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"

But soon with altered voice, said she—
"Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee."
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she,
"Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
"Alas!" said she, "this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wilder'd you!"
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, "'Tis over now!"

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countrée.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
"All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, "So let it be!"
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts move to and fro,

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[63]

That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bow'd,
And slowly roll'd her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud
Like one that shudder'd, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast;
Her silken robe and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel.

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly as one defied
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,

Ah, well-a-day!

And with low voice and doleful look

These words did say:

"In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!

Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;

But vainly thou warrest,

For this is alone in

Thy power to declare,

That in the dim forest

Thou heardest a low moaning,

And foundest a bright lady, surpassingly fair:

And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,

To shield her and shelter her from the damp air."

[64]

NOTES

The first part of the unfinished poem, "Christabel," was written in 1797, the second part which, however, left the story apparently as incomplete as before, in 1808. The two parts were first published in 1816. The poem is a picture of white innocence, purity, and truth, pursued and persecuted by the powers of evil. Its incompleteness seems to enhance its interest. "Completion could scarcely have failed to lessen its reality, for the reader could not have endured, neither could the poet's own theory have endured, the sacrifice of Christabel, the triumph of evil over good; and had she triumphed, there is a vulgar well-being in victory which has nothing to do with such a strain."

"Such is the unfinished and unfinishable tale of Christabel—a poem which, despite its broken notes and over-brevity, has raised its author to the highest rank of poets, and which in itself is at once one of the sweetest, loftiest, most spiritual utterances that has ever been framed in English words. We know of no existing poem in any language to which we can compare it. It stands by itself exquisite, celestial, ethereal,—a song of the spheres,—yet full of such pathos and tenderness and sorrowful beauty as only humanity can give."—*Blackwood's Magazine*, 1871.

It is worthy of note that "Christabel" was the immediate inspiration of Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel." "It is to Mr. Coleridge," says Sir Walter, "that I am bound to make the acknowledgment due from the pupil to his master." "But certainly," says Hales, "Scott himself never succeeded in surrounding any one of his works with so fine an atmosphere of glamour and romance."

[65]

The language and metrical arrangement of this poem are not only peculiar but are in full accord with the weird and fantastic conception of the piece as a whole. The versification is based upon a principle not commonly practised—that of counting the number of accentuated words in a line instead of the number of syllables. Though the latter varies from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents never exceed four. The result is an irregular, but strangely beautiful harmony of a kind that can hardly be attained through the ordinary methods of versification.

This poem is to be studied for its exquisite beauty, for the true poetic qualities which it possesses and which distinguish it from mere verse. Hence, no explanatory notes are given with reference to any particular passage, nor is it desirable that it should be analyzed with a view to grammatical or philological study. It should be read and reread until the student is thoroughly in accord with the poetic spirit which breathes in and vivifies the entire production. "It was

indolence, no doubt, that left the tale half told—indolence and misery—and a poetic instinct higher than all the better impulses of industry and virtuous gain. The subject by its very nature was incomplete; it had to be left a lovely, weird suggestion—a vision for every eye that could see."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born at Ottery Saint Mary, October 21, 1772. He was educated at Christ's Hospital and at Jesus College, Cambridge. At the age of twenty-two he left the University without having taken a degree. He was an intimate friend of Charles Lamb and Southey, and with the latter formed a wild scheme for the founding of a "Pantisocratic State" in America, which, however, was soon abandoned. His first book of poetry was published in 1794. In 1796 he and Charles Lamb published a volume of poems together. He soon afterwards became acquainted with Wordsworth, and in 1798 the two brought out their famous volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, containing some of Wordsworth's best pieces and Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." "Christabel," after lying in manuscript for several years, was published in 1816, three editions being issued within twelve months. Coleridge's chief poems were published in 1817 in a collection entitled *Sibylline Leaves*, so called, he says, "in allusion to the fragmentary and wildly scattered state in which they had long been suffered to remain." At about the same time he was received into the house of Mr. Gillman, a surgeon residing at Highgate, in order to be cured if possible of his excessive use of opium. Here he produced his more important prose works, *Aids to Reflection*, and *On the Constitution of Church and State*; and here he died, July 25, 1834. [66]

Coleridge was forever planning and designing,—beginning a work and leaving its completion until to-morrow—which never came. He devoted his attention only sparingly to poetry—and that chiefly during his youth. Later in life he was occupied with political, social, and religious questions. "He was a living Hamlet, full of the most splendid thoughts and the noblest purposes, but a most incompetent doer." "His mind," wrote Southey, "is a perpetual St. Vitus's dance—eternal activity without action."

"Of Coleridge's best verses," says Swinburne, "I venture to affirm that the world has nothing like them, and can never have; that they are of the highest kind, and of their own. They are jewels of the diamond's price, flowers of the rose's rank, but unlike any rose or diamond known."

"His best work is but little," says Stopford Brooke, "but of its kind it is perfect and unique. . . . All that he did excellently might be bound up in twenty pages, but it should be bound in pure gold."

Other Poems to be Read: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni; Ode to France; Genevieve.

REFERENCES: Swinburne's *Studies and Essays*; Shairp's *Studies in Poetry*; Carlyle's *Reminiscences*; Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*; De Quincey's *Essays*; *Coleridge* (English Men of Letters), by H. D. Traill; Hazlitt's *English Poets*; Hunt's *Imagination and Fancy*; Chorley's *Authors of England*; Walter Pater's *Apprecia*.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

[67]

TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse¹ strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still, and higher,
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The deep blue thou wingest,²
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,³
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;

Like a star of heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains⁴ out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;—
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought⁵
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite⁶ or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal,⁷
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt—
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Langour cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

[68]

[69]

Waking or asleep;
 Thou of death must deem
 Things more true and deep
 Than we mortals dream—
 Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
 And pine for what is not:⁸
 Our sincerest laughter
 With some pain is fraught:
 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
 Hate, and pride, and fear;
 If we were things born
 Not to shed a tear,
 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
 Of delight and sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found,
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know,
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow,
 The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

NOTES.

This is perhaps the most perfect lyric of its kind in the English language. Every verse is worthy of careful study, and it should be read and reread until its exquisite melody is felt and the subtle thoughts which it embodies fully understood. Yet there is little in the poem which requires annotation—the lark's song itself admits of no explanation. [71]

"For sweetness the 'Ode to a Skylark' is inferior only to Coleridge, in rapturous passion to no man. It is like the bird it sings,—enthusiastic, enchanting, profuse, continuous, and alone,—small, but filling the heavens."—*Leigh Hunt*.

"Has any one, since Shakespeare and Spenser, lighted on such tender and such grand ecstasies?"—*Taine*.

The skylark is very generally distributed over the northern portions of the Old World, but is not found in America. Its song in the morning may often be heard when the bird is so high as to be entirely out of sight, and although not finely modulated is remarkably cheerful and prolonged. A person who is accustomed to the song can tell by its variations whether it be ascending, stationary, or descending.

1. profuse. Accent here on the first syllable. From Lat. *profundo*, to pour forth.

2. Explain the figures of rhetoric employed in this line. The meaning of **blue**; of **wingest**.

3. sunken sun. The sun is not yet above the horizon, but the bird has risen so high that it is visible to him, and he "floats and runs" in its golden light.

4. What is the meaning of **rains**? of **rain** in the next stanza?

5. wrought. Influenced. A.-S. *worhte*, *wyrca*n, to work.

6. sprite. Spirit. In the first stanza he calls the lark a spirit and says it never was a bird; here he calls it "bird or sprite."

7. Chorus hymeneal. See note on "Prothalamion," page 241.

8. Compare this thought with the ideas contained in Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality."

pine. From A.-S. *pinan*, to pain. Our word *pain* is derived from the same root.

HYMN OF PAN.

From the forests and highlands
 We come, we come;

From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme,
The birds on the myrtle-bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus¹ was,
Listening to my sweet pipings.

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Liquid Peneus² was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
The light of the dying day,
Speded by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni³ and Sylvans and Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods and waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow,
Were silent with love,—as you now, Apollo,⁴
With envy of my sweet pipings.

I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the dædal⁵ earth,
And of heaven, and the Giant wars,⁶
And love, and death, and birth,
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Mænalus
I pursued a maiden,⁷ and clasped a reed:
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus;
It breaks in our bosom, and then we bleed.
All wept—as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood—
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

NOTES.

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Pan, as described in the Homeric hymns, is "lord of all the hills and dales": sometimes he ranges along the tops of the mountains; sometimes pursues the game in the valleys, roams through the woods, or floats along the streams; or drives his sheep into a cave, and there plays on his reeds music not to be excelled by that of the sweetest singing birds; and

"With him the clear-singing mountain-nymphs
Move quick their feet, by the dark-watered spring
In the soft mead, where crocus, hyacinths,
Fragrant and blooming, mingle with the grass
Confused, and sing, while echo peals around
The mountain's top."

Keats, in "Endymion," thus apostrophizes Pan:

"O Harkener to the loud clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsmen: Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms:
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors:
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!"

1. Tmolus. It was Tmolus who acted as umpire in the musical contest between Pan and Apollo. This contest is directly referred to throughout this poem.

2. Peneus. The chief river of Thessaly. It flows through the Vale of Tempe, and between the mountains Ossa and Pelion, emptying finally into the Ægean Sea. (See map of ancient Greece.)

3. Sileni. A name applied to the older satyrs. They were fond of wine and of every kind of sensual

pleasure, and hence represented the luxuriant powers of nature, and were connected with the worship of Bacchus.

Sylvans. Deities of the fields and forests.

Fauns. Gods of the shepherds, flocks, and fields. A faun was usually represented as half man and half goat.

4. Apollo. One of the chief divinities of the Greeks; the god of music and song, of prophecy, of the flocks and herds, of the founding of towns, and of the sun. He was the son of Zeus and Leto, and was born on the island of Delos. His favorite oracle was at Delphi. [74]

5. dædal. Labyrinthine, wonderful. From Dædalus, a famous Athenian architect, who designed the labyrinth at Crete in which the Minotaur was kept.

6. Giant wars. The wars of the Titans,—the contest in which Zeus overcame and deposed his father, Chronos, and made himself supreme ruler of the universe. The Titans, who were opposed to him, were overcome, and hurled into the lowest depths of Tartarus.

Mænalus. A mountain in Arcadia, celebrated as the favorite haunt of Pan.

7. maiden. Syrinx, a nymph of Arcadia, devoted to the service of Artemis. "As she was returning one day from the chase, Pan saw and loved her; but when he would address her, she fled. The god pursued. She reached the river Ladon, and, unable to cross it, implored the aid of her sister nymphs; and when Pan thought to grasp the object of his pursuit, he found his arms filled with reeds. At that moment the wind began to agitate the reeds and produced a low musical sound. The god took the hint, cut seven of the twigs, and formed from them his *syrinx*, or pastoral pipe." See Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

FROM "EPIPSYCHIDION."

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbor now;
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,—
No keel has ever ploughed that path before;
The halcyons¹ brood around the foamless isles;
The treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles;
The merry mariners are bold and free:
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?
Our bark is as an albatross whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple east;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night
And Day and Storm and Calm pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian² skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of paradise;
And, for³ the harbors are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,⁴—
Simple and spirited, innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam
Kissing the sifted sands and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide.
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air. And far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails,
Accompany the noonday nightingales.
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs.⁵
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,

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And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odor through the brain,
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odor, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within the soul,—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.⁶

It is an isle 'twixt heaven, air, earth, and sea,
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity;
Bright as that wandering Eden, Lucifer,⁷
Washed by the soft blue oceans of young air.⁸
It is a favored place. Famine or blight,
Pestilence, war, and earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way.
The wingèd storms, chaunting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.

And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight:
Which sun or moon or zephyr draw aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess.
Yet, like a buried lamp, a soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of the Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
O'er the gray rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude.

And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden eastern air,
And level with the living winds which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.

Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
The scene it would adorn; and therefore still
Nature with all her children haunts the hill.
The ringdove in the embowering ivy yet
Keeps up her love-lament; and the owls flit
Round the evening tower; and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moonlight
Before our gate; and the slow silent night
Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life; and, when years heap
Their withered hours like leaves on our decay,
Let us become the overhanging day,
The living soul, of this elysian isle—

Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise and sit and walk together
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather;
And wander in the meadows; or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds to touch their paramour;⁹

Or linger where the pebble-paven shore
Under the quick faint kisses of the sea
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy;—
Possessing and possessed by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one. . . .

[76]

[77]

[78]

We shall become the same, we shall be one
 Spirit within two frames, oh wherefore two?
 One passion in twin hearts, which grows and grew
 Till, like two meteors of expanding flame,
 Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
 Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
 Burning, yet ever unconsumable;
 In one another's substance finding food,
 Light flames too pure and light and unimbued
 To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
 Which point to heaven and cannot pass away:
 One hope within two wills, one will beneath
 Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
 One heaven, one hell, one immortality,
 And one annihilation!

Woe is me!

The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce
 Into the height of Love's rare universe
 Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
 I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

NOTES.

"A clever but disreputable professor at Pisa one day related to Shelley the sad story of a beautiful and noble lady, the Contessina Emilia Viviani, who had been confined by her father in a dismal convent of the suburbs, to await her marriage with a distasteful husband." Shelley, fired as ever by a tale of tyranny, was eager to visit the fair captive. The professor accompanied him and Medwin to the convent parlor, where they found her more lovely than even the most glowing descriptions had led them to expect. Nor was she only beautiful. Shelley soon discovered that she had "cultivated her mind beyond what I have ever met with in Italian women"; and a rhapsody composed by her upon the subject of Uranian Love—"Il Vero Amore"—justifies the belief that she possessed an intellect of more than ordinary elevation. He took Mrs. Shelley to see her; and both did all they could to make her convent prison less irksome by frequent visits, by letters, by presents of flowers and books. It was not long before Shelley's sympathy for this unfortunate lady took the form of love, which, however spiritual and Platonic, was not the less passionate. The result was the composition of "Epipsychidion," the most unintelligible of all his poems to those who have not assimilated the spirit of Plato's *Symposium* and Dante's *Vita Nuova*.—*J. A. Symonds*.

[79]

W. M. Rossetti characterizes this poem as "a pure outpouring of poetry; a brimming and bubbling fountain of freshness and music, magical with its own spray rainbows."

A year after its composition, Shelley wrote: "The 'Epipsychidion' I cannot look at. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealized history of my life and feelings."

Epipsychidion. From Gr. *epi*, upon, and *psyche*, the soul. This poem is addressed "to the noble and unfortunate Lady Emilia Viviani, now imprisoned in the Convent of St. Anne, Pisa," and was written in 1821.

1. halcyons. Kingfishers. Halcyone was the daughter of Æolus and wife of Ceyx. When her husband died she was changed into a bird,—the kingfisher,—and, floating over the sea, she still calls for the lost Ceyx in tones full of plaining and tears. And "whensoever she makes her nest, a law of nature brings round what is called Halcyon's weather—days distinguishable among all others for their serenity."

2. Ionian. Greek. See the expression "Under the roof of blue Ionian weather," below. Explain its meaning.

3. for. Since, because.

elysian. Heavenly. Pertaining to Elysium, the islands of the blest, the Elysian fields.

4. age of gold. Compare Milton, "Hymn on the Nativity" (see note 36, page 192. See, also, poem by John Lydgate, page 275).

5. peopled with sweet airs. Filled with sweet music.

6. antenatal dream. See Wordsworth's "[Ode on the Intimations of Immortality](#)" (also, note 13, page 47).

[80]

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting."

7. Lucifer. Venus when seen in the morning, rising before the sun is called Lucifer, the light-bearer. From Lat. *lux*, light, and *fero*, to bear (see note 18, page 189). The same star when seen in the evening, following the sun, is called Hesperus.

8. **blue oceans of young air.** Explain.

9. **paramour.** See Milton's "Ode on the Nativity," stanza i.

"It was no reason then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour."

Milton makes the sun the paramour of the earth; Shelley, the earth the paramour of the sky.

A LAMENT.

Swifter far than summer's flight,
Swifter far than youth's delight,
Swifter far than happy night,
 Art thou come and gone:
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
 I am left alone, alone.

The swallow Summer comes again,
The owlet Night resumes her reign,
But the wild swan Youth is fain
 To fly with thee, false as thou.
My heart each day desires the morrow,
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow,
Vainly would my winter borrow
 Sunny leaves from any bough.

Lilies for a bridal bed,
Roses for a matron's head,
Violets for a maiden dead,
 Pansies let my flowers be:
On the living grave I bear,
Scatter them without a tear,
Let no friend, however dear,
 Waste one hope, one fear, for me.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

[81]

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was born at Field Place, near Horsham in Sussex, August 4, 1792. He was educated at Eton and at Oxford. While a student at the latter place, he wrote a pamphlet, entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*, which caused his expulsion from college. This occurred in 1811, and in the same year he married Harriet Westbrook, from whom, three years later, he separated. In 1816 he married Mary Godwin. In 1818 he left England for Italy, where he remained until his death by drowning in the gulf of Spezia, July 8, 1822. His first considerable poem, "Queen Mab," was published in 1813; "Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude," in 1816; "The Revolt of Islam," in 1818; and "Epipsychidion" and "Adonais" in 1821. His two dramas, the "Cenci" and "Prometheus Unbound," were issued, the former in 1819, the latter in 1821.

"Shelley's early rupture with the English world," says Hales, "lost him all the advantages which a fuller experience of it and a longer intercourse with it might have given. That world was no less estranged from him than he from it. It misunderstood and misinterpreted him throughout his career. It covered him with its opprobrium. Assuredly, he was not the man that world painted. It by no means follows that because Shelley did not repeat the ordinary creeds, and even mocked at them, that he believed nothing. Shelley was never in his soul an atheist: it was simply impossible with his nature that he should be; what he did deny and defy was a deity whose worship seemed, as he saw the world, consistent with the reign of selfishness and bigotry."

Lord Macaulay says: "We doubt whether any modern poet has possessed in an equal degree some of the highest qualities of the great ancient masters. The words *bard* and *inspiration*, which seem so cold and affected when applied to other modern writers, have a perfect propriety when applied to him. He was not an author, but a bard. His poetry seems not to have been an art, but an inspiration. Had he lived to the full age of man, he might not improbably, have given to the world some great work of the very highest rank in design and execution."

Leigh Hunt says: "Assuredly, had he lived, he would have been the greatest dramatic writer since the days of Elizabeth. In general, if Coleridge is the sweetest of our poets, Shelley is at once the most ethereal and most gorgeous—the one who has clothed his thoughts in draperies of the most evanescent and most magnificent words and imagery. His poetry is as full of mountains, seas, and skies, of light, and darkness, and the seasons, and all the elements of our being, as if Nature herself had written it, with the Creation and its hopes newly cast around her, not, it must be confessed, without too indiscriminate a mixture of great and small, and a want of sufficient shade

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—a certain chaotic brilliancy, 'dark with excess of light.'"

Another English poet says: "Shelley outsang all poets on record but some two or three throughout all time; his depths and heights of inner and outer music are as divine as nature's, and not sooner exhaustible. He was alone the perfect singing-god; his thoughts, words, deeds, all sang together."

"The poet who creates a new ideal, and fills men's hearts with the flame of a divine desire, is a practical force in the stream of human development—and this Shelley has done. So much of his poetry is full of the tender melancholy of the moonlight he loved, that the world is still half blind to his highest bardic character, as the poet of a spiritual dawn, the eager spirit who flies forward

"Calling the lapsèd soul,
And weeping in the morning dew."

Even his moonlight seems to reflect the beams of some unrisen sun; and his sunlight has all the ethereal exhilaration of that of the first hours of a glorious day."—*John Todhunter*.

Other Poems to be Read: Adonais; The Sensitive Plant; The Cloud; Mount Blanc; To Wordsworth; The Euganean Hills; Liberty; Alastor; Prometheus Unbound.

REFERENCES: De Quincey's *Essays*; Jeaffreson's *The Real Shelley*; *Shelley* (English Men of Letters), by J. A. Symonds; Leigh Hunt's *Imagination and Fancy*; Rossetti's *Memoir of Shelley*; Dowden's *Life of P. B. Shelley*; Moore's *Life of Lord Byron*; Middleton's *Shelley and his Writings*; Medwin's *Life of Shelley*; Trelawney's *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*; Todhunter's *Shelley: A Study*.

John Keats.

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ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE.

I

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards¹ had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad² of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

II.

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
Dance, and Provençal song,³ and sun-burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,⁴
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

III.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;

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Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

IV.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,⁵
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

V.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine,⁶
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eyes.

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VI.

Darkling⁷ I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem⁸ become a sod.

VII.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn⁹;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

VIII.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

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NOTES.

"This poem," says Leigh Hunt, "was written in a house at the foot of Highgate Hill, on the border of the fields looking towards Hampstead. The poet had then his mortal illness upon him, and knew it; never was the voice of death sweeter."

1. Lethe-wards. That is, towards Lethe. Lethe was one of the rivers of Hell. Its name means "forgetfulness." Milton describes it thus:

"A slow and silent stream,
Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls
Her watery labyrinth, whereof who drinks
Forthwith his former state and being forgets—
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain."

—*Paradise Lost*, ii, 583.

2. Dryad. A wood-nymph. From Gr. *drus*, an oak tree. The life of the Dryad was supposed to be bound up with that of her tree.

"The quickening power of the soul, like Martha, is 'busy about many things,' or, like a Dryad, living in a tree."—*Sir John Davis*.

3. Provençal song. Song of the troubadours, a school of lyric poets that flourished in Provence, in the south of France, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. A love song.

4. Hippocrene. The "Fountain of the Horse" (*Fons Caballinus*). A fountain on Mount Helicon, Bœotia, sacred to the Muses. It was said to have been produced by the horse Pegasus striking the ground with his feet. Its waters were supposed to be a source of poetical inspiration.

Longfellow, in "The Goblet of Life," says:

"No purple flowers—no garlands green,
Conceal the goblet's shade or sheen,
Nor maddening draughts of Hippocrene,
Like gleams of sunshine, flash between
Thick leaves of mistletoe."

5. Bacchus and his pards. Bacchus was frequently represented as riding on the back of a leopard, a tiger, or a lion, or in a chariot drawn by panthers. [87]

pards. Spotted beasts.

See Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," third stanza, page 160.

6. Compare with Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Act ii, sc. i:

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine."

7. darkling. In the dark. The word is very rarely used.

8. requiem. A dirge, or funeral song. "So called from the first word in the Catholic mass for the dead, *Requiem æternum dona iis Domine* (Give eternal rest to them, O Lord)."—*Brand*.

become a sod. Compare with Ecclesiastes, xii, 7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was."

9. alien corn. See Ruth, ii. Why *alien* corn? Longfellow, in his poem on "Flowers," says:

"Everywhere about us they are glowing—
Some like stars, to tell us Spring is born;
Others, their blue eyes with tears o'erflowing,
Stand like Ruth amid the golden corn."

FROM "THE EVE OF ST. AGNES."

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;

Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
Until the popped warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray:
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hushed carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

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And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

These delicacies he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
"And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art mine heaven, and I thine eremite:
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mused awhile, entailed in woofed phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence called "La belle dame sans mercy":
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

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Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep.
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odor with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

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'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest,
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel."

"Hark!'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—
The bloated wassailers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drowned all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

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She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found,
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall!
Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:

By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch and demon and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela, the old,
Died palsy-twitch'd with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

NOTES.

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"The Eve of St. Agnes" is one of the finest of Keats's shorter poems. Leigh Hunt describes it as "the most complete specimen of his genius; exquisitely loving; young, but full-grown poetry of the rarest description; graceful as the beardless Apollo; glowing and gorgeous with the colors of romance." The stanzas here quoted, while comprising the main portion of the story, are not quite half of the entire poem.

Madeline, the beautiful daughter of a rude and rich old baron, is secretly betrothed to Porphyro, a young man whom her father has sworn to slay. On the eve of St. Agnes a great feast is in progress in the baron's castle. Porphyro, at the risk of his life, "comes across the moors, with heart on fire for Madeline." With the aid of the old nurse, Angela, he gains admission into the castle and is concealed in a closet, where he conceives the plan for their elopement. In the meanwhile, Madeline, having danced with her father's guests, retires to her room, her mind full of the thought of Porphyro, and intent upon testing the truth of the belief, then current, that on this evening, maidens might, if they performed certain ceremonies and forms, be vouchsafed a sight of their future husbands.

St. Agnes was a young virgin of Palermo, who is said to have suffered martyrdom at the age of thirteen, in the Diocletian persecution, about A.D. 304. Her feast was celebrated on the 21st of January.

With reference to the versification of this poem, see what is said of the Spenserian stanza, page [232](#). There are many imitations of Spenser in these verses.

The student is desired to discover for himself the peculiarities of thought, of feeling, of expression, which give interest and beauty to this production. The following are a few of the words and expressions whose meaning he should study: "Gules"; "taint"; "vespers"; "poppied"; "Swart Paynims"; "Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness"; "Morphean amulet"; "affray"; "azure-lidded sleep"; "argosy"; "missal"; "tinct"; "Fez"; "Samarcand"; "Lebanon"; "eremite"; "witless"; "alarum"; "entailed in woofed phantasies"; "La belle dame sans mercy"; "heart-shaped and vermeil dyed"; "Of haggard seeming"; "arras."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

JOHN KEATS was born October 29, 1795, in Moorfields, London. He was sent to school at Enfield, where he gained the rudiments of a classical education; but, his father having died when John was a mere child, he was apprenticed at an early age to a surgeon in Edmonton. When seventeen years old a copy of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" fell into his hands, and the perusal of that great poem was the beginning, for him, of a new life. He felt the poetic instinct within him, and resolved that he too would be a poet. In 1817 he published a small volume of poems, which attracted but little attention; and in 1818 his more ambitious effort, "Endymion," was presented to the world. The latter poem was unkindly received by the great reviews. The author was advised to "go back to his gallipots," and told that "a starved apothecary was better than a starved poet." A story was long current that these severe criticisms induced Keats's early death, but this is entirely improbable. He continued writing, although consumption, a hereditary disease in his family, had already begun its work upon him. He published "The Eve of St. Agnes" in 1820, and had made some progress with a noble poem, entitled "Hyperion," which Lord Byron declared to be "actually inspired by the Titans, and as sublime as Æschylus." In September of that year he sailed for Italy, but the hope of prolonging life by a change of climate proved to be vain. On the 27th of February, 1821, he died at Rome.

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"We can hardly be wrong in believing," says Masson, "that had Keats lived to the ordinary age of man, he would have been one of the greatest of all our poets. As it is, I believe we shall all be disposed to place him very near indeed to our very best."

"That which was deepest in his mind," says Stopford Brooke, "was the love of loveliness for its own sake, the sense of its rightful and pre-eminent power; and, in the singleness of worship which he gave to Beauty, Keats is especially the artist, and the true father of the latest modern school of poetry."

Other Poems to be Read: Endymion; Ode on a Grecian Urn; Lamia; Hyperion; To Autumn;

The Eighteenth Century.

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"The influence of the poetry of the past lasted; new elements were added to poetry, and new forms of it took shape. The study of the Greek and Latin classics revived, and with it a more artistic poetry. Not only correct form, for which Pope sought, but beautiful form was sought after. Men like Thomas Gray and William Collins strove to pour into their work that simplicity of beauty which the Greek poets and Italians like Petrarca had reached as the last result of genius restrained by art. . . . Two things had been learned. First, that artistic rules were necessary, and, secondly, that natural feeling was necessary in order that poetry should have a style fitted to express nobly the emotions and thoughts of man. The way was therefore now made ready for a style in which the Art should itself be Nature, and it sprang at once into being in the work of the poets of this time. The style of Gray is polished to the finest point, and yet it is instinct with natural feeling. Goldsmith is natural even to simplicity, and yet his verse is even more accurate than Pope's. Cowper's style, in such poems as the 'Lines to my Mother's Picture,' arises out of the simplest pathos, and yet it is as pure in expression as Greek poetry."—STOPFORD BROOKE.

"At last there started up an unfortunate Scotch peasant (Burns), rebelling against the world, and in love, with the yearnings, lusts, greatness, and irrationality of modern genius. Now and then behind his plough, he lighted on genuine verses, verses such as Heine and Alfred de Musset have written in our own days. In those few words, combined after a new fashion, there was a revolution."—TAINÉ.

Poets of the Eighteenth Century.

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Alexander Pope (1688-1744). See biographical note, page [155](#).

Thomas Parnell (1679-1718). "The Hermit"; short poems.

Edward Young (1684-1765), "Night Thoughts"; "The Last Day"; "Resignation."

Allan Ramsay (1686-1758). "The Gentle Shepherd"; "Scots Songs"; "Fables and Tales."

John Gay (1688-1732). "The Beggar's Opera"; "The Shepherd's Week"; "Trivia"; "Rural Sports"; fables, and other short poems.

Matthew Green (1696-1737). "The Grotto"; "The Spleen."

John Dyer (1698-1758). "Grongar Hill"; "The Fleece."

Robert Blair (1699-1746). "The Grave."

James Thomson (1700-1748). "The Seasons"; "The Castle of Indolence."

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), "The Vanity of Human Wishes"; "London."

Richard Glover (1712-1785). "Leonidas"; "Admiral Hosier's Ghost"; "The Athenaid."

William Shenstone (1714-1763). "The Schoolmistress"; "Pastoral Ballads."

Thomas Gray (1716-1771). See biographical note, page [139](#).

William Collins (1721-1759). Odes and other short poems.

Mark Akenside (1721-1770). "The Pleasures of the Imagination."

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774). See biographical note, page [128](#).

Thomas Warton (1728-1790). "The Pleasures of Melancholy"; "The Triumph of Isis"; short poems.

William Cowper (1731-1800). See biographical note, page [122](#).

Charles Churchill (1731-1764). "The Prophecy of Famine"; "The Rosciad."

James Beattie (1735-1803). "The Minstrel."

Robert Fergusson (1750-1774). Short Scottish poems.

Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770). "Poems of Thomas Rowley"; short poems.

George Crabbe (1754-1832). "Tales of the Hall"; "The Village"; "The Parish Register"; "Tales in Verse."

William Blake (1757-1827). "Songs of Innocence"; "Songs of Experience"; "Poetical Sketches."

Robert Burns (1759-1796). See biographical note, page [111](#).

Robert Burns.

[97]

THE COTTER'S¹ SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO R. AIKEN, ESQ.²

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short but simple annals of the Poor.³
—Gray.

My loved, my honored, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,⁴
The lowly train⁵ in life's sequestered scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! though his worth unknown, far happier there I ween.

November chill blows loud wi' angry sugh;⁶
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose;
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes,—
This night his weekly moil is at an end,—
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.⁷

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At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee things toddlin', stacher thro'
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wine's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labor an' his toil.⁸

Belyve, the elder bairns⁹ come drapping in,
At service out, among the farmers roun';
Some ca'¹⁰ the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neibor¹¹ town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposit¹² her sair-won penny-fee,¹³
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

Wi' joy unfeigned, brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's welfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-winged, unnoticed fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears;
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years,
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother wi' her needle an' her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's and their mistress's command,
 The younkers a' are warned to obey;
 And mind their labors wi' an eydent hand,
 And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
 "And, oh! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
 And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!
 Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
 Implore His counsel and assisting might:
 They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!"¹⁴

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
 Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
 Tells how a neibor lad came o'er the moor,
 To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
 The wily mother sees the conscious flame
 Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
 Wi' heart-struck anxious care inquires his name,
 While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
 Weel pleased the mother hears, it's nae wild worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome Jenny brings him ben;¹⁵
 A strappin' youth; he takes the mother's eye;
 Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
 The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.¹⁶
 The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
 But, blate and lathefu', scarce can weel behave;
 The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
 What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
 Weel pleased to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

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

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
 A wretch, a villain, lost to love and truth,
 That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
 Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
 Curse on his perjured arts! dissembling smooth!
 Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exiled?
 Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
 Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
 Then paints the ruined maid, and their distraction wild!

But now the supper crowns their simple board,—
 The halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food:
 The sowpe their only hawkie¹⁷ does afford,
 That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood;
 The dame brings forth in complimentary mood,
 To grace the lad, her weel-hained kebbuck, fell,
 An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
 The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell
 How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.¹⁸

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
 The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
 The big ha'-Bible,¹⁹ ance his father's pride;
 His bonnet²⁰ rev'rently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care;
 And "Let us worship God!" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
 Perhaps "Dundee's" wild warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive "Martyrs," worthy of the name,
 Or noble "Elgin" beets²¹ the heavenward flame,

The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame,
The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand; [102]
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"²²
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!
The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole²³;
But, haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;
And in His book of life the inmates poor enroll.

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He, who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs, [103]
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings;
"An honest man's the noblest work of God:"²⁴
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent,
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, oh, may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide

That streamed thro' Wallace's²⁵ undaunted heart,
 Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
 Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
 (The patriot's God peculiarly Thou art,
 His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
 O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
 But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard,
 In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

NOTES.

This poem, composed in 1785, is written partly in the Scottish dialect, partly in English. The livelier passages are in the poet's vernacular; the loftier or more solemn parts in the language of books. This distinction was doubtless made because Burns disliked to treat his higher themes in a merely colloquial manner, fearing to belittle them by so doing. The household described was probably that of the poet's own father; it was at least a typical Scotch peasant's household, with which no one was more familiar. Gilbert Burns, in a letter to Dr. Currie, says: "Although the 'Cotter' in the Saturday Night, is an exact copy of my father in his manners, his family devotions, and exhortations, yet the other parts of the description do not apply to our family. None of us ever went 'At service out among the neighbors roun'.' Instead of our depositing our 'sair-won penny-fee' with our parents, my father labored hard, and lived with the most rigid economy, that he might be able to keep his children at home." [104]

The influence of Gray and Goldsmith is very apparent in more than one passage in this poem.

"Robert had frequently remarked to me," said his brother, "that there was something particularly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent, sober head of a family introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author, the world is indebted for 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.' The hint of the plan and title of the poem is taken from Ferguson's 'Farmer's Ingle.'"

1. Cotter. "One who inhabits a cot, or cottage, dependent on a farm."—*Jamieson*.

2. R. Aiken. A friend with whom Burns had been brought into contact during the Old and New Light Controversy.

3. See Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," eighth stanza.

4. lays. Songs; probably from the same root as the German *lied*. The word was originally applied to a form of elegiac French poetry, much imitated by the English.

5. train. A favorite word with the poets at this time. Goldsmith uses it no fewer than six times in the "Deserted Village." The original meaning is something drawn along; from Lat. *traho*, to draw.

6. sugh. Also spelled *sough*. Whistling sound, murmur. Derived from the same root as sigh, for which word it is used by Burns in his lines, "On the Battle of Sherriffmuir":

"My heart for fear gae sough for sough
 To hear the thuds," etc.

7. Compare with Gray's "Elegy," line 3:

"The ploughman homeward plods his weary way."

8. Toil was perhaps pronounced *tile*, thus properly rhyming with *beguile*. Johnson, in "London," says:

"On all thy hours security shall smile,
 And bless thine evening walk and morning toil."

9. bairns. From A.-S. *bearn*s, children. [105]

10. ca'. Drive, follow. Probably not from the same root as our common word *call*. Kingsley uses it in this sense in the line:

"Go, Mary, go, and call the cattle home."

11. neibor. Neighboring. Milton, in "Comus," uses the expressions: "Some neighbor woodman," "some neighbor villager"; and Shakespeare says: "A neighbor thicket" ("Love's Labour Lost"), and "neighbor room" ("Hamlet").

12. deposit. Pronounced here *dep' o-zit*.

13. penny-fee. Fee, wages, from A.-S. *feoh*, cattle. "Cattle," says Bosworth, "was the first kind of property; and, by bartering, this word came to signify money in general." So, too, the word *penny* is from A.-S. *penig*, Icelandic *peningr*, cattle. The word *penny*, as in this country the word *dollar*, is used indefinitely for *money*.

14. Observe that in quoting the words of the Cotter the poet partially drops the Ayrshire dialect

and uses a purer English.

15. ben. Within. The inner part of the house; from O. E. *binnan*, within. Its opposite is *but*, the outside of the house.

16. kye. Cattle, from O.-E. *cu*, or *kie*. *Kine* is derived from the same root, and probably *cow*.

17. hawkie. This word, says Hales, "denotes, properly, a cow with a white face. So, in Northumberland, *bawsand* was used of an animal with a white spot on its forehead, and *crummie* of a cow with crooked horns."

18. sin' lint was i' the bell. Since flax was in bloom. That is, the cheese was a year old last flax-blossoming time.

19. ha'-Bible. The hall Bible—the Bible kept in the best room.

20. bonnet. This word in Scotch denotes a man's head-covering. In early English it was used in the same sense.

21. beets. Feeds,—that is, gives fuel to the flame.

"It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her name;
It heats me, it beets me,
And sets me a' on flame."

—*Burns's Epistle to Davie, a brother poet.*

The word is probably from A.-S. *betan*, to better, to mend; from which, also, we have the words *beat*, to excel, *better*, *best*, etc.

22. Burns refers the reader to Pope's "Windsor Forest" for this quotation. He probably had in mind the line in the "Essay on Man":

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

23. sacerdotal stole. A long, narrow scarf with fringed ends, and richly embroidered, worn by the clergy upon special occasions. **Sacerdotal**, from Lat. *sacerdos*, a priest. **Stole**, from Lat. *stola*, a long dress worn by Roman women over their tunic and fastened with a girdle. [106]

24. Pope's "Essay on Man," Epistle iv, line 247.

25. William Wallace (1270-1305), the Scotch national hero was, like Burns, a native of Ayrshire.

VOCABULARY.

aft , often.	ingle , fire.
amaist , almost.	jauk , trifle.
amang , among.	kebbuck , cheese.
ance , once.	kens , understands.
auld , old.	lathefu' , shy.
belyve , by and by.	lave , the rest.
blate , bashful.	lyart , gray.
blinkin , gleaming.	miry , muddy, dusty.
blythe , happy.	moil , labor.
braw , brave, fine.	nae , no.
cannie , easy.	parritch , porridge.
carking , fretting.	pleugh , plough.
certes , certain.	rin , run.
chows , chews.	sair-won , hard-earned.
claes , clothes.	sowpe , milk.
convoy , accompany.	spiers , inquires.
cracks , talks.	stacher , stagger.
craws , crows.	strappin' , strapping, stout.
drapping , dropping.	tentie , attentively.
eydent , diligent.	towmond , twelvemonth.
fell , tasty.	uncos , unknown things, new.
flichterin , fluttering.	wales , chooses.
frae , from.	wee bit , little.
gang , go.	weel , well.
gars , makes.	wee things , little folks.
guid , good.	weel-hained , well-kept.
hae , have.	wiles , knowledge.
haffets , temples.	wily , knowing.
hafflins , half.	youngling , youthful.

halesome, wholesome.
hallan, partition wall.
hameward, homeward.

youunkers, youngsters, children.
'yont, on the other side of.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY.

[107]

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH, IN APRIL, 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tippéd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
 Thy slender stem.
To spare thee now is past my power,
 Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet
 Wi' spreckled breast,
When upward springing, blythe to greet
 The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
 Amid the storm,
Scarce reared above the parent earth
 Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
High sheltering woods an' wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield
 O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field,
 Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
 In humble guise:
But now the share uptears thy bed,
 And low thou lies!

[108]

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betrayed,
 And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soiled, is laid
 Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starred!
Unskilful he to note the card
 Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
 And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering worth is given,
Who long with wants and woes has striven,
By human pride or cunning driven
 To misery's brink,
Till, wrenched of every stay but Heaven,
 He, ruined, sink!

Even thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
 Full on thy bloom,
Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight,
 Shall be thy doom.

bield, protection.
blythe, happy.
bonnie, pretty.
card, compass.
glinted, passed quickly.
histie, barren.

maun, must.
spreckled, speckled.
stibble, stubble.
stoure, dust.
weet, wetness.
wrenched, deprived.

FOR A' THAT, AND A' THAT.

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that?¹
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toils obscure, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,²
The man's the gowd³ for a' that!

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin gray, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that!

Ye see yon birkie,⁴ ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof⁵ for a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that;
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

[110]

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon⁶ his might,
Guid faith, he maunna fa'⁷ that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that;
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that!

Then let us pray that come it may—
As come it will for a' that—
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree,⁸ and a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that!

NOTES.

1. Is there anything in honest poverty to cause one to hang his head, etc.?
2. Explain lines 7 and 8 fully.
3. **gowd**, gold.
4. **birkie**, fellow.
5. **coof**, fool.
6. **aboon his might**, above his power.
7. **maunna fa'**, may not get.
8. **gree**, palm, supremacy.

"Burns was not only the poet of love, but also of the new excitement about man. Himself poor, he

sang the poor. Neither poverty nor low birth made a man the worse—the man was 'a man for a that.'"—*Stopford Brooke*.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

[111]

ROBERT BURNS was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1759. His childhood and youth were spent in poverty on his father's farm, where he learned to plough, reap, mow, and thresh in the barn, but where opportunities for education were such only as Scottish peasants know. In 1784 his father died, and he attempted to manage a farm of his own at Mossgiel. The experiment proving to be a failure, he resolved to leave Scotland, and secured an appointment to a clerkship in Jamaica. Just before the time set for his departure, he learned of the success of a volume of his poems which had just been published at Kilmarnock; and, instead of departing for the West Indies, he made a visit to Edinburgh. He was welcomed by the best society, and received at once into the literary circles of the Scottish capital. "His name and fame flashed like sunshine over the land: the shepherd on the hill, the maiden at her wheel, learned his songs by heart, and the first scholars of Scotland courted his acquaintance." A second edition of his poems was published in 1787, and with the proceeds—about \$2500—he took a farm at Ellisland, in Nithsdale. But his habits were such that he made sad failure a second time in the experiment of farming; and, after two years of mismanagement, to eke out his scanty income he accepted an appointment as exciseman. In 1791, "unfortunately both for his health and for his reputation," he removed to Dumfries, where, five years later, he died.

"While the Shakespeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves, this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye; for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines."—*Carlyle*.

"Burns is not the poet's poet, which Shelley no doubt meant to be, or the philosopher's poet, which Wordsworth, in spite of himself, is. He is the poet of homely human nature, not half so homely or prosaic as it seems. His genius, in a manner all its own, associates itself with the fortunes, experiences, memorable moments, of human beings whose humanity is their sole patrimony; to whom 'liberty and whatever, like liberty, has the power

[112]

To raise a man above the brute,
And mak him ken himsel,'

is their portion in life; for whom the great epochs and never-to-be-forgotten phases of existence are those which are occasioned by emotions inseparable from the consciousness of existence. For the great majority of his readers, and therefore for the mass of human beings, the sympathy which exists between him and them is sympathy relative to their strongest and deepest feelings, and this is sympathy out of which personal affection naturally springs, and in the strength of which it cannot but grow strong."—*John Service*.

"Burns was not like Shakespeare in the range of his genius, but there is something of the same magnanimity, directness, and unaffected character about him. With but little of Shakespeare's imagination or inventive power, he had the same life of mind; within the narrow circle of personal feeling or domestic incidents, the pulse of his poetry flows as healthily and vigorously. He had an eye to see, a heart to feel,—no more. His pictures of good fellowship, of social life, of quaint humor, are equal to anything; they come up to nature, and they cannot go beyond it."—*Hazlitt*.

"His is that language of the heart
In which the answering heart would speak,
Thought, word, that bids the warm tear start,
Or the smile light the cheek.

"And his that music to whose tone
The common pulse of man keeps time,
In cot or castle's mirth or moan,
In cold or sunny clime."

—*Fitz-Greene Halleck*.

Other Poems to be Read: Bannockburn; Auld Lang Syne; Tam O' Shanter; To a Mouse; The Jolly Beggars; Ye Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon; Highland Mary; Address to the Deil; To Mary in Heaven.

REFERENCES: Carlyle's *Essay on Robert Burns*; *Burns* (English Men of Letters), by J. C. Shairp; Hazlitt's *English Poets*.

BOADICEA.

When the British warrior queen,
Bleeding from the Roman rods,
Sought, with an indignant mien,
Counsel from her country's gods,

Sage beneath the spreading oak
Sat the Druid, hoary chief;
Every burning word he spoke
Full of rage, and full of grief.

"Princess! if our aged eyes
Weep upon thy matchless wrongs,
'Tis because resentment ties
All the terrors of our tongues.

"Rome shall perish—write that word
In the blood that she has spilt;
Perish, hopeless and abhorr'd,
Deep in ruin as in guilt.

"Rome, for empire far renown'd,
Tramples on a thousand states;
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground,—
Hark, the Gaul is at her gates!

"Other Romans shall arise, [114]
Heedless of a soldier's name;
Sounds, not arms,¹ shall win the prize;
Harmony the path to fame.

"Then the progeny that springs
From the forests of our land,
Arm'd with thunder, clad with wings,²
Shall a wider world command.

"Regions Cæsar never knew
Thy posterity shall sway;
Where his eagles never flew
None invincible as they."³

Such the bard's prophetic words,
Pregnant with celestial fire,
Bending as he swept the chords
Of his sweet but awful lyre.

She, with all the monarch's pride,
Felt them in her bosom glow,
Rush'd to battle, fought and died;
Dying, hurled them⁴ at the foe.

Ruffians, pitiless as proud,
Heaven awards the vengeance due;
Empire is on us bestowed,
Shame and ruin wait for you.⁵

NOTES.

Boadicea was queen of the Iceni, a powerful and warlike tribe of Britons, about the middle of the first century. Upon the death of her husband, Prasutagus, her kingdom was seized by the Romans, and she herself, for some real or imaginary offence, was publicly scourged. During the absence of the Roman governor from that part of England, Boadicea raised an immense army, burned the city of London, and put 70,000 Romans to the sword. She afterwards, with 230,000 troops, met the Roman army, under Suetonius, in the field, and although the Romans could muster only 10,000 soldiers, the British army was defeated, and the queen, in despair, ended her own life by taking poison. [115]

In this poem, Cowper represents the queen as, soon after her shameful treatment by the Romans, seeking counsel from one of the native priests. The Druid prophesies the destruction of Rome and the future greatness of Britain.

1. Sounds, not arms. Does the poet allude to the cultivation of oratory and poetry among the

Romans and the neglect of military affairs?

2. **Arm'd with thunder, clad with wings.** What do these expressions mean? To what do they refer?

3. Explain the prophecy included in this stanza.

4. **hurled them.** Hurlled what?

5. This stanza, evidently a part of the imprecation which Boadicea "hurled" at her enemies, ought to be enclosed with quotation marks, but in most versions of the poem it appears without them.

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE.

Oh, that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
"Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!"
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blessed be the art that can immortalize,
The art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear, [116]
O welcome guest, though unexpected here!
Who bidst me honor with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long,
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own:
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
Shall steep¹ me in Elysian reverie,²
A momentary dream that thou art she.

My mother! when I learnt³ that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfelt, a kiss;
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss.
Ah! that maternal smile! It answers—Yes.
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone
Adieu and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!

The maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,⁴
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wished I long believed,
And, disappointed still, was still deceived.
By expectation every day beguiled,
Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
I learned at last submission to my lot; [117]
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nursery floor;
And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapped
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped,
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we called the pastoral house our own.
Short-lived possession! but the record fair
That memory keeps, of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.⁵
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,

That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid;
 Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
 The biscuit, or confectionary plum;⁶
 The fragrant waters on my cheek bestowed
 By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed;
 All this, and more endearing still than all,
 Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
 Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and brakes
 That humor interposed too often makes;⁷
 All this still legible in memory's page,
 And still to be so to my latest age,
 Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
 Such honors to thee as my numbers may;
 Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
 Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours,
 When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers,
 The violet, the pink, and jessamine,
 I pricked them into paper with a pin
 (And thou wast happier than myself the while,
 Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile),
 Could those few pleasant days again appear,
 Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
 I would not trust my heart—the dear delight
 Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.—
 But no—what here we call our life is such
 So little to be loved, and thou so much,
 That I should ill requite thee to constrain
 Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

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Thou, as a gallant bark⁸ from Albion's coast
 (The storms all weathered and the ocean crossed)
 Shoots into port at some well-havened isle,
 Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,
 There sits quiescent on the floods that show
 Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
 While airs impregnated with incense play
 Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;
 So thou, with sails how swift! hast reached the shore,
 "Where tempests never beat nor billows roar."⁹
 And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide
 Of life long since has anchored by thy side.
 But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
 Always from port withheld, always distressed—
 Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest tost,
 Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost,
 And day by day some current's thwarting force,
 Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.
 Yet, oh, the thought that thou art safe, and he!
 That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
 My boast is not, that I deduce my birth
 From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;
 But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
 The son of parents passed into the skies!
 And now, farewell—Time unrevoked has run
 His wonted course, yet what I wished is done.
 By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
 I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again;
 To have renewed the joys that once were mine,
 Without the sin of violating thine:
 And, while the wings of Fancy still are free,
 And I can view this mimic show of thee,¹⁰
 Time has but half succeeded in his theft—
 Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.

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NOTES.

This, one of the most exquisite poems in the language, was written by Cowper in "the last glimmering of the evening light," before his mind was wholly overwhelmed by the final attack of insanity. "Every line is instinct with a profound and chastened feeling, to which it would be difficult to find a parallel. There is not a phrase, not a word, which jars upon the most susceptible ear, not a tinge of exaggeration, not a touch that is excessive. The fact that he who gave forth these supreme utterances of filial love was old himself when he did it, brings into the relationship a strange, tender equality which is marvellously touching."

1. **steep.** Imbue. From Ger. *stippen*. From the same root as *dip*, with the letter *s* prefixed.
2. **Elysian reverie.** Heavenly meditation. See note on Elysium, page 79.
3. **when I learnt.** Cowper was only six years old when his mother died.
4. **concern.** Distress, anxiety.
5. Nearly fifty years after his mother's death, Cowper wrote: "I can truly say that not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her; such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short."
6. **plum.** Perhaps the gravest fault in this poem is the frequent intermixture, as in these two lines, of trivial thoughts and circumstances with those of a more noble character. [120]
7. Explain the metaphor which the poet attempts to carry through these three lines. **Brakes** = *breaks*, interruptions. What is the meaning of *humor*?
8. **as a gallant bark.** Observe the beauty of the simile in these twelve lines, also of the simile which follows.
9. Probably misquoted from "The Dispensary," by Samuel Garth (1670-1719):

"To die is landing on some silent shore,
Where billows never break nor tempests roar."
10. **this mimic show.** Explain the meaning of this expression.

EPITAPH ON A HARE.

Here lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
Nor swifter greyhound follow,
Whose foot ne'er tainted morning dew,
Nor ear heard huntsman's halloo;

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,
Who, nursed with tender care,
And to domestic bounds confined,
Was still a wild Jack hare.

Though duly from my hand he took
His pittance every night,
He did it with a jealous look,
And, when he could, would bite.

His diet was of wheaten bread,
And milk, and oats, and straw;
Thistles, or lettuces instead,
With sand to scour his maw.

On twigs of hawthorn he regaled,
On pippins' russet peel,
And, when his juicy salads failed,
Sliced carrot pleased him well. [121]

A Turkey carpet was his lawn,
Whereon he loved to bound,
To skip and gambol like a fawn,
And swing his rump around.

His frisking was at evening hours,
For then he lost his fear,
But most before approaching showers,
Or when a storm drew near.

Eight years and five round-rolling moons
He thus saw steal away,
Dozing out all his idle noons,
And every night at play.

I kept him for his humor's sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.

But now beneath this walnut shade
He finds his long last home,
And waits, in snug concealment laid,
Till gentler Puss shall come.

He, still more agèd, feels the shocks
From which no care can save,
And, partner once of Tiney's box,
Must soon partake his grave.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

[122]

WILLIAM COWPER was born at Great Berkhamstead, November 26, 1731. His father was the rector of the parish, and his mother was Ann Donne of the family of the famous John Donne. Cowper was educated at a private school and afterwards at Westminster. It was intended that he should follow the profession of law, and, after the completion of his studies at Westminster, he entered the Middle Temple and was articled to a solicitor. At the age of twenty-two, through the influence of his uncle, Major Cowper, he was appointed to two clerkships in the House of Lords. The excitement brought on by this occurrence, together with an unhappy love affair, induced an attack of insanity, from which he suffered for more than a year. In 1773 he suffered from a second attack of insanity, which continued for sixteen months. It was not until 1780, when in his fiftieth year, that he began really to write poetry. His first volume was published in 1782, and comprised, besides several shorter pieces, the three poems, "Conversation," "Retirement," and "Table Talk." His second volume appeared in 1785, and contained "The Task," "Tirocinium," and the ballad of "John Gilpin," which had already become famous through the recitations of one Henderson, an actor. Cowper's translation of Homer was completed and published in 1791. From that time until his death in 1800 he suffered from hopeless dejection, regarding himself as an object of divine wrath, a condemned and forsaken outcast.

Cowper was not a great poet; but he was the first to abandon the mechanical versification and conventional phrases of the artificial poets, to find inspiration and guidance in nature. It may be said that he lacked creative power; but he possessed a quickness of thought, a depth of feeling, and a certain manliness and sincerity, which lifted him above the level of the ordinary versifiers of his time.

Other Poems to be Read: The Castaway; John Gilpin; The Task; The Loss of the Royal George.

REFERENCES: Southey's *Life of William Cowper*; *Cowper* (English Men of Letters), by Goldwin Smith; Hazlitt's *English Poets*; Macaulay's *Essay on Moore's Life of Byron*; *Life of Cowper*, in the "Globe Edition" of his works.

Oliver Goldsmith.

[123]

THREE PICTURES FROM "THE DESERTED VILLAGE."

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.
There as I pass'd, with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came soften'd from below:
The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
The sober herd that low'd to meet their young,
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school,
The watch-dog's voice that bay'd the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind—
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And fill'd each pause the nightingale had made.
But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled—
All but yon widow'd, solitary thing,
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron—forc'd in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn—
She only left of all the harmless train,

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The sad historian of the pensive plain!

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden-flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's¹ modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing² rich with forty pounds³ a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain:
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
The broken soldier,⁴ kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away,
Wept o'er his wounds or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

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Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place:
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools who came to scoff remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
Even children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed;
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.⁵

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
There in his noisy mansion,⁶ skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school.
A man severe he was, and stern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant knew;
Well had the boding⁷ tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper circling round
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.
Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault;
The village⁸ all declared how much he knew;

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"Twas certain he could write, and cipher too;
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides⁹ presage,
 And e'en the story ran that he could gauge:¹⁰
 In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill;
 For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;
 While words of learned length and thundering sound
 Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
 And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
 That one small head could carry all he knew.
 But past is all his fame. The very spot
 Where many a time he triumphed is forgot.

NOTES.

1. The village preacher.—"This picture of the village pastor," says Irving, "which was taken in part from the character of his father, embodied likewise the recollections of his brother Henry; for the natures of the father and son seem to have been identical. . . . To us the whole character seems traced as it were in an expiatory spirit; as if, conscious of his own wandering restlessness, he sought to humble himself at the shrine of excellence which he had not been able to practise."

2. passing rich. Exceedingly rich. The word is a common one among the poets. "Is she not passing fair?" (Shakespeare, "Two Gentlemen of Verona," Act iv, sc. 4); "How passing sweet is solitude" (Cowper, "Retirement").

3. forty pounds. In his dedication of "The Traveller," Goldsmith refers to his brother Henry as "a man who, despising fame and fortune, has retired early to happiness and obscurity, with an income of forty pounds a year." [127]

4. broken soldier. See "The Soldier's Dream," Campbell.

"And fain was their war-broken soldier to stay!"

5. The simile included in these four lines, says Lord Lytton, is translated almost literally from a poem by the Abbé de Chaulieu, who died in 1720. "Every one must own," adds he, "that, in copying, Goldsmith wonderfully improved the original."

6. The village master.—The portrait here drawn of the village schoolmaster is from Goldsmith's own teacher, Thomas Byrne, with whom he was placed when six years old. "Byrne had been educated for a pedagogue," says Irving, "but had enlisted in the army, served abroad during the wars of Queen Anne's time, and risen to the rank of quartermaster of a regiment in Spain. At the return of peace, having no longer exercise for the sword, he resumed the ferule, and drilled the urchin populace of Lissoy.

"There are certain whimsical traits in the character of Byrne, not given in the foregoing sketch. He was fond of talking of his vagabond wanderings in foreign lands, and had brought with him from the wars a world of campaigning stories of which he was generally the hero, and which he would deal forth to his wondering scholars when he ought to have been teaching them their lessons. These travellers' tales had a powerful effect upon the vivid imagination of Goldsmith, and awakened an unconquerable passion for wandering and seeking adventure.

"Byrne was, moreover, of a romantic vein, and exceedingly superstitious. He was deeply versed in the fairy superstitions which abound in Ireland, all which he professed implicitly to believe. Under his tuition Goldsmith soon became almost as great a proficient in fairy lore."

noisy mansion. The old-time school-room was a noisy place, the pupils studying their lessons aloud, and but little care being taken to secure quietness at any time.

7. boding. Foreboding; seeing that which is about to happen. From A.-S. *bodian*, to announce, to foretell.

8. village. Villagers.

9. terms and tides. Times and seasons. **presage.** Foreknow. From Lat. *pre*, before, and *sagio*, to perceive.

10. gauge. Measure liquids. The humor in this and in some other expressions in these verses is too apparent to require comment.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH was born at Pallas, county of Longford, Ireland, on the 10th of November, 1728. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and afterwards studied medicine at Edinburgh and at Leyden. After travelling on foot through portions of Western Europe, he made his way to London, where he was in turn assistant to a chemist, usher in a school at Peckham, and literary hack for one of the leading monthly publications. He afterwards contributed many articles, both in prose and poetry, to the leading periodicals of the time. He wrote "The Traveller" in 1764, and "The Deserted Village" and *The Vicar of Wakefield* in 1770. He died in his chambers in Brick Court, London, April 4, 1774. For a full account of his life, read Macaulay's Essay on Oliver Goldsmith.

"The naturalness and ease of Goldsmith's poetry," says Edward Dowden, "are those of an accomplished craftsman. His verse, which flows towards the close of the period with such a gentle yet steady advance, is not less elaborated than that of Pope; and Goldsmith conceived his verse more in paragraphs than in couplets. His artless words were, each one, delicately chosen; his simple constructions were studiously sought." And Sir Walter Scott said of him: "It would be difficult to point out one among the English poets less likely to be excelled in his own style. Possessing much of Pope's versification without the monotonous structure of his lines; rising sometimes to the swell and fulness of Dryden, without his inflections; delicate and masterly in his descriptions; graceful in one of the greatest graces of poetry, its transitions; alike successful in his sportive or grave, his playful or melancholy mood; he may long bid defiance to the numerous competitors whom the friendship or flattery of the present age is so hastily arraying against him."

Other Poems to be Read: The Traveller; the rest of The Deserted Village; Retaliation.

REFERENCES: Irving's *Life of Goldsmith*; Forster's *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*; Macaulay's *Essay on Goldsmith*; Thackeray's *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*; De Quincey's *Eighteenth Century*; Hazlitt's *English Poets*; *Goldsmith* (English Men of Letters), by William Black.

Thomas Gray.

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THE BARD.

I. 1.

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!
Confusion on thy banners wait;
Tho' fanned by Conquest's crimson wing,¹
They mock the air with idle state.²
Helm, nor hauberk's³ twisted mail,
Nor e'en thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's⁴ curse, from Cambria's tears!"
Such were the sounds that o'er the crested pride
Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,
As down the steep of Snowdon's⁵ shaggy side
He wound with toilsome march his long array.
Stout Gloster⁶ stood aghast in speechless trance:
"To arms!" cried Mortimer,⁷ and couched his quivering lance.

I. 2.

On a rock⁸ whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er cold Conway's foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the poet stood,
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air⁹)
And with a master's hand, and prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.¹⁰
"Hark, how each giant-oak, and desert cave,
Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!
O'er thee, oh King! their hundred arms they wave,
Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;
Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
To high-born Hoel's¹¹ harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay.

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I. 3.

"Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,
That hushed the stormy main:¹²
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred, whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon¹³ bow his cloud-topt head.
On dreary Arvon's shore¹⁴ they lie,

Smeared with gore, and ghastly pale:
Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
The famished eagle¹⁵ screams, and passes by.
Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,¹⁶
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries—
No more I weep. They do not sleep.
On yonder cliffs, a griesly band,
I see them sit,¹⁷ they linger yet,
Avengers of their native land:
With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.

II. 1.

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"Weave the warp, and weave the woof,¹⁸
The winding sheet of Edward's race.
Give ample room, and verge enough
The characters of hell to trace.
Mark the year, and mark the night,
When Severn shall re-echo with affright
The shrieks of death, thro' Berkley's roof that ring,
Shrieks of an agonizing king!¹⁹
She-wolf of France,²⁰ with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate,
From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs
The scourge of heaven.²¹ What terrors round him wait!
Amazement in his van, with Flight combined,
And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

II. 2.

"Mighty victor, mighty lord!
Low on his funeral couch he lies!²²
No pitying heart, no eye, afford
A tear to grace his obsequies.
Is the sable warrior²³ fled?
Thy son is gone. He rests among the dead.
The swarm, that in thy noontide beam were born,
Gone to salute the rising morn.
Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,²⁴
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

II. 3.

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"Fill high the sparkling bowl,
The rich repast prepare;
Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast:
Close by the regal chair
Fell Thirst and Famine scowl²⁵
A baleful smile upon their baffled guest.
Heard ye the din of battle²⁶ bray,
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?
Long years of havoc urge their destined course,
And thro' the kindred squadrons mow their way.
Ye towers of Julius,²⁷ London's lasting shame,
With many a foul and midnight murder fed,
Revere his consort's faith, his father's fame,
And spare the meek usurper's²⁸ holy head.
Above, below, the rose of snow,
Twined with her blushing foe,²⁹ we spread:
The bristled boar³⁰ in infant-gore
Wallows beneath the thorny shade.
Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom,
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

III. 1.

"Edward,³¹ lo! to sudden fate
(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun.)
Half of thy heart³² we consecrate.
(The web is wove. The work is done.)
Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn
Leave me unblest, unpitied, here to mourn:
In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
Descending slow their glittering skirts unroll?
Visions of glory, spare my aching sight!³³
Ye unborn ages, crowd not on my soul!
No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.
All hail, ye genuine kings, Britannia's issue, hail!

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III. 2.

"Girt with many a baron bold
Sublime their starry fronts they rear;
And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old
In bearded majesty, appear.
In the midst a form divine!³⁴
Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line;
Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,³⁵
Attemper'd sweet to virgin-grace.
What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
What strains of vocal transport round her play.
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin,³⁶ hear;
They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
Bright Rapture calls, and soaring as she sings,
Waves in the eye of heaven her many-colored wings.

III. 3.

"The verse adorn again
Fierce War, and faithful Love,³⁷
And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest.
In buskined measures³⁸ move
Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,
With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast.
A voice, as of the cherub-choir,
Gales from blooming Eden bear;
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
That lost in long futurity expire.
Fond,³⁹ impious man, think'st thou yon sanguine cloud,
Raised by thy breath, has quenched the orb of day?
To-morrow he repairs⁴⁰ the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
Enough for me; with joy I see
The different doom our fates assign.
Be thine despair, and sceptred care;
To triumph, and to die, are mine."
He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to endless night.

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NOTES.

This poem was published in 1757. "It is founded," says Gray, "on a tradition current in Wales that Edward I., when he completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the bards that fell into his hands to be put to death." The argument is as follows: "The army of Edward I., as they march through a deep valley, and approach Mount Snowdon, are suddenly stopped by the appearance of a venerable figure seated on the summit of an inaccessible rock, who, with a voice more than human, reproaches the king with all the desolation and misery which he had brought on his country; foretells the misfortunes of the Norman race, and with prophetic spirit declares that all his cruelty shall never extinguish the noble ardor of poetic genius in this island; and that men shall never be wanting to celebrate true virtue and valor in immortal strains, to expose vice and infamous pleasure, and boldly censure tyranny and oppression. His song ended, he precipitates himself from the mountain, and is swallowed up by the river that rolls at its feet."

The tradition upon which the poem is said to be founded, if it ever had any existence, is in great part mythical. Edward I. did indeed conquer Wales, but there is no evidence that he massacred or even persecuted the Welsh bards. A hundred years after his time their number and influence had not been diminished.

This poem is a good example of an English ode constructed strictly after Greek models. It will be observed that it is written, not in uniform stanzas, but in three uniform parts, each of which contains three stanzas. The first of these parts is called the *Strophe*, or Turn; the second, the *Antistrophe*, or Counter-turn; the third, the *Epode*, or After-song. The origin of these terms may be traced to the use of the ode as an important part of the entertainment presented in the ancient Greek theatre. The *Strophe* was sung while the chorus moved from one side of the orchestra to the other; the *Antistrophe* while the reversed movement was being made; and the *Epodos* after the singers had returned to their original position. The accurate perception of harmony and the relationship between the different parts of the choral ode, which enabled the Greeks to enter thoroughly into its enjoyment, is unknown among moderns. Hence, there have been but few attempts in the English language to construct odes strictly after the Greek model. Most of our odes are poems relating to themes of greater or less varying length, and divided into many irregular stanzas of varying lengths and metres. Such are Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," and Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," all of which are odes in form and style, although differing from their Greek prototype and from one another. Of all English poets, none have worked so thoroughly on the ancient model as Gray, although to Congreve must be given the honor of being the first to attempt this species of English composition.

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1. crimson wing. Explain the meaning of this line.

2. Compare this line with Shakespeare, "King John," Act v, sc. 1:

"Mocking the air with colors idly spread."

3. hauberk. From A.-S. *heals*, the neck, and *beorgan*, to protect. "The hauberk was a texture of steel ringlets, or rings interwoven, forming a coat of mail that sat close to the body, and adapted itself to every motion."—*Gray*.

4. Cambria. Wales. An ancient legend says it was so called from Camber, the son of Brute. This legendary king of Britain divided his dominions among his three sons: to Locrin he gave the southern part (England), which was called Loegria; to Albanact the northern (Scotland), Albania; and to Camber, the western (Wales), Cambria.

5. Snowdon. "Snowdon was a name given by the Saxons to that mountainous tract which the Welsh themselves call *Cragium-eryri*. It included all the highlands of Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire as far east as the river Conway."—*Gray*. It was in the spring of 1283 that the army of Edward I. forced its way through the defiles of these mountains.

shaggy. See "Lycidas," 54:

"Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high."

6. Gloster. "Gilbert de Clare, surnamed the Red, Earl of Gloucester and Hereford, son-in-law to King Edward."—*Gray*.

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7. Mortimer. Edward, or Edmond, de Mortimer, Lord of Wigmore, one of King Edward's ablest leaders. It was by one of his knights that the Welsh prince Llewellyn was slain in December, 1282.

8. rock. One of the heights of Snowdon, probably Pen-maen-mawr, the extreme northern point of the range, a few miles from the mouth of the Conway River.

9. "The image was taken from a well-known picture of Raphael, representing the Supreme Being in the vision of Ezekiel. There are two of these paintings (both believed originals), one at Florence, the other in the Duke of Orleans's collection at Paris."—*Gray*.

10. Explain the meaning of this line.

11. Hoel. A Welsh prince and famous bard, some of whose poems are still extant. Cadwallo and Urien, named below, were other celebrated bards. The name of Modred is not so well known; it is possible that Gray refers to "the famous Myrddin ab Morvyn, called Merlyn the Wild, a disciple of Taliessin—the form of the name being changed for the sake of euphony." It is not entirely clear whether the Llewellyn mentioned here was a bard, or the famous but unfortunate prince who lost his life in the war with King Edward. (See note 7, above.) Is it the lay sung in memory of mild Llewellyn? Or is it the lay which soft Llewellyn sang?

12. hushed the stormy main. Shakespeare says:

"The rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music."

—*Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act ii, sc. 1.

13. Plinlimmon. A group of lofty mountains in Wales. The name is probably a corruption of *Pumlumon*, "the fire-beacons," so-called because there was a beacon on each of the five peaks composing the group.

14. Arvon's shore. Caernarvon, or Caer yu Arvon, means the camp in Arvon. The shore referred to is that of Caernarvon, on the mainland, opposite the island of Anglesey.

15. eagle. "Camden and others observe that eagles used annually to build their aerie among the rocks of Snowdon, which from thence (as some think) were named by the Welsh, *Craigian-eryri*, or the crags of the eagles. At this day (I am told), the highest point of Snowdon is called 'the Eagle's Nest.'"—*Gray*.

16. Dear as the ruddy drops. Shakespeare has it:

"As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart."

—*Julius Cæsar*, Act ii, sc. 1.

17. I see them sit. See Milton's "Lycidas," 52:

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"On the steep
Where your old bards, the Druids lie."

griesly. Grisly. From the A.-S. *grisli*, dreadful.

18. Weave the warp, etc. As the *Fates* were represented by the ancient Greeks as spinning the destinies of men, so the *Norns* in the Norse mythology are said to weave the destinies of the heroes who die in battle.

"Glittering lances are the loom,
Where the dusky warp we strain,—
Shafts for shuttles, dipt in gore,
Shoot the trembling cords along;
Swords that once a monarch bore,
Keep the tissue close and strong."

—*The Fatal Sisters*, translated by Gray, from the Norse.

19. "Edward the Second, cruelly butchered in Berkeley Castle."—*Gray*. The murder of the king occurred on the night of September 21, 1327. Berkeley Castle stands at the southeast end of the town of Berkeley, about one and one-half miles from the Severn River. It was built before the time of Henry II., and is still inhabited by a descendant of its founders.

20. She-wolf of France. Isabel of France, the wife of Edward II. Shakespeare applies this epithet to Margaret, the queen of Henry VI.:

"She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France."

—*3 Henry VI.*, Act i, sc. 4.

21. Edward III., the son of Queen Isabel, proved indeed to be a scourge to France.

22. "Death of that king (Edward III.), abandoned by his children, and even robbed in his last moments by his courtiers and his mistress."—*Gray*.

23. sable warrior. "Edward the Black Prince, dead some time before his father."—*Gray*.

24. The magnificence of the first years of Richard II.'s reign is figured in this and the following lines.

25. Thirst and Famine scowl. When Richard II. died in prison, his body was brought to St. Paul's, and "the face was left uncovered, to meet rumors that he had been assassinated by his keeper, Sir Piers Exon." But the older writers assert that he was starved to death.

26. din of battle. "Ruinous wars of York and Lancaster."—*Gray*.

bray. From Gr. *bracho*, to clash.

27. towers of Julius. "The oldest part of that structure (the Tower of London) is vulgarly attributed to Julius Cæsar."—*Gray*.

28. meek usurper. "Henry the Sixth, very near being canonized. The line of Lancaster had no right of inheritance to the crown."—*Gray*. The references in the preceding line are to Henry's "consort," Queen Margaret, and his father, Henry V.

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29. The rose of snow, twined with her blushing foe. The reference is to the union of the houses of York and Lancaster after the War of the Roses.

30. bristled boar. Richard III., so called from his badge of a silver boar. So Shakespeare:

"In the sty of the most deadly boar."

—*Richard III.*, Act iv, sc. 5.

"The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar

That spoiled your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash."

—*Ibid.* Act v, sc. 2.

[31.](#) The bard's vision of the future has come to an end, and he again addresses the king.

[32. Half of thy heart.](#) "Eleanor of Castile died a few years after the conquest of Wales. The heroic proof she gave of her affection for her lord is well known."—*Gray*.

Tennyson, in the "Dream of Fair Women," speaks of Queen Eleanor as

"Her who knew that Love can vanquish Death,
Who kneeling, with one arm about her king,
Drew forth the poison with her balmy breath,
Sweet as new buds in spring."

[33.](#) The bard's visions are resumed, and he sees the glories which were ushered in with the advent of the Tudor line. Henry VII.'s paternal grandfather was Sir Owen Tewdwr of Pernnyuydd, in Anglesey, whose mother was of royal British blood. "Both Merlin and Taliessin had prophesied that the Welsh should regain their sovereignty over this island; which seemed to be accomplished in the house of Tudor."—*Gray*.

[34. a form divine.](#) Elizabeth.

[35. awe-commanding face.](#) "Speed, relating an audience given by Queen Elizabeth to Paul Dzialiuski, ambassador of Poland, says: 'And thus she, lion-like rising, daunted the malapert orator no less with her stately port and majestic deporture, than with the tartnesse of her princie cheekes.'"—*Gray*.

[36.](#) Taliessin was a famous Welsh bard who flourished in the sixth century. It is said that some of his works are still preserved by his countrymen.

[37.](#) See "Faerie Queene," 1:

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"Fierce warres and faithful love shall moralize my song."

[38. buskined measures.](#) The tragic drama as represented by Shakespeare. So Milton speaks ("Il Penseroso," 102) of the "buskind stage." The buskin was the Greek *coturnus*, a boot with high heels, designed to add stature and dignity to the tragic actor.

[39. Fond.](#) Foolish. This is the original meaning of the word, and is so used by the older poets.

[40. he repairs.](#) So Milton:

"Sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

THOMAS GRAY was born in Cornhill, London, December 26th, 1716. Through the help of his mother's brother, who was Assistant-Master at that famous school, he received his primary education at Eton, and in 1735 entered St. Peter's College, Cambridge. In 1738 he left the University without taking a degree, intending to study law at the Inner Temple. Soon afterwards, however, he accompanied Horace Walpole on a tour through France and Italy, and spent the greater part of two years in Paris, Rome, and Florence. Upon his return to England, finding himself possessed of a life-long competency, he resolved to give up the law and devote himself entirely to self-culture. He settled at Cambridge, and gave all his time to study and to the cultivation of his mind. The first of his poems to appear in print was the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," published in 1747. His "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" was not published until 1750, although it had been written and handed about in manuscript several years before. The post of Poet-Laureate was offered him in 1757, on the death of Colley Cibber; but he did not accept it. In 1768 he was appointed Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, but the state of his health was such that he was never permitted to lecture. He died, July 29th, 1771, at the age of fifty-four.

"He was certainly the most accomplished man of his time," says Hales, "and was something much more than accomplished. His learning was not only wide but deep; his taste, if perhaps too fastidious, was pure and thorough; his genius was of no mean degree or order; his affections were of the truest and sincerest. . . . His poems are works of refinement rather than of passion; but yet they are inspired with genuine sentiment. They are no doubt extremely artificial in form; the weight of their author's reading somewhat depresses their originality; he can with difficulty escape from his books to himself; but yet there is in him a genuine poetical spirit. His poetry, however elaborated, is sincere and truthful. If the exterior is what Horace might have called over-filed and polished, the thought is mostly of the simplest and naturest."

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Matthew Arnold says: "Gray's production was scanty, and scanty it could not but be. Even what he produced was not always pure in diction, true in evolution. Still, with whatever drawbacks, he is alone or almost alone in his age. Gray said himself that the style he aimed at was 'extreme

conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical.' Compared, not with the work of the great masters of the golden ages of poetry, but with the poetry of his own contemporaries in general, Gray may be said to have reached, in his style, the excellence at which he aimed."

Cowper writes, "I have been reading Gray's works, and think him the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of sublime."

Lowell says: "Gray, if we may believe the commentators, has not an idea, scarcely an epithet, that he can call his own, and yet he is, in the best sense, one of the classics of English literature."

And Sir James Mackintosh says: "Of all English poets he was the most finished artist. He attained the highest degree of splendor of which poetic style seemed to be capable. It may be added that he deserves the comparatively trifling praise of having been the most learned poet since Milton."

Other Poems to be Read: Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard; On a Distant Prospect of Eton College; The Progress of Poesy; Ode on Spring.

REFERENCES: Johnson's *Lives of English Poets; Gray* (English Men of Letters), by Edmund Gosse; Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*; Roscoe's *Essays*.

Alexander Pope.

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FROM THE "ESSAY ON CRITICISM."

Some to Conceit¹ alone their taste confine,
And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at ev'ry line;
Pleas'd with a work where nothing's just or fit;²
One glaring Chaos and wild heap of wit.³
Poets, like painters, thus, unskill'd to trace
The naked nature and the living grace,
With gold and jewels cover ev'ry part,
And hide with ornaments their want of art.
True wit is nature to advantage dress'd;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;⁴
Something, whose truth convinc'd at sight we find,
That gives us back the image of our mind.
As shades more sweetly recommend the light,
So modest plainness sets off sprightly wit.
For works may have more wit than does 'em good,
As bodies perish through excess of blood.
Others for Language all their care express,
And value books, as women men,⁵ for dress:
Their praise is still,—the style is excellent;
The sense, they humbly take upon content.⁶
Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found:
False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
In gaudy colors spreads on ev'ry place;
The face of nature we no more survey,
All glares alike, without distinction gay:
But true expression, like th' unchanging sun,
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon;
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.
Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent, as more suitable;
A vile conceit in pompous words express'd
Is like a clown in regal purple dress'd:
For diff'rent styles with diff'rent subjects sort,⁷
As sev'ral garbs with country, town, and court.
Some by old words to fame have made pretence,
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense;
Such labor'd nothings, in so strange a style,
Amaze th' unlearn'd, and make the learned smile,
Unlucky, as Fungoso⁸ in the play,
These sparks⁹ with awkward vanity display
What the fine gentleman wore yesterday;
And but so mimic ancient wits at best,
As apes our grandsires, in their doublets drest.

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In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold;
Alike fantastic, if too new or old:
Be not the first by whom the new are try'd,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong:
In the bright muse, tho' thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
Who haunt Parnassus¹⁰ but to please their ear,
Not mend¹¹ their minds, as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.
These equal syllables alone require,
Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire;¹²
While expletives their feeble aid do join;
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line:
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes;
Where'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
In the next line, it "whispers through the trees":¹³
If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
The reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with "sleep":
Then, at the last and only couplet fraught
With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
A needless Alexandrine ends the song,¹⁴
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.¹⁵
Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes, and know
What's roundly smooth, or languishingly slow;
And praise the easy vigor of a line,
Where Denham's strength and Waller's¹⁶ sweetness join.
True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense:
Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers¹⁷ flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar:
When Ajax¹⁸ strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labors, and the words move slow:
Not so, when swift Camilla¹⁹ scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.
Hear how Timotheus'²⁰ vary'd lays surprise,
And bid alternate passions fall and rise!
While at each change, the son of Libyan Jove²¹
Now burns with glory, and then melts with love;

Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,
Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow:
Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found,
And the world's victor stood subdu'd by sound!
The power of music all our hearts allow,
And what Timotheus was, is Dryden now.
Avoid extremes; and shun the fault of such,
Who still are pleas'd too little or too much.
At ev'ry trifle scorn to take offence,
That always shows great pride, or little sense:
Those heads, as stomachs, are not sure the best,
Which nauseate all, and nothing can digest.
Yet let not each gay turn thy rapture move;
For fools admire, but men of sense approve:
As things seem large which we through mists descry;
Dulness is ever apt to magnify.

Some foreign writers, some our own despise;
The ancients only, or the moderns prize.
Thus wit, like faith, by each man is apply'd
To one small sect, and all are damn'd beside.
Meanly they seek the blessing to confine,
And force that sun but on a part to shine,
Which not alone the southern wit sublimes,
But ripens spirits in cold northern climes;
Which from the first has shone on ages past,
Enlights the present, and shall warm the last;
Tho' each may feel increases and decays,
And see now clearer and now darker days.

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Regard not, then, if wit be old or new,
 But blame the false, and value still the true.
 Some ne'er advance a judgment of their own,
 But catch the spreading notion of the Town;
 They reason and conclude by precedent, [145]
 And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent.
 Some judge of authors' names, not works, and then
 Nor praise nor blame the writings, but the men.
 Of all this servile herd, the worst is he
 That in proud dulness joins with Quality.²²
 A constant critic at the great man's board,
 To fetch and carry nonsense for my Lord.
 What woful stuff this madrigal would be,
 In some starv'd hackney sonneteer, or me?
 But let a Lord once own the happy lines,
 How the wit brightens! how the style refines!
 Before his sacred name flies ev'ry fault,
 And each exalted stanza teems with thought!

NOTES.

Pope's "Essay on Criticism" was published in 1711. It consists of 724 lines, and is written in heroic couplets—that style of poetic composition in which Pope excelled all others. It is full of sound critical precepts, put together with considerable art, and expressed in a manner which, at the time of its production, insured the popularity of the poem and the fame of its author. It was probably suggested by Boileau's "Art Poétique," which was founded on Horace's "Ars Poetica," and it in turn on Aristotle's rules, very commonly known among the classical poets. "The Essay," says De Quincey, "is a collection of independent maxims tied together into a fasciculus by the printer, but having no natural order or logical dependence; generally so vague as to mean nothing. And, what is remarkable, many of the rules are violated by no man so often as by Pope, and by Pope nowhere so often as in this poem."

1. Conceit. Affected wit. "Conceit is to nature what paint is to beauty; it is not only needless but impairs what it would improve."—*Pope*.

2. fit. Proper. "Fit audience find, though few" (Milton, "Paradise Lost," V, 7).

3. wit. This is a favorite word with Pope, and is used by him to indicate a variety of ideas,—such as thought, knowledge, imagination, expression, the exercise of humor, etc. In this poem there are no fewer than twelve couplets rhyming to it. [146]

4. "It requires very little reading of the French text-books to find the maxims which Pope has strung together in this poem, but he has dressed them so neatly, and turned them out with such sparkle and point, that these truisms have acquired a weight not their own, and they circulate as proverbs among us in virtue of their pithy form rather than their truth. They exemplify his own line, 'What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.' Pope told Spence that he had gone through all the best critics, specifying Quintilian, Rapin, and Le Bossu. But whatever trouble he took in collecting what to say, his main effort is expended upon how to say it."—*Pattison*.

5. as women men. "As women value men," or "as women by men are valued"—which?

6. humbly take upon content. Are satisfied to take in faith.

7. sort. Agree.

8. Fungoso. A character in Ben Jonson's comedy, "Every Man in his Humour."

9. sparks. Fops; vain, showy men.

10. Parnassus. A mountain in Hellas, the chief seat of Apollo and the Muses. Hence, figuratively, a resort of the poets.

11. mend. Improve, make better, amend.

"Mend your speech a little
 Lest it may mar your fortunes."

—*Shakespeare, King Lear, Act i, sc. i.*

12. "The gaping of the vowels in this line, the expletive *do* in the next, and the ten monosyllables in that which follows, give such a beauty to this passage as would have been very much admired in an ancient poet."—*Addison*.

13. Pope himself is not disinclined to make use of these rhymes. See "Essay on Man," 271.

"Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
 Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees."

14. Referring to the Spenserian stanza which is composed of nine lines, eight of which are iambic

pentameters, and the ninth a hexameter or Alexandrine. The name Alexandrine is said to have been derived from an old French poem on Alexander the Great, written about the twelfth or thirteenth century, and composed entirely of hexameter verses. See note on the versification of the "Faerie Queene," page [232](#).

[15](#). Observe the skill with which, both in this line and in several which precede and follow, the poet has made "the sound to seem an echo to the sense."

[16](#). Waller had been regarded as the greatest poet of the seventeenth century (see page [205](#)), and Denham, in the time of Pope, was more esteemed than Milton or Spenser. Dryden called Denham [147]

"That limping old bard
Whose fame on 'The Sophy' and 'Cooper's Hill' stands."

[17](#). **numbers**. Poetical metre.

"As yet a child nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

—Pope, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

[18](#). **Ajax**. "The beautiful distich upon Ajax puts me in mind of a description in Homer's 'Odyssey,' which none of the critics have taken notice of. It is where Sisyphus is represented lifting his stone up the hill which is no sooner carried to the top of it, but it immediately tumbles to the bottom. This double motion of the stone is admirably described in the numbers of these verses; as in the four first it is heaved up by several spondees intermixed with proper breathing places, and at last trundles down in a continual line of dactyls."—*Addison*.

[19](#). **Camilla**. The virgin queen of the Volsci. She aided Turnus against Æneas, and was famed for her fleetness of foot.

[20](#). **Timotheus**. See notes on "Alexander's Feast," by Dryden.

[21](#). **son of Libyan Jove**. Alexander. See note 5, page [166](#).

[22](#). **Quality**. Persons of high rank.

ODE ON ST. CECILIA'S DAY.

MDCCVIII.

I.

Descend, ye Nine!¹ descend and sing;
The breathing instruments inspire,
Wake into voice each silent string,
And sweep the sounding lyre!
 In a sadly pleasing strain,²
 Let the warbling lute complain:
 Let the loud trumpet sound,
 Till the roofs all around
 The shrill echoes rebound;
While in more lengthen'd notes and slow,
The deep, majestic, solemn organs blow. [148]
 Hark! the numbers soft and clear
 Gently steal upon the ear;
 Now louder, and yet louder rise,
 And fill with spreading sounds the skies:
Exulting in triumph now swell the bold notes,
In broken air, trembling, the wild music floats,
 Till, by degrees, remote and small,
 The strains decay,
 And melt away,
 In a dying, dying fall.

II.

By music, minds an equal temper know,³
Nor swell too high, nor sink too low.
If in the breast tumultuous joys arise,
Music her soft, assuasive⁴ voice applies;
 Or, when the soul is press'd with cares,

Exalts her in enlivening airs.
Warriors she fires with animated sounds;
Pours balm into the bleeding lover's wounds:
 Melancholy lifts her head,
 Morpheus rouses from his bed,
 Sloth unfolds her arms and wakes,
 Listening Envy drops her snakes;
Intestine war no more our passions wage,
And giddy factions hear away their rage.

III.

But when our country's cause provokes to arms,
How martial music every bosom warms!
So when the first bold vessel dared the seas,
High on the stern the Thracian raised his strain,⁵
 While Argo saw her kindred trees
 Descend from Pelion to the main.
 Transported demi-gods⁶ stood round,
 And men grew heroes at the sound,
 Inflamed with glory's charms;
Each chief his sevenfold shield display'd,
And half unsheathed the shining blade:
 And seas, and rocks, and skies rebound,
 To arms! to arms! to arms!

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IV.

But when, through all the infernal bounds⁷
Which flaming Phlegethon surrounds,
 Love, strong as death,⁸ the poet led
 To the pale nations of the dead,
What sounds were heard,
What scenes appear'd,
 O'er all the dreary coast!
 Dreadful gleams,
 Dismal screams,
 Fires that glow,
 Shrieks of woe,
 Sullen moans,
 Hollow groans,
And cries of tortured ghosts!
 But, hark! he strikes the golden lyre;
 And see! the tortured ghosts respire,
 See, shady forms⁹ advance!
 Thy stone, O Sisyphus, stands still,¹⁰
 Ixion rests upon his wheel,
 And the pale spectres dance;
The Furies sink upon their iron beds,
And snakes uncurl'd hang listening round their heads.

V.

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By the streams that ever flow,
By the fragrant winds that blow
 O'er the Elysian flowers;
By those happy souls who dwell
In yellow meads of asphodel,
 Or amaranthine bowers;
By the heroes' armed shades,
Glittering through the gloomy glades,
By the youths that died for love,
Wandering in the myrtle grove,
Restore, restore Eurydice to life:
Oh take the husband, or return the wife!

He sung, and hell¹¹ consented
 To hear the poet's prayer;
Stern Proserpine relented,
 And gave him back the fair.
 Thus song could prevail
 O'er death and o'er hell,
A conquest how hard and how glorious!

Though fate had fast bound her
With Styx nine times round her,
Yet music and love were victorious.¹²

VI.

But soon, too soon, the lover turns his eyes:
Again she falls, again she dies, she dies!
How wilt thou now the fatal sisters move?
No crime was thine, if 'tis no crime to love.
Now under hanging mountains,
Beside the falls of fountains,
Or where Hebrus wanders, [151]
Rolling in meanders,
All alone,
Unheard, unknown,
He makes his moan;
And calls her ghost,
For ever, ever, ever lost!
Now with furies surrounded,¹³
Despairing, confounded,
He trembles, he glows,
Amidst Rhodope's¹⁴ snows:
See, wild as the winds, o'er the desert he flies;
Hark! Hæmus resounds with the Bacchanals' cries—
Ah see, he dies!
Yet even in death Eurydice he sung,
Eurydice still trembled on his tongue,
Eurydice the woods,
Eurydice the floods,
Eurydice the rocks, and hollow mountains rung.

VII.

Music¹⁵ the fiercest grief can charm,
And fate's severest rage disarm;
Music can soften pain to ease,
And make despair and madness please:
Our joys below it can improve,
And antedate the bliss above.
This the divine Cecilia found,
And to her Maker's praise confined the sound.
When the full organ joins the tuneful choir,
The immortal powers incline their ear;
Borne on the swelling notes our souls aspire,
While solemn airs improve the sacred fire; [152]
And angels lean from heaven to hear.
Of Orpheus now no more let poets tell,
To bright Cecilia greater power is given;
His numbers raised a shade from hell,
Hers lift the soul to heaven.¹⁶

NOTES.

This poem was written in 1708 at the suggestion of Sir Richard Steele; it was set to music by Maurice Greene, and in 1730 was performed at the public commemoration at Cambridge. Its model is Dryden's famous ode, "Alexander's Feast," of which Pope was a warm admirer (see page 159). Dr. Johnson says; "In his 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day' Pope is generally confessed to have miscarried; yet he has miscarried only as compared with Dryden, for he has far outgone other competitors. Dryden's plan is better chosen; history will always take stronger hold of the passions than fable: the passions excited by Dryden are the pleasures and pains of real life; the scene of Pope is laid in imaginary existence; Pope is read with calm acquiescence, Dryden with turbulent delight; Pope hangs upon the ear, Dryden finds the passes of the mind. Both the odes want the essential constituent of metrical compositions, the stated recurrence of settled numbers. . . . If Pope's ode be particularly inspected, it will be found that the first stanza consists of sounds, well chosen, indeed, but only sounds. The second consists of hyperbolical commonplaces, easily to be found, and, perhaps, without much difficulty to be as well expressed. In the third, however, there are numbers, images, harmony, and vigor not unworthy the antagonist of Dryden. Had all been like this—but every part cannot be the best. The next stanzas place and detain us in the dark and dismal regions of mythology; . . . we have all that can be performed by elegance of diction or sweetness of versification; but what can form avail without better matter? The last stanza again refers to commonplaces. The conclusion is too evidently modelled by that of Dryden; and it may be remarked that both end with the same fault—the comparison of each is literal on one side and

metaphorical on the other. Poets do not always express their own thoughts. Pope, with all this labor in the praise of music, was ignorant of its principles and insensible of its effects."

St. Cecilia, the Christian Polyhymnia and patron saint of sacred music, is said to have suffered martyrdom about the year 230. In Chaucer's "Seconde Nonnes Tale"—which is an almost literal translation of the "Legenda Aurea," written in the thirteenth century—it is related that, on account of Cecilia's spotless purity, an angel came down from heaven to be her guardian. Her husband, Valerian, was also the recipient of angelic favors, for [153]

"This angel had of roses and lilie
Corones two, the which he bare in honde,
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
He yaf that on, and after gan he take
That other to Valerian hire make."

How and when Cecilia was first recognized as the patron saint of music does not appear. The legend only says, that

"While the organs maden melodie,
To God alone thus in hire hert song she;
'O Lord, my soule and eke my body gie
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be."

There is also a tradition in the church that St. Cecilia was the inventor of the organ. Dryden calls her "inventress of the vocal frame" (see page 164). The origin of this musical instrument is not known, but the first organs used in Italy are said to have been brought thither from Greece. Some of the Roman churches are known to have had them in use in the seventh century, but they were not common until several hundred years later. The festival of St. Cecilia occurs on the 22d of November.

1. ye Nine. The nine Muses: (1) Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry; (2) Clio, the Muse of history; (3) Euterpe, the Muse of lyric poetry; (4) Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy; (5) Terpsichore, the Muse of choral dance and song; (6) Erato, the Muse of erotic poetry; (7) Polyhymnia, the Muse of the sublime hymn; (8) Urania, the Muse of astronomy; (9) Thalia, the Muse of comedy and idyllic poetry. The custom of invoking the Muses, at the beginning of poems, is derived from Homer:

"Of Peleus' son, Achilles, sing, O Muse."

—*Iliad*, I, 1.

"Tell me, O Muse, of that sagacious man
Who, having overthrown the sacred town
Of Ilium, wandered far," etc.

—*Odyssey*, I, 1.

Milton invokes the

"heavenly Muse that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd," etc.

—*Paradise Lost*, I, 1.

2. Observe how, in the sixteen lines following, the sound is made in some measure to be "an echo to the sense." [154]

3. equal temper know. Evenness of disposition acquire. The music of Timotheus had an opposite effect on Alexander. See "Alexander's Feast."

4. assuasive. Moderating.

5. the Thracian raised his strain. Orpheus was a Thracian, the son of Œagrus and the Muse Calliope. Apollo gave him a lyre, and the Muses instructed him in its use; and so sweet was the music which he drew from it that the wild beasts were enchanted and the trees and rocks moved from their places to follow the sound. When Jason and his followers, the Argonauts, were unable to launch their ship Argo, Orpheus played his lyre, and the vessel glided into the sea, while her "kindred trees descended" from the slopes of the mountain (Pelion) and followed her into "the main."

6. demi-gods. Half-gods; heroes. Among the Argonauts were Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Theseus, Peleus, Nestor, and others similarly renowned.

7. infernal bounds. Boundaries of hell. The wife of Orpheus was a nymph named Eurydice. She having died from the bite of a serpent, the sweet musician followed her into the infernal regions. He begged of Pluto that his wife might return with him to the earth, but his prayer was granted only upon condition that he should not look back upon her until both had safely passed the gates between Hades and the upper world. The poet tells the rest of the story.

Phlegethon. A river of hell in which flowed fire instead of water.

[8.](#) See Song of Solomon viii. 6: "Love is strong as death."

[9.](#) **shady forms.** Departed spirits were called "shades," because they were supposed to be perceptible sometimes to the sight but never to the touch. See "[heroes' armed shades](#)," below.

[10.](#) **Sisyphus.** See note 18, page [147](#).

Ixion. King of the Lapithæ. As a punishment for ingratitude to Zeus, his hands and feet were chained to a wheel which was always in motion.

Furies. See note 20, page [167](#).

[11.](#) **hell.** The powers of hell—or, as he explains below, Proserpine, the queen of the infernal regions. **Styx.** The principal river of hell, around which it flows seven—not nine—times.

[12.](#) See Milton's "L'Allegro," 135:

"Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse, . . .
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regain'd Eurydice."

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[13.](#) Orpheus's grief for the loss of Eurydice caused him to treat with contempt the Thracian women among whom he dwelt, and they in revenge tore him to pieces, under the excitement of their Bacchanalian orgies. His head was given by the Hebrus to the sea, and finally carried to the island of Lesbos, where it was buried. See Milton's "Lycidas," 58:

"What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?"

See, also, "Paradise Lost," VII, 32:

"The barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
To rapture, till the savage clamor drown'd
Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her son."

[14.](#) **Rhodope.** A range of mountains in Thrace, sacred to Bacchus. **Hæmus** was another range extending from Rhodope, on the west, to the Black Sea, on the east.

[15.](#) **Music.** Compare what Pope says of music with:

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast."

—*Congreve, The Mourning Bride.*

"O Music! sphere-descended maid,
Friend of pleasure, wisdom's aid!"

—*Collins, The Passions.*

"Soft is the music that would charm forever."

—*Wordsworth, Sonnets.*

[16.](#) Compare these lines with the four which end Dryden's "Alexander's Feast."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

ALEXANDER POPE was born in London in 1688. He had some instruction at home, and was afterwards sent, first to a Roman Catholic seminary near Winchester, then to another in London. "This," he said, "was all the teaching I ever had, and God knows it extended a very little way. When I had done with my priests, I took to reading by myself, for which I had a very great eagerness and enthusiasm, especially for poetry: and in a few years I had dipped into a very great number of the English, Italian, Latin, and Greek poets." He was small of stature and deformed, and his ill health made him peevish, irritable, and selfish. Yet his rare intellectual abilities and

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the deserved success of his earlier poetry secured for him the friendship of many of the most influential men of the time. Bolingbroke declared that he never knew a man more tenderly devoted to his friends; and Warburton said, "He is as good a companion as poet, and, what is more, appears to be a good man."

Pope's "Essay on Criticism" was published in 1711; the "Rape of the Lock" in 1714; his translation of Homer's "Iliad" in 1715-18, and of the "Odyssey" in 1726; the "Dunciad" in 1728; the "Essay on Man" in 1732. A revised and enlarged version of the "Dunciad" was published in 1742. The latter part of Pope's life was spent at his country-seat of Twickenham, which he enlarged and beautified from the proceeds of his translation of Homer. He died in 1744.

"Pope is our greatest master in didactic poetry," says Stopford Brooke, "not so much because of the worth of the thoughts as because of the masterly form in which they are put."

"In two directions," says Mark Pattison, "in that of condensing and pointing his meaning, and in that of drawing the utmost harmony of sound out of the couplet, Pope carried versification far beyond the point at which it was when he took it up. The matter which he worked up into his verse has a permanent value, and is indeed one of the most precious heirlooms which the eighteenth century has bequeathed us."

Other Poems to be Read: The Rape of the Lock; The Dying Christian to his Soul; The Universal Prayer; Pastorals; Windsor Forest.

REFERENCES: Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*; Stephen's *Hours in a Library*; De Quincey's *Literature of the Eighteenth Century*; Lowell's *My Study Window*; *Pope* (English Men of Letters), by Leslie Stephen.

The Seventeenth Century.

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"The people of the seventeenth century were weary of liberty, weary of the unmitigated rage of the dramatists, cloyed with the roses and the spices and the kisses of the lyrists, tired of being carried over the universe and up and down the avenues of history at the freak of every irresponsible rhymester. Literature had been set open to all the breezes of heaven by the blustering and glittering Elizabethans, and in the hands of their less gifted successors it was fast declining into a mere Cave of the Winds. . . . We know the poets of the early Caroline period almost entirely by extracts, and their ardor, quaintness, and sudden flashes of inspiration give them a singular advantage in this form. The sustained elevation which had characterized Shakespeare and Spenser, and even in some degree several of the chief of their contemporaries, had passed away, but still the poets were most brilliant, most delectable in their purple patches. . . . As the last waves of the Renaissance died away, a deathly calm settled down upon the pools of thought. Man returned from the particular to the general, from romantic examples to those disquisitions on the norm which were thought to display a classical taste. The seer disappeared, and the artificer took his place. For a whole century the singer that only sang because he must, and as the linnets do, was entirely absent from English literature. He came back at the close of the eighteenth century, with Burns in Scotland, and with Blake in England."—EDMUND GOSSE.

"At the same time, amid the classical coldness which then dried up English literature, and the social excess which then corrupted English morals . . . appeared a mighty and superb mind (Milton), prepared by logic and enthusiasm for eloquence and the epic style; the heir of a poetical age, the precursor of an austere age, holding his place between the epoch of unselfish dreaming and the epoch of practical action."—TAINÉ.

Poets of the Seventeenth Century.

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Ben Jonson (1573-1637). See biographical note, page [213](#).

William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649). Short poems; "Poems: Amorous, Funerall, Divine, Pastorall, in Sonnets, Songs, Sextains, Madrigals"; "Floures of Sion."

William Browne (1588-1643). "Britannia's Pastorals"; "The Shepherd's Pipe"; "The Inner Temple Masque."

George Wither (1588-1667). Short poems; "Collection of Emblems"; "Nature of Man"; "The Shepheard's Hunting"; "Fidelia."

Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650). "The Locustes"; "The Purple Island."

Giles Fletcher (1588-1623). "Christ's Victory and Triumph."

Thomas Carew (1589-1639). Short poems; "Cælum Britannicum."

Francis Quarles (1592-1644). "Divine Poems"; "Emblems, Divine and Moral."

Robert Herrick (1594-1674). See biographical note, page [202](#).

Sir John Suckling (1608-1642). Love poems.

Richard Lovelace (1618-1658). Short poems; "Lucasta: Odes, Sonnets, Songs," etc.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1581-1648). Odes and short poems.

George Herbert (1592-1634). "The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations"; short poems.

George Sandys (1577-1643). "Christ's Passion."

Richard Crashaw (1615-1650). "Steps to the Altar."

Henry Vaughan (1621-1695). "Silex Scintillans"; "The Mount of Olives."

Abraham Cowley (1618-1667). "Poetical Blossomes"; "The Mistress."

Edmund Waller (1605-1687). See biographical note, page [205](#).

Sir John Denham (1615-1668). "Cooper's Hill."

Sir William Davenant (1605-1668). "Gondibert"; "Madagascar and Other Poems."

John Milton (1608-1674). See biographical note, page [195](#).

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678). Lyric and satiric poems.

Samuel Butler (1612-1680). "Hudibras."

Thomas Otway (1651-1685). "The Poet's Complaint of his Muse"; "Windsor Castle."

John Dryden (1631-1700). See biographical note, page [175](#).

John Dryden.

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ALEXANDER'S FEAST; OR, THE POWER OF MUSIC:

AN ODE IN HONOR OF ST. CECILIA'S DAY.

'Twas at the royal feast,¹ for Persia won
By Philip's warlike son:
Aloft in awful state
The godlike hero sate
On his imperial throne:
His valiant peers were placed around;
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound:²
(So should desert in arms be crowned.)
The lovely Thais,³ by his side,
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

Chorus.

Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

Timotheus,⁴ placed on high
Amid the tuneful quire,
With flying fingers touched the lyre:
The trembling notes ascend the sky,
And heavenly joys inspire.
The song began from Jove,⁵
Who left his blissful seats above,
(Such is the power of mighty love.)

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A dragon's fiery form belied the god:
Sublime on radiant spires he rode.
The listening crowd admire the lofty sound,
A present deity,⁶ they shout around;
A present deity, the vaulted roofs rebound:
 With ravish'd ears
 The monarch hears,
 Assumes the god,
 Affects to nod,⁷
And seems to shake the spheres.

Chorus.

 With ravish'd ears
 The monarch hears,
 Assumes the god,
 Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

The praise of Bacchus then, the sweet musician sung,
Of Bacchus ever fair and ever young:
 The jolly god in triumph comes;
 Sound the trumpets; beat the drums;
 Flush'd with a purple grace,
 He shows his honest face:
Now give the hautboys⁸ breath; he comes! he comes!
 Bacchus, ever fair and young,
 Drinking joys did first ordain;
 Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
 Drinking is the soldier's pleasure;
 Rich the treasure,
 Sweet the pleasure;
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

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Chorus.

 Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
 Drinking is the soldier's pleasure;
 Rich the treasure,
 Sweet the pleasure;
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

 Sooth'd with the sound, the king grew vain;
 Fought all his battles o'er again;
And thrice he routed all his foes; and thrice he slew the slain.⁹
 The master saw the madness rise;
 His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes;
 And, while he Heaven and Earth defied,
 Changed his hand, and check'd his pride.
 He chose a mournful muse,
 Soft pity to infuse:
 He sung Darius¹⁰ great and good,
 By too severe a fate,
 Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,
 Fallen from his high estate,
 And welt'ring in his blood;
 Deserted at his utmost need,
 By those his former bounty fed:
 On the bare earth expos'd he lies,¹¹
 With not a friend to close his eyes.¹²
With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,
Revolving in his alter'd soul
 The various turns of chance below;
And, now and then, a sigh he stole,¹³
And tears began to flow.

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Chorus.

 Revolving in his alter'd soul
 The various turns of chance below;
 And, now and then, a sigh he stole,
 And tears began to flow.

The mighty master smil'd to see
That love was in the next degree:
'Twas but a kindred sound to move,
For pity melts the mind to love.¹⁴

Softly sweet, in Lydian¹⁵ measures,
Soon he sooth'd his soul to pleasures.
War, he sung, is toil and trouble;
Honor, but an empty bubble;¹⁶
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying;
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, oh think it worth enjoying!
Lovely Thais sits beside thee,
Take the good the gods provide thee.
The many¹⁷ rend the air with loud applause;
So Love was crown'd, but Music won the cause.
The prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gaz'd on the fair
Who caus'd his care,
And sigh'd and look'd,¹⁸ sigh'd and look'd,
Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again;
At length, with love and wine at once oppress'd,
The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.

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Chorus.

The prince, unable to conceal his pain,
Gaz'd on the fair
Who caus'd his care,
And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd,
Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again;
At length, with love and wine at once oppress'd,
The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.

Now strike the golden lyre again;
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.
Break his bands of sleep¹⁹ asunder,
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark, the horrid sound
Has raised up his head!
As awaked from the dead,
And amaz'd he stares around.
Revenge! revenge! Timotheus cries,
See the Furies²⁰ arise:
See the snakes that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair,
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts,²¹ that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious on the plain:
Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew.²²
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods!
The princes applaud with a furious joy;
And the king seiz'd a flambeau with zeal to destroy;
Thais led the way,²³
To light him to his prey,
And like another Helen, fired another Troy.

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Chorus.

And the king seiz'd a flambeau with zeal to destroy;
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And like another Helen, fired another Troy.

Thus, long ago,
Ere heaving bellows learn'd to blow,
While organs²⁴ yet were mute;
Timotheus to his breathing flute,
And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.
At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;²⁵
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,

And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown:
He rais'd a mortal to the skies;
She drew an angel down.²⁶

Grand Chorus.

At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown:
He rais'd a mortal to the skies
She drew an angel down.

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NOTES.

This song was written in 1697. Lord Bolingbroke relates that, calling upon the poet one morning, Dryden said to him: "I have been up all night; my musical friends made me promise to write them an ode for their Feast of St. Cecilia, and I was so struck with the subject which occurred to me that I could not leave it till I had completed it: here it is, finished at one sitting."

The poem was first set to music by one Jeremiah Clarke, a steward of the Musical Society, whose members had solicited Dryden to write it. In 1736 it was rearranged by the great composer Handel, and again presented at a public performance.

M. Taine says, "His 'Alexander's Feast' is an admirable trumpet-blast, in which metre and sound impress upon the nerves the emotions of the mind, a master-piece of rapture and of art, which Victor Hugo alone has come up to."

"As a piece of poetical mechanism to be set to music, or recited in alternate strophe and anti-strophe," says Hazlitt, "nothing can be better."

"This ode is Dryden's greatest and best work."—*Macaulay*.

1. royal feast. About the year B.C. 331, Alexander the Great, having overthrown the Persian Empire, held a great feast at Persepolis in celebration of his victories. At the close of the revelries, instigated, it is said, by Thais, his Athenian mistress, he set fire with his own hand to the great palace of Persepolis; and a general massacre of the inhabitants ensued. The ruins of the city and palace are still to be seen in a beautiful valley watered by the river Araxes—now called Bendemir—not far from the border of the Carmanian Desert.

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2. with roses and with myrtles. At the banquets of the Greeks it was the custom of the guests to wear garlands of roses and myrtles.

3. Thais. "Her name is best known from the story of her having stimulated the Conqueror, during a great festival at Persepolis, to set fire to the palace of the Persian kings; but this anecdote, immortalized as it has been by Dryden's famous ode, appears to rest on the sole authority of Cleitarchus, one of the least trustworthy of the historians of Alexander, and is in all probability a mere fable." After the death of Alexander, Thais became the wife of Ptolemy Lagus.

4. Timotheus. A famous flute-player from Thebes. Another and more celebrated Timotheus, "the poet of the later Athenian dithyramb," was a native of Miletus and died about the time of Alexander's birth.

5. Alexander claimed to be the son of Jupiter Ammon; and when he visited the temple of that god, in the Libyan Desert, he was received by the priests and honored as such. See Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*.

6. present deity. See Psalm xlv. 1.

7. affects to nod. See Homer's "Iliad." I, 528-530: "Jove spake, and nodded his dark brow, and the ambrosial locks waved from his immortal head; and he made great Olympus quake."

8. hautboys. Oboes. French *hautbois*. Wind instruments resembling the clarinet.

Bacchus. Compare Shakespeare:

"Come, thou monarch of the vine,
Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne."

—*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act ii, sc. 7.

9. thrice he slew the slain. How could he slay the slain?

10. Darius. At the time of this feast at Persepolis, Darius, the vanquished king of Persia, was still living, although a fugitive. In the following year Alexander pursued him into the Parthian Desert, where he was murdered by the satrap of Bactria. By order of Alexander, the body of the unfortunate king was sent to Persepolis, to be buried in the tombs of the kings.

11. expos'd he lies. Dryden seems to have written this under the impression that Darius had been killed before the time of the great feast at Persepolis.

12. close his eyes. Compare this with the lines from Pope ("Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady"):

"By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed;
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed."

13. a sigh he stole. Sighed silently. His sighs when the result of pity were not very distinctly uttered. Compare Shakespeare: [167]

"And then the lover,
Sighing like a furnace."

—*As You Like It*, Act ii, sc. 7.

And then read, in the next stanza, how Alexander sighed when moved by love.

14. pity melts the mind to love. Compare:

"Pity swells the tide of love."

—*Young's Night Thoughts*, III, 106.

"Pity's akin to love."

—*Southern's Oroonoko*, II, 1.

15. Lydian measures. The people of Lydia were noted for the effeminacy of their manners. And Lydian music was peculiarly soft and voluptuous.

"And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs."

—*Milton's L'Allegro*, 135.

"And all the while sweet Musicke did divide
Her looser notes with Lydian harmony."

—*Spenser's Faerie Queene*, III, 1.

Observe the change in metre in the ten lines beginning "Softly sweet." What does the word *sweet* modify?

16. Honor, but an empty bubble. So Shakespeare:

"Honor is a mere scutcheon."

—*1 Henry IV.*, Act v, sc. 1.

17. The many. The multitude.

18. sigh'd and look'd. He no longer *steals* a sigh, as he did when pitying Darius. See note [13](#), above.

19. Break his bands of sleep. The music now is very different from the Lydian measures which "soothed his soul to pleasures." "Suidas," says Dr. Warton, "mentions the Orthian style in music, in which Timotheus is said to have played to Alexander; and one Antigenidas inflamed this prince still more by striking into what were called Harmatian measures. Quintus Curtius gives a minute description of the burning of the palace at Persepolis, when Alexander was accompanied by Thais. But it does not appear in the accurate Arrian that Thais had any share in this transaction. Arrian, but more so Aristobulus, endeavored to exculpate Alexander from the charge of frequent ebriety; but Menander plainly mentions the drunkenness of Alexander as proverbial."

20. Furies. The Eumenides, or avengers of evil. They are variously represented by the poets. Æschylus describes them as having black bodies, hair composed of twining snakes, and eyes dripping with blood.

21. Grecian ghosts. The spirits of the Greek warriors in Alexander's army who had been slain by the Persians. [168]

22. crew. This word was formerly used to designate any associated multitude or assemblage of persons. It is now restricted to a ship's company, except when occasionally used in a bad sense. From A.-S. *cread* or *cruth*, a crowd.

23. Thais led the way, etc. See note [19](#), above. Neither Thais nor Helen actually fired any city.

What the poet means to say is that, as Helen was the cause of the destruction of Troy, so Thais instigated the burning of Persepolis.

24. organs. The word *organ* originally denoted but a single pipe, and hence the older English writers, when referring to the complete instrument, generally used the word in the plural number. "Father Schmidt and other famous organ-builders flourished in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The organ in Temple Church, London, was built by Schmidt in Charles II.'s time."

25. vocal frame. The organ—the grand instrument of church music—so perfect that it may literally be said to speak. See introductory note to Pope's "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," page [153](#).

26. St. Cecilia, according to the story in the "Golden Legend," was under the immediate protection of an angel. But it was not her sweet playing, but her spotless purity, that brought the angel to earth, not to listen, but to be "a heavenly guard."

Compare these last four lines with those at the close of Pope's Ode.

Dr. Warton says of "Alexander's Feast": "If Dryden had never written anything but this ode, his name would have been immortal, as would that of Gray, if he had never written anything but his 'Bard.' It is difficult to find new terms to express our admiration of the variety, richness, and melody of its numbers; the force, beauty, and distinctness of its images; the succession of so many different passions and feelings; and the matchless perspicuity of its diction. No particle of it can be wished away, but the epigrammatic turn of the four concluding lines."

Hallam says: "This ode has a few lines mingled with a far greater number ill conceived and ill expressed; the whole composition has that spirit which Dryden hardly ever wanted, but it is too faulty for high praise. It used to pass for the best work of Dryden and the best ode in the language. But few lines are highly poetical, and some sink to the level of a common drinking song. It has the defects as well as the merits of that poetry which is written for musical accompaniment."

THE FIRE OF LONDON.

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[FROM "ANNUS MIRABILIS."]

Such was the rise of this prodigious fire,¹
Which, in mean buildings first obscurely bred,
From thence did soon to open streets aspire,
And straight to palaces and temples spread.

The diligence of trades, and noiseful gain,
And luxury, more late, asleep were laid;
All was the Night's, and in her silent reign
No sound the rest of Nature did invade.

In this deep quiet, from what source unknown,²
Those seeds of fire their fatal birth disclose;
And first few scattering sparks about were blown,
Big with the flames that to our ruin rose.

Then in some close-pent room it crept along,
And, smouldering as it went, in silence fed;
Till the infant monster, with devouring strong,
Walk'd boldly upright with exalted head.

Now, like some rich or mighty murderer,
Too great for prison which he breaks with gold,
Who fresher for new mischiefs does appear,
And dares the world to tax him with the old,

So scapes the insulting fire his narrow jail,
And makes small outlets into open air;
There the fierce winds his tender force assail,
And beat him downward to his first repair.

The winds, like crafty courtesans, withheld
His flames from burning but to blow them more:
And, every fresh attempt, he is repell'd
With faint denials, weaker than before.

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And now, no longer letted³ of his prey,
He leaps up at it with enraged desire,
O'erlooks the neighbors with a wide survey,

And nods at every house his threatening fire.

The ghosts of traitors from the Bridge⁴ descend,
 With bold fanatic spectres to rejoice;
 About the fire into a dance they bend,
 And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice.

Our guardian angel saw them where they sate,
 Above the palace of our slumbering King;
 He sighed, abandoning his charge to Fate,
 And drooping oft look'd back upon the wing.

At length the crackling noise and dreadful blaze
 Call'd up some waking lover to the sight;
 And long it was ere he the rest could raise,
 Whose heavy eyelids yet were full of night.

The next to danger, hot pursued by fate,
 Half-clothed, half-naked, hastily retire;
 And frightened mothers strike their breasts too late
 For helpless infants left amidst the fire.

Their cries soon waken all the dwellers near;
 Now murmuring noises rise in every street;
 The more remote run stumbling with their fear,
 And in the dark men jostle as they meet.

So weary bees in little cells repose;
 But if night-robbers lift the well-stored hive,
 An humming through their waxen city grows,
 And out upon each other's wings they drive.⁵

Now streets grow throng'd and busy as by day;
 Some run for buckets to the hallow'd quire;
 Some cut the pipes, and some the engines play,
 And some more bold mount ladders to the fire.

In vain; for from the east a Belgian wind
 His hostile breath through the dry rafters sent;
 The flames impell'd soon left their foes behind,
 And forward with a wanton fury went.

A key⁶ of fire ran all along the shore,
 And lighten'd all the river with a blaze;
 The waken'd tides began again to roar,
 And wondering fish in shining waters gaze.

Old Father Thames rais'd up his reverend head,
 But fear'd the fate of Simois⁷ would return;
 Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed,
 And shrank his waters back into his urn.

The fire meantime walks in a broader gross;⁸
 To either hand his wings he opens wide;
 He wades the streets, and straight he reaches cross,
 And plays his longing flames on the other side.

At first they warm, then scorch, and then they take;
 Now with long necks from side to side they feed;
 At length, grown strong, their mother-fire forsake,
 And a new colony of flames succeed.

To every nobler portion of the town
 The curling billows roll their restless tide;
 In parties now they straggle up and down,
 As armies unopposed for prey divide.

One mighty squadron, with a sidewind sped,
 Through narrow lanes his cumber'd fire does haste,
 By powerful charms of gold and silver led
 The Lombard bankers and the Change to waste.

Another backward to the Tower would go,
 And slowly eats his way against the wind;
 But the main body of the marching foe
 Against the imperial palace is design'd.

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[172]

Now day appears; and with the day the King,
Whose early care had robb'd him of his rest;
Far off the cracks of falling houses ring,
And shrieks of subjects pierce his tender breast.

Near as he draws, thick harbingers of smoke
With gloomy pillars cover all the place;
Whose little intervals of night are broke
By sparks that drive against his sacred face.

More than his guards his sorrows made him known,
And pious tears which down his cheeks did shower;
The wretched in his grief forgot their own;
So much the pity of a king has power.

He wept the flames of what he lov'd so well,
And what so well had merited his love;
For never prince in grace did more excel,
Or royal city more in duty strove.

NOTES.

[173]

This selection from Dryden's long and very tedious poem, "Annus Mirabilis, the year of Wonders, 1666," is given here as a specimen of that kind of mechanical versification so popular in the latter half of the seventeenth century. "That part of my poem which describes the Fire," says Dryden, "I owe first to the piety and fatherly affection of our monarch to his suffering subjects; and, in the second place, to the courage, loyalty, and magnanimity of the city; both of which were so conspicuous that I have wanted words to celebrate them as they deserve. And I have chosen to write my poem in quatrains or stanzas of four in alternate rhyme, because I have ever judged them more noble, and of greater dignity, both for the sound and number, than any other verse in use amongst us." This opinion, however, was certainly not long maintained by the poet, for he never afterward practised that form of versification which he has here praised.

1. this prodigious fire. A half sheet published immediately after the Great Fire contains this account of the catastrophe which Dryden describes in his verses:

"On Sunday, the second of September, this present year 1666, about one o'clock in the morning, there happened a sad and deplorable fire in *Pudding-lane* near *New Fish-street*; which, falling out in a part of the city so close built with wooden houses . . . in a short time became too big to be mastered by any engines or working near it. . . . It continued all Monday and Tuesday with such impetuosity, that it consumed houses and churches all the way to *St. Dunstan's Church*, in *Fleet-street*; at which time, by the favour of God, the wind slackened; and that night, by the vigilancy, industry, and indefatigable pains of his Majesty and his Royal Highness, calling upon all people, and encouraging them by their personal assistances, a stop was put to the fire in *Fleet-street*, etc. But on Wednesday night it suddenly broke out afresh in the *Inner Temple*. His Royal Highness in person fortunately watching there that night, by his care, diligence, great labour, and seasonable commands for the blowing up, with gunpowder, some of the said buildings, it was most happily before day extinguished."

2. source unknown. "It was ascribed by the rage of the people either to the Republicans or the Catholics, especially the latter. An inscription on the monument, intended to perpetuate this groundless suspicion, was erased by James II., but restored at the Revolution."—*Warton*.

3. letted. Hindered. This use of the word *let* is now obsolete, except in the phrase, "Without let or hindrance." It was frequently employed by the older writers. [174]

"What lets but one may enter?"—*Shakespeare*.

4. the Bridge. The heads of traitors were displayed on London Bridge. "How inferior is this passage," says Dr. Dodd, "to Milton's animated description of the wild ceremonies of Moloch, which Dryden, however, seems to have here had in mind." See "Ode on the Nativity," stanza xxxiii.

5. The simile in this stanza was doubtless intended to be very effective.

6. key. Quay. A bank, or ledge.

7. Simois. See Homer's "Iliad," Bk. XXI.

8. gross. Bulk.

REASON AND RELIGION.

[FROM "RELIGIO LAICI."]

Dim as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars
 To lonely, weary, wand'ring travellers,
 Is Reason to the soul: and as on high,
 Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
 Not light us here; so Reason's glimmering ray
 Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
 But guide us upward to a better day.
 And as those nightly tapers disappear,
 When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere;
 So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight;
 So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.
 Some few whose light shone brighter, have been led
 From cause to cause, to nature's secret head;
 And found that one first principle must be,
 But what, or who, that Universal HE;
 Whether some soul encompassing this ball,
 Unmade, unmov'd, yet making, moving all,
 Or various atoms' interfering dance
 Leap'd into form, the noble work of chance,
 Or this great All was from eternity—
 Not even the Stagirite himself could see,
 And Epicurus guess'd as well as he;
 As blindly groped they for a future state,
 As rashly judged of providence and fate.
 In this wild maze their vain endeavors end:
 How can the less the greater comprehend?
 Or finite Reason reach Infinity?
 For what could fathom God were more than He.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

JOHN DRYDEN was born on the 9th of August, 1631, at Aldwincle All Saints, near Oundle in Northamptonshire. He was educated at Westminster School, under the famous Dr. Busby, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. At the age of twenty-six he went up to London with the intention of devoting himself to literature and politics. During the brief remaining years of the Commonwealth (1657-1660) he was nominally a friend to the Puritan party; and one of the first poems written by him was a series of "Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Oliver Cromwell." At the Restoration he at once espoused the cause of the Royalists; and his recent panegyric on the Protector did not prevent him from writing a poem, "Astræa Redux," in honor of the return of Charles the Second. In 1663 he married the Lady Elizabeth Howard, a daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, a Royalist nobleman. For several years he devoted himself chiefly to the writing of plays,—comedies, tragedies, and tragi-comedies. The comedies he wrote in prose; the earliest tragedies in blank verse, followed by several in rhyme, and, after these, others in blank verse. In 1670 he was appointed Poet-Laureate. In 1681, when nearly fifty years old, by the publication of "Absalom and Achitophel," he suddenly became famous as a satirical poet. He soon afterwards wrote "The Medal," another satire, directed against the Earl of Shaftesbury, and "Mac Flecknoe," aimed at Shadwell, the chief poet of the Opposition. At about the same time he produced "Religio Laici," a didactic poem explaining his religious opinions and defending the Church of England against dissenters, atheists, and Catholics. Not long after the accession of James II., Dryden, true to his policy of being always on the side of the ruling party, became a Catholic, and wrote "The Hind and the Panther," in which he eulogized many things that, in the former poem, he had ridiculed. His political career ended with the overthrow of James II., in 1688; but his literary activity continued unabated. The last years of his life were occupied in translating the works of Persius and Juvenal and the Æneid of Virgil. In 1697 he wrote "Alexander's Feast"; and his "modernizations" of some of Chaucer's poems appeared in 1700, the year of his death.

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"If there is grandeur in the pomp of kings and the march of hosts," says A. W. Ward, "in the 'trumpet's loud clangor' and in tapestries and carpetings of velvet and gold, Dryden is to be ranked with the grandest of English poets. The irresistible impetus of an invective which never falls short or flat, and the savor of a satire which never seems dull or stale, give him an undisputed place among the most glorious of English wits."

"His descriptive power was of the highest," says Hales. "Our literature has in it no more vigorous portrait-gallery than that he has bequeathed it. His power of expression is beyond praise. There is always a singular *fitness* in his language: he uses always the right word. He is one of our greatest masters of metre: metre was, in fact, no restraint to him, but rather it seems to have given him freedom. It has been observed that he argues better in verse than in prose; verse was the natural costume of his thoughts."

Professor Masson says: "Not only is Dryden the largest figure in one era of our literature: he is a very considerable figure also in our literature as a whole. Of all that he wrote, however, there is but a comparatively small portion that has won for itself a permanent place in our literature."

Other Poems to be Read: Absalom and Achitophel; Mac Flecknoe; Religio Laici; Threnodia Augustalis.

John Milton.

[177]

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

I.

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heav'ns 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,¹
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II.

The glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he wont² at Heav'ns 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.³

III.

Say, heav'nly muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no vers, no hymn, or solemn strein
To welcome him to this his new abode
Now while the Heav'n by the suns team untrod
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

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IV.

See how from far upon the eastern rode
The star-led Wisards⁴ haste with odours sweet;
O run, prevent⁵ them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire,⁶
From out his secret altar toucht with hallow'd fire.

THE HYMN.

I.

It was the winter wilde
While the Heav'n-born childe
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature in aw of him
Had doff't 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.⁷

II.

Onely with speeches fair

She woo's the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinfull blame,
The saintly veil of maiden⁸ white to throw:
Confounded that her Makers eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

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III.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace,
She, crown'd with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphear,⁹
His ready harbinger,¹⁰
With turtle¹¹ wing the amorous clouds dividing,
And, waving wide her mirtle wand,
She strikes a universall peace¹² through sea and land.

IV.

No war, or battails sound,
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high up hung;
The hooked chariot¹³ stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sate still with awfull eye,¹⁴
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

V.

But peacefull was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began;
The windes, with wonder whist,¹⁵
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joyes to the milde ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

VI.

[180]

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixt in stedfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence,¹⁶
And will not take their flight
For¹⁷ all the morning light
Or Lucifer¹⁸ that often warn'd them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Untill their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

VII.

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 inferiour flame
The new-enlightn'd world no more should need;
He saw a greater sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axle-tree¹⁹ could bear.

VIII.

The shepherds on the lawn²⁰
Or ere²¹ the point of dawn
Sate simply chatting in a rustick row;
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan²²
Was kindly com to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,

Was all that did their silly²³ thoughts so busie keep.

IX.

[181]

When such musick sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortall finger strook,²⁴
Divinely warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise²⁵
As all their souls in blissfull rapture took;
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echo's still prolongs each heav'nly close.²⁶

X.

Nature that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round²⁷
Of Cynthia's seat the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was don,
And that her reign had here its²⁸ last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heav'n and Earth in happier union.

XI.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shame-fac't Night array'd;
The helmed Cherubim,²⁹
The sworded Seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displaid,
Harping in loud and solemn quire
With unexpressive³⁰ notes to Heav'n's new-born Heir.

XII.

[182]

Such musick (as 'tis said)
Before was never made
But when of old the sons of Morning sung,³¹
While the Creator great
His constellation set,
And the well-ballanc't world on hinges³² hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltring³³ waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII.

Ring out, ye crystall sphears;³⁴
Once bless our humane ears
(If ye have power to touch our senses so),
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the base of Heav'ns deep organ blow,
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort³⁵ to th' angelike symphony.

XIV.

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the age of Gold;³⁶
And speckl'd Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould;³⁷
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her³⁸ dolorous mansions to the peering day.

XV.

[183]

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,

Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will set between,
Thron'd in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And Heav'n, as at som festivall,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.³⁹

XVI.

But wisest Fate sayes no;
This must not yet be so;
The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross⁴⁰
Must redeem our loss,
So both himself and us to glorifie;
Yet first to those ychain'd⁴¹ in sleep
The wakefull trump⁴² of doom must thunder through the deep.

XVII.

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,⁴³
While the red fire and smould'ring clouds out brake;
The aged Earth, agast,
With terrour of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the center shake;
When at the worlds last session⁴⁴
The dreadfull Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

XVIII.

[184]

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for from this happy day,
Th' old Dragon⁴⁵ under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swindges⁴⁶ the scaly horror of his fouled tail.

XIX.

The oracles are dumm;⁴⁷
No voice or hideous humm
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos⁴⁸ leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-ey'd Priest from the prophetic cell.

XX.

The lonely mountains o'er
And the resounding shore
A voice of weeping⁴⁹ heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale
Edged with poplar pale
The parting⁵⁰ Genius is with sighing sent;
With floure-inwov'n tresses torn
The nimps in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

XXI.

[185]

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth⁵¹
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamins⁵² at their service quaint
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar power forgoes⁵³ his wonted seat.

XXII.

Peor and Baälim⁵⁴
Forsake their temples dim,
With that wise batter'd god⁵⁵ of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heav'ns queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers holy shine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn;
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn;⁵⁶

XXIII.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dred⁵⁷
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals ring
They call the grisly⁵⁸ King
In dismal dance about the furnace blue;
The brutish⁵⁹ gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis last.

XXIV.

[186]

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green
Trampling the unshowr'd grass⁶⁰ with lowings loud,
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Naught but profoundest hell can be his shroud;
In vain with timbrel'd anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipt ark.

XXV.

He feels from Judas land
The dredded Infants hand;
The rayes of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;⁶¹
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 controul the damned crew.

XXVI.

So, when the Sun in bed,⁶²
Curtain'd with cloudy red
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to th' infernal jail;
Each fetter'd ghost slips to his severall grave;
And the yellow-skirted Fayes
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-lov'd maze.

XXVII.

[187]

But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is our tedious song should here have ending;
Heav'ns youngest teemed⁶³ star
Hath fixt her polish'd car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harness'd angels sit in order serviceable.⁶⁴

NOTES.

This poem was begun by Milton on Christmas day, 1629. He had then just completed his twenty-first year, and was still an undergraduate at Christ's College, Cambridge. From certain fragments and other evidence, it is believed that he contemplated writing a series of poems on great Christian events in a similar way. This is the first poem of importance which he wrote. Hallam

speaks of it as perhaps the finest lyric of its kind in the English language. "A grandeur, a simplicity, a breadth of manner, an imagination at once elevated and restrained by the subject, reign throughout it. If Pindar is a model of lyric poetry, it would be hard to name any other ode so truly Pindaric; but more has naturally been derived from the Scriptures."

1. our deadly forfeit should release. Should remit the penalty of death pronounced against us. Shakespeare has a similar use of the word "forfeit."

"Thy slanders I forgive, and therewithal
Remit thy other forfeits."

—*Measure for Measure*, Act v, sc. 1.

2. wont. The past tense of the A.-S. verb *wunian*, to persist, to continue, to be accustomed. Now used only in connection with some form of the auxiliary verb *be*.

3. Explain the meaning of each word in this line, and of the whole line. The next two stanzas comprise an invocation to the Muse of Poetry. See note 1, page [153](#).

4. Wisards. Wizards. Wise men. The word was originally used in this sense, and not with the depreciatory meaning of "magician," as at present. Spenser says: [188]

"Therefore the antique wizards well invented
That Venus of the fomy sea was bred,"

meaning by "antique wizards" ancient philosophers.

5. prevent. Go before; the original meaning of the word, from Lat. *præ*, before, and *venio*, to go or come.

"I prevented the dawning of the morning."—*Psalms* cxix. 147.

"I will have nothing to hinder me in the morning, for I will prevent the sun rising."—*Izaak Walton, Compleat Angler*.

6. angel quire. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God."—*Luke* ii, 13.

7. paramour. See note 9, page [80](#).

8. maiden. Pure, innocent, unpolluted. Compare

"When I am dead, strew me o'er
With maiden flowers."

—*Shakespeare, Henry VIII*, Act iv, sc. 2.

9. turning sphear. The Ptolemaic system of astronomy taught that the earth was the centre of the universe, and that all the heavenly bodies revolved about it, being fixed in a complicated framework, or series of hollow crystalline spheres moving one within the other. The "turning sphear" is here this entire system of revolving spheres. See note [34](#), below.

10. harbinger. One who provides a resting-place for a superior person. It was the duty of the king's harbinger, when the court removed from one place to another, to provide lodgings for the king's retinue. Derived from *harbor*, *harborage*. The word "harbor" is from A.-S. *here*, army, and *beorg*, a refuge. Others derive the word from *har*, a message, and *bringer*—hence, one who brings a message, a herald.

Parkes's *Topography of Hampstead*, 1818, contains the following:

"The office of harbinger still exists in the Royal Household, the nominal duty of the officer being to ride one stage onward before the king on his progress, to provide lodging and provision for the court."

The last knight-harbinger was Sir Henry Rycroft (appointed in 1816, died October, 1846, aged eighty). The office became extinct at his death.

11. turtle. Commonly *turtle-dove*. For history of the word as now applied to the tortoise, see Worcester's Dictionary.

12. universall peace. About the time of the birth of Christ there was peace throughout the Roman Empire, and the temple of Janus was shut. [189]

13. hooked chariot. The war-chariot armed with scythes, a Celtic invention adopted by the Romans.

14. awful eye. We would say, "awe-filled eyes."

sovrán. Old French *souverain*. Some derive it from Lat. *supra*, above, and *regno*, to reign.

15. whist. Hushed. This word, now used as a sort of interjection commanding silence, seems to have had in earlier English more of a verbal meaning, as Spenser in "The Faerie Queene," VII, vii,

"So was the Titaness put downe and whist."

It also meant *to keep silent*, as in Surrey's "Virgil":

"They whisted all, with fixed face intent."

A game of cards in which the players are supposed to keep silent is called whist.

birds of calm. Halcyons. See note 1, page [78](#).

16. influence. From Lat. *in*, into, and *fluo*, to flow. This word, until a comparatively modern date, was always used with respect to the supposed mysterious rays or aspects flowing from the stars to the earth, and thus having a strange power over the fortunes of men. "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?"—*Job* xxviii. 31.

"Happy constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influences."

—*Paradise Lost*, VIII, 512.

17. For. Notwithstanding.

18. Lucifer. The morning star. The idea of Lucifer appearing to warn the stars of the approach of the sun is a happy figure. See note 7, page [80](#).

19. axle-tree. Axis. *Tree* in O. E. is used to signify beam. We still have *single-tree*, *double-tree*, *whiffle-tree*, etc. Compare "Comus," 95:

"The gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay."

20. lawn. Used in its original sense of a pasture, or open, grassy space. Formerly *laund*. Similarly we have *lane*, an open passage between houses or fields.

21. Or ere. *Or* is here used in its old sense, meaning *before*, from A.-S. *ær*. *Ere* = e'er, ever. Compare Ecclesiastes xii. 6: "Or ever the silver cord be loosed." Also "King Lear," Act ii, sc. 4:

"But this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
Or ere I'll weep."

22. Pan. See note, page [72](#). The application of the name *Pan* to Christ is evidently derived from [\[190\]](#) Spenser. See "Shepherds Calendar," July:

"And such, I ween, the brethren were
That came from Canaän,
The brethren Twelve, that kept yfere
The flocks of mightie Pan."

In the Glosse to the Calendar for May it is said that "Great Pan is Christ, the very God of all shepherds, which calleth himselfe the great and good shepherd. The name is most rightly (methinks) applied to him; for Pan signifieth all, or omnipotent, which is only the Lord Iesus. And by that name (as I remember) he is called of Eusebius in his fifth booke, *De Preparat. Evange*."

23. silly. From A.-S. *saelig*, blessed, happy. Spenser uses the word in the sense of innocent, as in "Faerie Queene," III, viii, 27:

"The silly virgin strove him to withstand."

Chaucer, in the "Reves Tale," uses it in the more modern sense of simple, or foolish:

"These sely clerkes han ful fast yronne."

But in the "Legend of Good Women" it has another meaning:

"O sely woman, full of innocence."

The meaning of this word has completely changed.

24. strook. Caused to sound as on a stringed instrument. Compare Dryden in "Alexander's Feast":

"Now strike the golden lyre again."

25. noise. A company of musicians under a leader. Used in this sense by both Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.

26. close. Cadence. See Dryden, "Fables":

"At every *close* she made, th' attending throng
Replied, and bore the burden of the song."

27. hollow round. The sphere in which the moon has its motion. See notes [9](#) and [34](#).

Cynthia. The moon. In the ancient mythology applied to Artemis, from Mount Cynthus in the island of Delos, her birthplace.

28. its. In all his poetry, Milton uses this word only three times. The other examples are in "Paradise Lost," I, 254, and IV, 814. This possessive form of the pronoun it was never used until the time of Shakespeare, who employs it five times in "A Winter's Tale," and once in "Measure for Measure"; it does not occur anywhere in the authorized version of the Bible.

29. Why are the Cherubim "helmed," while the Seraphim are "sworded"? Addison says, "Some of the rabbins tell us that the cherubims are a set of angels who know most, and the seraphims a set of angels who love most." Observe that the plural of cherub or of seraph may be formed in three ways: viz. cherubs, cherubim, cherubims; seraphs, seraphim, seraphims. [191]

30. unexpressive. Inexpressible. See Shakespeare, "As You Like It":

"The fair, the chaste, the unexpressive she."

Also Milton, "Lycidas," 176:

"And hears the unexpressive nuptial song."

31. the sons of Morning sung. See Job xxxviii. 4-7, the oldest reference to the "music of the spheres." See note [34](#), below.

32. hinges. Literally, a hinge is anything for hanging something upon. From A.-S. *hangian*.

33. weltring. Rolling, wallowing. See "Lycidas," 13.

34. Ring out. An allusion to the music of the spheres. See note [27](#), above. The theory of Pythagoras was that the distances between the heavenly bodies were determined by the laws of musical concord. "These orbs in their motion could not but produce a certain sound or note, depending upon their distances and velocities; and as these were regulated by harmonic laws, they necessarily formed as a whole a complete musical scale." "In the whorl of the distaff of necessity there are eight concentric whorls. These whorls represent respectively the sun and moon, the five planets, and the fixed stars. On each whorl sits a siren singing. Their eight tones make one exquisite harmony." Milton added a ninth whorl,— "that swift nocturnal and diurnal rhomb,"—and then spoke of the "ninefold harmony," as just below. This was a favorite idea with the poets.

"Sure she was nigher to heaven's spheres,
Listening the lordly music flowing from
The illimitable years."

—Tennyson, *Ode to Memory*.

"The music of the spheres! list, my Mariana!"

—Shakespeare, *Pericles*, Act v, sc. 1.

"There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims."

—Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, Act v, sc. 1.

"If Nature thunder'd in his opening ears,
And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
How would he wish that Heaven had left him still
The whispering zephyr and the purling rill!"

—Pope, *Essay on Man*, I.

"Her voice, the music of the spheres,
So loud, it deafens mortals' ears,
As wise philosophers have thought,
And that's the cause we hear it not."

—Butler's *Hudibras*, II, i, 617.

See, also, Montaigne, *Essays*, I, xxii; Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, II, 9; Plato's *Republic*, VI; Dryden's "Ode to Mrs. Anne Killigrew," etc.

35. consort. Accompaniment. This word, so written until Milton's time, has now given place to *concert*, whenever used as here. [192]

36. age of Gold. The fabled primeval age of universal happiness.

"A blisful lyfe, a peseable, and so swete,
Ledde the peplis in the former age."—*Chaucer*.

37. mould. Matter, substance. The word is used in the old Romances to denote the earth itself. Milton elsewhere says:

"Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine, enchanting ravishment?"

38. her. Observe what has already been said (note 28, above) about the pronoun *its*. *Hell*, in the Anglo-Saxon language, is feminine. But, just above, observe the expression *it self*. See, in the [last line](#) of stanza xv, the pronoun *her* with *heaven* as its antecedent. *Heofon*, in the Anglo-Saxon, is also feminine.

39. This stanza is a fine example of word-painting. What idea is conveyed to your mind by the expressions, "orb'd in a rainbow," "like glories wearing," "thron'd in celestiall sheen," "the tissued clouds down steering," etc.? What kind of glories will Mercy wear? Where will she sit? How will she be enthroned? What are *radiant* feet? Why are Mercy's feet radiant? Does she steer the tissued clouds "with radiant feet," or does she steer herself down the tissued clouds? Why will the opening of Heaven's high palace wall be "as at some festivall"?

40. bitter cross. Compare Shakespeare, "1 Henry IV," Act i, sc. 1, 27:

"Those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd
For our advantage, on the bitter cross."

41. ychain'd. The *y* is a corruption of the prefix *ge*, anciently used in connection with the past participle, and still retained in many German words. Often used by Chaucer and Spenser, as in *yblessed*, *yburied*, *ybrent*, *yfonden*, *ygeten*, *yklad*, *yfraught*, etc.

42. trump. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."—*1 Thessalonians* iv. 16.

wakefull. Awakening.

[193]

43. rang. See Exodus xix.

44. session. Assize. Both words were originally from the same root, Lat. *sedeo*, *sessum*.

spread. Prepare, make ready. A similar use of the word survives in the idiom "to spread the table."

45. Dragon. See Revelation xii. 9.

46. Swindges. Swings about violently. This is the only case in which Milton uses this word. It is used several times by Shakespeare in the sense of *to whip*, *to scourge*.

47. oracles are dumm. Keightly says: "This was a frequent assertion of the Fathers, who ascribed to the coming of Christ what was the effect of time. They regarded the ancient oracles as having been the inspiration of the devil."

Spenser, quoting the story which Plutarch relates in "his Booke of the ceasing of miracles," says, "For at that time, as hee sayth, all Oracles surceased, and enchanted spirites that were woont to delude the people thenceforth held their peace."—*Glosse to Shepheards Calendar*, May.

48. Delphos. The mediæval form of the word *Delphi*. The temple where was the chief oracle of Apollo was at Delphi, built at the foot of a precipitous cliff two thousand feet high. This oracle was suppressed by the Emperor Theodosius.

49. weeping. Compare Matthew ii. 19, and Jeremiah xxxi. 15.

Spenser, in the same *Glosse*, quoted from above, says, "About the same time that our Lorde suffered his most bitter passion for the redemption of man, certaine persons sailing from Italie to Cyprus and passing by certaine iles called Paxæ, heard a voice calling aloud Thamus, Thamus, (now Thamus was the name of an Egyptian which was pylote of the ship), who, giving ear to the crie, was bidden, when he came to Palodes to tell that great Pan was dead: which hee doubting to doe, yet for that when hee came to Palodes, there suddenly was such a calme of winde that the ship stode still in the sea unmooved, he was forced to crie aloude that Pan was dead: wherewithall there was heard such piteous outcries, and dreadfull shrieking as hath not beene the like."

50. parting. Departing. Frequently used in Old English.

Genius. Spirit. See "Lycidas," 182:

"Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore."

[51. consecrated earth—holy hearth.](#) Referring to the places specially haunted by the Lars and Lemures. The Lemures were the spirits of the dead, and were said to wander about at night, frightening the living. The Lares were the household gods, sometimes referred to as the spirits of good men. The former frequented the graveyards; the latter, the hearths. [194]

[52. Flamins.](#) Priests.

[53. forgoes.](#) Goes from, gives up, abandons.

[54. Peor and Baälim.](#) Compare the proper names which occur in this and the following stanzas with those in "Paradise Lost," I, 316-352.

Peor. The name of a mountain of Palestine is here used as one of the titles of Baal, who was worshipped there.

Baälim. Plural of Baal, meaning that god in his various modifications.

Ashtaroth. The Syrian goddess Astarte. But her worship was identified rather with the planet Venus than with the moon.

Hammon. A Libyan deity, represented as a ram or as a man with ram's horns.

[55. twice batter'd god.](#) Dagon. See 1 Samuel v.

[56. mourn.](#) In Phœnicia, in the ancient city of Byblos, a festival of two days was held every year in honor of Adonis, or Thammuz, as the Phœnicians called him. The first day was observed as a day of mourning for the death of the god; the second, as a day of rejoicing because of his return to the earth. The principal participants were young women. The prophet Ezekiel alludes to this subject: "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz."—*Ezekiel* viii. 14.

Milton, in "Paradise Lost," says:

"Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day."

[57.](#) Compare with "Paradise Lost," I, 392-405. In *Sandys's Travels*, published in 1615, and a popular book in Milton's time, the following description is given of the sacrifices made to Moloch: "Therein the Hebrews sacrificed their children to Moloch, an idol of brass, having the head of a calf, the rest of a kingly figure, with arms extended to receive the miserable sacrifice seared to death with his burning embracements. For the idol was hollow within and filled with fire."

[58. grisly.](#) Frightful, hideous. Probably from A.-S. *agrisan*, to dread.

[59. brutish.](#) Shaped like a brute; animal.

Isis. The Egyptian earth-goddess, afterwards worshipped as the goddess of the moon.

Orus. The Egyptian god of the sun.

the dog **Anubis.** Juvenal says, "Whole towns worship the dog."—*Sat.*, XV, 8. [195]

[60. unshowr'd.](#) A reference to the general, though erroneous, idea that it does not rain in Egypt.

Osiris, or Apis, one of the chief gods of the Egyptians, was represented by a bull.

sacred chest = worshipt ark, below.

[61. eyn.](#) The old plural form of eyes. This form of the plural survives in *oxen, children, brethren, kine, swine.*

Typhon. A monster among the gods, variously described by the poets. He was a terror to all the other deities.

[62. in bed.](#) The sun has not yet risen.

[63. youngest teemed.](#) Referring to the Star of Bethlehem.

[64.](#) Compare Milton's "Sonnet on his Blindness":

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

JOHN MILTON was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, London, in the year 1608, eight years before the death of Shakespeare. From his boyhood he showed the possession of more than ordinary powers of mind. He was educated first under private tutors, and at St. Paul's School, and finally at Christ's College, Cambridge, where in 1632 he received the degree of "Master of Arts." His first considerable work was the "Hymn on the Morning of the Nativity," written in 1629. Within the next seven years he wrote the most noteworthy of his shorter poems: the masque, "Comus";

the pastoral piece entitled "Arcades"; the beautiful descriptive poems, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"; and the elegy, "Lycidas." In 1639 he made a tour upon the Continent, visited the famous seats of learning in France and Italy, and made the acquaintance of many of the great poets and scholars of his time. Upon hearing, however, that civil war was about to break out in England, he hastened home, resolved to devote himself to what he regarded as his country's best interests. Poetry was abandoned for politics, and for the next twenty years he wrote little except prose—political tracts and controversial essays. When Cromwell became Lord Protector of England, Milton was appointed Latin Secretary of State, a position which he continued to hold until towards the downfall of the Commonwealth. But after the Restoration he quietly withdrew into retirement, resolved to devote the remainder of his life to the writing of the great poem which he had been contemplating for many years. Through unceasing study he had lost his sight; the friends of his youth had deserted him; the fortune which he had received from his father was gone. And so it was in darkness, and disappointment, and poverty, that in 1667 he gave to the world the great English epic, "Paradise Lost." It was in that same year that Dryden published his "Annus Mirabilis." Milton shortly afterward wrote "Paradise Regained"; and, in 1671, he produced "Samson Agonistes," a tragedy modelled after the masterpieces of the Greek drama. On the 8th of November, 1674, at the age of sixty-six years, his strangely eventful life came to a close. [196]

WORDSWORTH'S SONNET TO MILTON.

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

Other Poems to be Read: L'Allegro; Il Penseroso; Comus; Lycidas; selections from Paradise Lost.

REFERENCES: Masson's *Life and Times of John Milton*; *Milton* (Classical Writers), by Stopford Brooke; *Milton* (English Men of Letters), by Mark Pattison; Macaulay's *Essay on Milton*; De Quincey, *Milton vs. Southey and Landor*; Coleridge's *Literary Remains*; Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*; Hazlitt's *English Poets*.

Robert Herrick.

[197]

TO PHILLIS.

Live, live with me, and thou shalt see
The pleasures I'll prepare for thee:
What sweets the country can afford
Shall bless thy bed, and bless thy board.
The soft sweet moss shall be thy bed,
With crawling woodbine over-spread:
By which the silver-shedding streams
Shall gently melt thee into dreams.
Thy clothing next, shall be a gown
Made of the fleeces' purest down.
The tongue of kids shall be thy meat;
Their milk thy drink; and thou shalt eat
The paste of filberts for thy bread
With cream of cowslips buttered:
Thy feasting-table shall be hills
With daisies spread, and daffadils;
Where thou shalt sit, and Red-breast by,
For meat, shall give thee melody.
I'll give thee chains and carcanets
Of primroses and violets.

A bag and bottle thou shalt have,
That richly wrought, and this as brave;
So that as either shall express
The wearer's no mean shepherdess.
At shearing-times, and yearly wakes,
When Themelis his pastime makes,
There thou shalt be; and be the wit,
Nay more, the feast, and grace of it.
On holydays, when virgins meet
To dance the heys with nimble feet,
Thou shalt come forth, and then appear
The Queen of Roses for that year.
And having danced ('bove all the best)
Carry the garland from the rest.
In wicker-baskets maids shall bring
To thee, my dearest shepherdling,
The blushing apple, bashful pear,
And shame-faced plum, all simp'ring there.
Walk in the groves, and thou shalt find
The name of Phillis in the rind
Of every straight and smooth-skin tree;
Where kissing that, I'll twice kiss thee.
To thee a sheep-hook I will send,
Be-prank'd with ribbons, to this end,
This, this alluring hook might be
Less for to catch a sheep, than me.
Thou shalt have possets, wassails fine,
Not made of ale, but spiced wine;
To make thy maids and self free mirth,
All sitting near the glitt'ring hearth.
Thou shalt have ribbands, roses, rings,
Gloves, garters, stockings, shoes, and strings
Of winning colors that shall move
Others to lust, but me to love.
—These, nay, and more, thine own shall be,
If thou wilt love, and live with me.

[198]

THE MAD MAID'S SONG.

[199]

Good morrow to the day so fair;
Good morning, sir, to you;
Good morrow to mine own torn hair,
Bedabbled with the dew.

Good morning to this primrose too;
Good morrow to each maid;
That will with flowers the tomb bestrew
Wherein my Love is laid.

Ah! woe is me, woe, woe is me,
Alack and well-a-day!
For pity, sir, find out that bee,
Which bore my Love away.

I'll seek him in your bonnet brave;
I'll seek him in your eyes;
Nay, now I think they've made his grave
I' th' bed of strawberries.

I'll seek him there; I know, ere this,
The cold, cold earth doth shake him;
But I will go, or send a kiss
By you, sir, to awake him.

Pray hurt him not; though he be dead,
He knows well who do love him;
And who with green turfs rear his head,
And who do rudely move him.

He's soft and tender, pray take heed,
With bands of cowslips bind him,
And bring him home;—but 'tis decreed

[200]

A THANKSGIVING TO GOD.

Lord, thou hast given me a cell,
Wherein to dwell;
A little house, whose humble roof
Is weather proof;
Under the spars of which I lie
Both soft and dry;
Where thou, my chamber for to ward,
Hast set a guard
Of harmless thoughts, to watch and keep
Me, while I sleep.
Low is my porch, as is my fate;
Both void of state;
And yet the threshold of my door
Is worn by th' poor,
Who thither come, and freely get
Good words, or meat.
Like as my parlor, so my hall
And kitchen's small;
A little buttery, and therein
A little bin,
Which keeps my little loaf of bread
Unchipt, unflead;
Some brittle sticks of thorn or briar
Make me a fire,
Close by whose living coal I sit,
And glow like it.
Lord, I confess too, when I dine,
The pulse is thine,
And all those other bits that be
There placed by thee;
The worts, the purslain, and the mess
Of water-cress,
Which of thy kindness thou hast sent;
And my content
Makes those, and my beloved beet,
To be more sweet.
'Tis thou that crown'st my glittering hearth
With guiltless mirth,
And giv'st me wassail bowls to drink,
Spiced to the brink.
Lord, 'tis thy plenty-dropping hand
That soils my land,
And giv'st me, for my bushel sown,
Twice ten for one;
Thou mak'st my teeming hen to lay
Her egg each day;
Besides, my healthful ewes to bear
Me twins each year;
The while the conduits of my kine
Run cream, for wine:
All these, and better, thou dost send
Me, to this end,—
That I should render, for my part,
A thankful heart;
Which, fired with incense, I resign,
As wholly thine;
—But the acceptance, that must be,
My Christ, by Thee.

[201]

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

[202]

ROBERT HERRICK was born in Cheapside, London, August 20, 1591. He was educated at Cambridge, and in 1629, having taken orders, was presented to the vicarage of Dean Prior in Devonshire. From this living he was ejected by the Long Parliament in 1648, and, going up to London, he united himself with some of his former associates and entered upon a career not altogether creditable to his profession of parson. At the restoration of Charles II. he was returned to his vicarage, where he remained until his death in 1674. His best poems are included in the

collection entitled "Hesperides, or Works Humane and Divine," published in 1648, and dedicated to "the most illustrious and most hopeful Prince Charles." The "Argument" prefixed to this collection very prettily describes the character of the pieces which it contains:

"I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers,
Of April, May, of June, and July-flowers;
I sing of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,
Of bride-grooms, brides, and of their bridal-cakes.
I write of Youth, of Love;—and have access
By these, to sing of cleanly wantonness;
I sing of dews, of rains, and, piece by piece,
Of balm, of oil, of spice, of ambergris.
I sing of times trans-shifting; and I write
How roses first came red, and lilies white.
I write of groves, of twilights, and I sing
The court of Mab, and of the Fairy King;
I write of Hell; I sing, and ever shall
Of Heaven,—and hope to have it after all."

"Herrick's best things," says Robert Buchanan, "are his poems in praise of the country life, and his worst things are his epigrams. His gladsome, mercurial temper had a great deal to do with the composition of his best lyrics; for the parson of Dean Prior was no philosopher, and his lightest, airiest verses are the best. His was a happy, careless nature, throwing off verses out of the fulness of a joyous heart, rioting in a pleasant, sunny element."

Edmund Waller.

[203]

SONG.

Go, lovely Rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows
When I resemble her to thee
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That had'st thou sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die, that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee,
How small a part of time they share
Who are so wondrous sweet and fair.

OF ENGLISH VERSE.

[204]

Poets may boast, as safely vain,
Their works shall with the world remain:
Both bound together, live or die,
The verses and the prophecy.

But who can hope his line should long
Last, in a daily-changing tongue?
While they are new, envy prevails;
And as that dies our language fails.

When architects have done their part,
The matter may betray their art:

Time, if we use ill-chosen stone,
Soon brings a well-built palace down.

Poets, that lasting marble seek,
Must carve in Latin or in Greek:
We write in sand, our language grows,
And, like the tide, our work o'erflows.

Chaucer his sense can only boast,
The glory of his numbers lost!
Years have defac't his matchless strain,
And yet he did not sing in vain.

The beauties which adorn'd that age,
The shining subjects of his rage,
Hoping they should immortal prove,
Rewarded with success his love.

This was the gen'rous poet's scope,
And all an English pen can hope;
To make the fair approve his flame,
That can so far extend their fame.

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Verse thus design'd has no ill fate,
If it arrive but at the date
Of fading beauty, if it prove
But as long-liv'd as present love.

ON A GIRDLE.

That which her slender waist confin'd
Shall now my joyful temples bind;
No monarch but would give his crown
His arms might do what this has done.

It was my heaven's extremest sphere,
The pale which held that lovely deer:
My joy, my grief, my hope, my love,
Did all within this circle move!

A narrow compass! and yet there
Dwelt all that's good and all that's fair:
Give me but what this riband bound,
Take all the rest the sun goes round.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

EDMUND WALLER, whose poetry is noticeable because he was the first English versifier to adopt the French fashion of writing in couplets, was born in Warwickshire in 1605. He was elected to Parliament at the age of seventeen, and was a member of that body during the greater part of his life. At the beginning of the difficulties between the king and the Parliament, he gained some notoriety by his opposition to the former, but when the Civil War broke out he attached himself to the Royalist cause. In 1643, being convicted of complicity in a plot against Parliament, he was fined £10,000 and imprisoned for twelve months. After his release he went to France; but in 1653 he returned to England and became reconciled to the new government, writing, soon afterward, "A Panegyric to my Lord Protector, of the present Greatness and joint Interest of his Highness and this Nation." At the Restoration he eagerly declared allegiance to Charles II., and wrote a congratulatory ode on that monarch's return. He became a court favorite, noted for his wit, was made provost of Eton, and returned to his old place in Parliament. He died October 21, 1687. The first edition of his poems was published in 1645, and from that time to the close of the seventeenth century he was quite generally regarded as the greatest of English poets. At the present time there are few writers so little considered as he.

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Waller may be regarded as the founder of the classical school of English poetry, in which Dryden and Pope excelled, and which remained in the ascendancy for more than a century after his death. "The excellence and dignity of rhyme," says Dryden, "were never fully known till Mr. Waller taught it; he first made writing easily an art, first showed us to conclude the sense, most commonly, in distichs, which in the verse of those before him runs on for so many lines together, that the reader is out of breath to overtake it."

And Dr. Johnson says: "He certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers who were living when his poetry commenced. But he was rather smooth than strong: of the 'full resounding line' which Pope attributes to Dryden, he has given very few examples. The general

character of his poetry is elegance and gaiety. He seems neither to have had a mind much elevated by nature, nor amplified by learning. His thoughts are such as a liberal conversation and large acquaintance with life would easily supply."

Ben Jonson.

[207]

AN ODE TO HIMSELF.

Where dost Thou careless lie
 Buried in ease and sloth?
Knowledge that sleeps, doth die;
And this security,
 It is the common moth
That eats on wits and arts, and [so] destroys them both.

Are all the Aonian¹ springs
 Dried up? lies Thespia waste?
Doth Clarius² harp want strings,
That not a nymph now sings;
 Or droop they as disgrac'd,
To see their seats and bowers by chattering pies³ defac'd?

If hence⁴ thy silence be,
 As 'tis too just a cause,
Let this thought quicken thee:
Minds that are great and free
 Should not on fortune pause;
'Tis crown enough to virtue⁵ still, her own applause.

What though the greedy fry
 Be taken with false baits
Of worded balladry,
And think it poesy?
 They die with their conceits,
And only piteous scorn upon their folly waits.

[208]

Then take in hand thy lyre;
 Strike in thy proper strain;
With Japhet's line,⁶ aspire
Sol's chariot for new fire,
 To give the world again:
Who aided him, will thee, the issue of Jove's brain.⁷

And, since our dainty age
 Cannot endure reproof,
Make not thyself a page
To that strumpet the stage;
 But sing high and aloof,
Safe from the wolf's black jaw, and the dull ass's hoof.⁸

NOTES.

This poem is found in the collection of miscellaneous pieces, by Ben Jonson, entitled "Underwoods." The poet reproaches himself for his own indolence.

1. Aonian springs. The fountain Aganippe, situated in Aonia, was much frequented by the Muses, who were therefore sometimes called "Aonides." They were also called *Thespiades*, because Mount Helicon, one of their favored resorts, was in the vicinity of Thespia, and was itself named "Thespia rupes."

2. Clarius. The name applied to the celebrated oracle of Apollo at Clarus, on the Ionian coast.

3. pies. Magpies, "who make sound without sense."

4. hence. For this reason.

5. virtue . . . her own applause. Compare:

"Virtue is her own reward."—*Dryden, Tyrannic Love.*

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"Virtue, a reward to itself."—*Walton, Compleat Angler.*

"Virtue is its own reward."—*Prior, Imitations of Horace.*

6. Japhet's line. The line of Iapetus, the father of Prometheus, who stole fire from the chariot of the sun.

7. issue of Jove's brain. Athene, or Minerva.

8. "Safe from the slanderer and the fool."

TO CYNTHIA.

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep;
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep;
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear, when day did close;
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying heart
Space to breathe, how short soever;
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY BELOVED MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, AND WHAT HE HATH LEFT US.

[210]

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;¹
While I confess thy writings to be such,
As neither Man nor Muse can praise too much.
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways
Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise;
For seeliest² ignorance on these may light,
Which, when it sounds at best, but echoes right;
Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
And think to ruin where it seemed to praise.
But thou art proof against them and, indeed,
Above the ill fortune of them, or the need.
I therefore will begin: Soul of the age!
The applause, delight, the wonder of our stage!
My SHAKESPEARE rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room:³
Thou art a monument without a tomb,
And art alive still while thy book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
That I not mix thee so my brain excuses,—
I mean with great, but disproportioned Muses;
For if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
And tell how far thou didst our Lyly⁴ outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honor thee I would not seek

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For names, but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,⁵
 Euripides, and Sophocles to us,
 Pacuvius, Accius,⁶ him of Cordova dead,
 To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,
 And shake a stage; or when thy socks⁷ were on,
 Leave thee alone for a comparison
 Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
 Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
 To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
 He was not of an age, but for all time!
 And all the Muses still were in their prime,
 When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
 Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!
 Nature herself was proud of his designs,
 And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines,
 Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
 As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
 The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
 Neat Terence, witty Plautus,⁸ now not please;
 But antiquated and deserted lie,
 As they were not of Nature's family.
 Yet must I not give Nature all; thy Art,
 My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
 For though the poet's matter nature be,
 His art doth give the fashion; and that he⁹
 Who casts to write a living line, must sweat
 (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
 Upon the Muses' anvil, turn the same,
 And himself with it, that he thinks to frame;
 Or for the laurel he may gain to scorn;
 For a good poet's made, as well as born.
 And such wert thou! Look, how the father's face
 Lives in his issue, even so the race
 Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
 In his well-turnèd and true filèd lines,
 In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
 As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.
 Sweet Swan of Avon!¹⁰ what a sight it were
 To see thee in our waters yet appear,
 And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
 That so did take Eliza and our James!
 But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere¹¹
 Advanced, and made a constellation there!
 Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage
 Or influence chide or cheer the drooping stage,
 Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like night,
 And despairs day but for thy volume's light.

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NOTES.

This poem was prefixed to the first folio edition of Shakespeare, 1623, and is also printed in Ben Jonson's "Underwoods."

1. The meaning of these two lines would seem to be: "To show that I am not envious, Shakespeare, of thy name, I thus write fully of thy works and fame."

2. **seeliest.** Silliest, simplest. From A.-S. *saelig*, foolish. See note 23, page 190.

3. In allusion to W. Basse's elegy on Shakespeare, beginning:

"Renownèd Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
 To learned Chaucer; and rare Beaumont, lie
 A little nearer Spenser, to make room
 For Shakespear in your threefold, fourfold tomb."

4. **Lyly, Kyd, Marlowe.** Contemporaries of Shakespeare. See Biographical Dictionary.

5. **Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles.** The founders of the Greek tragical drama.

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6. **Pacuvius, Accius.** Celebrated Roman tragic poets.

him of Cordova. Seneca, the great rhetorician, was born at Cordova, in Spain, B.C. 61.

7. **socks were on.** The socks indicated comedy, and the buskins tragedy. Compare Milton's "L'Allegro," 131:

"Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-note wild."

Also, "Il Penseroso," 97. See note on *buskin*, page [139](#).

8. Aristophanes, Terence, Plautus. Ancient writers of comedy.

9. that he. That man.

10. Swan of Avon. So Cowper calls Virgil "the Mantuan swan."

11. hemisphere. The celestial hemisphere.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

BEN JONSON was born in Westminster, in 1573. His early life was full of hard and varied experiences. He was educated at Westminster School, and entered St. John's College, Cambridge. Being obliged to leave his university course unfinished, he worked for a time with his step-father as a brick-layer. At the age of eighteen he enlisted as a volunteer in the Low Countries; but in 1596 he settled in London, as a playwright. His first comedy, "Every Man in his Humour," did not meet with immediate success. It was remodelled, at Shakespeare's suggestion, and when afterwards presented was received with marked favor. His first tragedy, "Sejanus," was acted in 1603. His masques, of which there are thirty-six, were written during the reign of James I. His miscellaneous works, embracing a variety of odes, elegies, epigrams, and other lyrics and epistles, are included in two collections, the first of which, called *The Forest*, was published in 1616, and the second posthumously, in 1641. He died in London, August 6, 1637.

One of the last and most beautiful of Jonson's dramas is the unfinished pastoral comedy, "The Sad Shepherd." It was written while in the sick-chamber, with a keen sense and remembrance of the disappointments which had followed him through life; and to these he touchingly refers in the prologue: [214]

"He that hath feasted you these forty years,
And fitted fables for your finer ears,
Although at first he scarce could hit the bore;
Yet you, with patience, hearkening more and more,
At length have grown up to him, and made known
The working of his pen is now your own:
He prays you would vouchsafe, for your own sake,
To hear him this once more, but sit awake.
And though he now present you with such wool
As from mere English flocks his muse can pull,
He hopes when it is made up into cloth,
Not the most curious head here will be loth
To wear a hood of it, it being a fleece,
To match or those of Sicily or Greece.
His scene is Sherwood, and his play a tale
Of Robin Hood's inviting from the vale
Of Belvoir, all the shepherds to a feast;
Where, by the casual absence of one guest,
The mirth is troubled much, and in one man
As much of sadness shown as passion can."

Robert Herrick wrote of him thus:

"Ah Ben!
Say how or when
Shall we, thy guests,
Meet at those lyric feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun;
Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad?
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.

"My Ben!
Or come again,
Or send to us
Thy wit's great overplus;
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it,
Lest we that talent spend;
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock,—the store

The Sixteenth Century.

[215]

"In fifty-two years, without counting the drama, two hundred and thirty-three poets are enumerated, of whom forty have genius or talent. . . . What is this condition which gives rise to so universal a taste for poetry? What is it breathes life into their books? How happens it, that amongst the least, in spite of pedantrie, awkwardnesses, we meet with brilliant pictures and genuine love-cries? How happens it, that when this generation was exhausted, true poetry ended in England, as true painting in Italy and Flanders? It was because an epoch of the mind came and passed away,—that, namely, of instinctive and creative conception. These men had new senses, and no theories in their heads. . . . They are happy in contemplating beautiful things, and wish only that they should be the most beautiful possible. They do not excite themselves to express moral or philosophical ideas. They wish to enjoy through the imagination, through the eyes, like those Italian nobles, who, at the same time, were so captivated by fine colors and forms, that they covered with paintings not only their rooms and their churches, but the lids of their chests and the saddles of their horses. . . . Think what poetry was likely to spring from them, how superior to common events, how free from literal imitation, how smitten with ideal beauty, how capable of creating a world beyond our sad world."—TAINÉ.

Poets of the Sixteenth Century.

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Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542). See biographical note, page [252](#).

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547). See biographical note, page [252](#).

George Gascoigne (1536-1577). "The Steel Glass"; "The Tragedy of Iocaste."

Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst (1536-1608). "The Induction to the Mirror for Magistrates"; "The Tragedy of Gorboduc."

Edmund Spenser (1552-1598). See biographical note, page [245](#).

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586). "Astrophel and Stella"; sonnets and short poems.

Thomas Watson (1557-1592). "The Hecatompethia or Passionate Century of Love"; "Melibœus"; "The Tears of Fancie."

John Lyly (1554-1606). Lyrical poems; "Alexander and Campaspe"; "Love's Metamorphosis."

Robert Greene (1560-1592). Dramas and lyrical poems.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593). Dramas and lyrical poems.

Thomas Lodge (1556-1625). Dramas and lyrical poems.

William Warner (1550-1609). "Albion's England"; "Pan, his Syrinx or Pipe."

William Shakespeare (1564-1616). See note, page [221](#).

Samuel Daniel (1562-1619). "History of the Civil Wars between the two Houses of York and Lancaster."

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618). Short poems.

George Chapman (1559-1634). Translations of "Homer's Iliad" and "Homer's Odyssey."

Michael Drayton (1563-1631). "Polyolbion"; "The Barons' Wars"; "The Battle of Agincourt."

Joseph Hall (1574-1656). "Virgidemiarum"; satires.

Sir John Davies (-1626). "Nosce Teipsum."

John Donne (1573-1631). Short poems.

William Shakespeare.

[217]

[FROM "VENUS AND ADONIS."]

"Thou hadst been gone," quoth she, "sweet boy, ere this,
But that thou told'st me thou wouldst hunt the boar.
O, be advised! thou know'st not what it is
With javelin's point a churlish swine to gore,
Whose tushes never sheathed he whetteth still,
Like to a mortal butcher bent to kill.

"On his bow-back he hath a battle set
Of bristly pikes, that ever threat his foes;
His eyes, like glow-worms, shine when he doth fret;
His snout digs sepulchres where'er he goes;
Being moved, he strikes whate'er is in his way,
And when he strikes his crooked tushes slay.

"His brawny sides, with hairy bristles arm'd,
Are better proof than thy spear's point can enter;
His short thick neck cannot be easily harm'd;
Being ireful, on the lion he will venture:
The thorny brambles and embracing bushes,
As fearful of him, part, through whom he rushes.

"Alas, he nought esteems that face of thine,
To which Love's eyes pay tributary gazes;
Nor thy soft hands, sweet lips and crystal eyne,
Whose full perfection all the world amazes;
But having thee at vantage,—wondrous dread!
Would root these beauties as he roots the mead.

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"O, let him keep his loathsome cabin still;
Beauty hath nought to do with such foul fiends:
Come not within his danger by thy will;
They that thrive well take counsel of their friends.
When thou didst name the boar, not to dissemble,
I fear'd thy fortune, and my joints did tremble.

"But if thou needs wilt hunt, be ruled by me;
Uncouple at the timorous flying hare,
Or at the fox which lives by subtlety,
Or at the roe which no encounter dare:
Pursue these fearful creatures o'er the downs,
And on thy well-breathed horse keep with thy hounds.

"And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles
How he outruns the wind and with what care
He cranks and crosses with a thousand doubles:
The many musets through the which he goes
Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.

"Sometime he runs among a flock of sheep,
To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell,
And sometime where earth-delving conies keep,
To stop the loud pursuers in their yell,
And sometime sorteth with a herd of deer:
Danger deviseth shifts; wit waits on fear:

"For there his smell with others being mingled,
The hot scent-snuffing hounds are driven to doubt,
Ceasing their clamorous cry till they have singled
With much ado the cold fault cleanly out;
Then do they spend their mouths: Echo replies,
As if another chase were in the skies.

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"By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
To hearken if his foes pursue him still:
Anon their loud alarums he doth hear;
And now his grief may be compared well
To one sore sick that hears the passing-bell.

"Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch
Turn, and return, indenting with the way;
Each envious brier his weary legs doth scratch,
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay:

For misery is trodden on by many,
And being low never relieved by any."

A MORNING SONG FOR IMOGEN.

[FROM "CYMBELINE."]

Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phoebus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies;
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes:
With everything that pretty is,
My lady sweet, arise:
Arise, arise.

SIGH NO MORE, LADIES.

[220]

[FROM "MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING."]

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no moe,
Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leafy:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

SUNSHINE AND CLOUD.

[SONNET XXXIII.]

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all-triumphant splendor on my brow;
But out, alack! he was but one hour mine;
The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.

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THE WORLD'S WAY.

[SONNET LXVI.]

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,—
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honor shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive Good attending captain Ill:
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,—
Save that, to die, I leave my Love alone.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was born at Stratford-on-Avon in April, 1564, and died there April 23, 1616. His fame rests chiefly upon his dramatic compositions. His two narrative poems, "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," were published in 1593 and 1594, before any of his plays had been printed. They may be regarded as companion pieces, written in the same style and distinguished by similar characteristics. [222]

"A couple of ice-houses," says Dowden, "these two poems of Shakespeare have been called by Hazlitt; 'they are,' he says, 'as hard, as glittering, as cold.' Cold indeed they will seem to any one who listens to hear in them the natural cry of human passion. But the paradox is true, that for a young poet of Elizabeth's age to be natural, direct, simple, would have been indeed unnatural. He was most happy when most fantastical; he spun a shining web to catch conceits inevitably as a spider casts his thread; the quick-building wit was itself warm while erecting its ice-houses." Coleridge says of the "Venus and Adonis" that its most obvious excellence "is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant."

Shakespeare's "Sonnets" were published in 1609. Concerning the origin, purpose, and interpretation of these poems, many widely different theories have been proposed, "Some have looked on them as one poem." says Fleay; "some as several poems—of groups of sonnets; some as containing a separate poem in each sonnet. They have been supposed to be written in Shakespeare's own person, or in the character of another, or of several others; to be autobiographical or heterobiographical or allegorical; to have been addressed to Lord Southampton, to Sir William Herbert, to his own wife, to Lady Rich, to his child, to himself, to his Muse." The safest and wisest course seems to be, first to regard each of the one hundred and fifty-four sonnets as a poem complete in itself, and after studying whatever it may contain of art, or beauty, or truth, then to discover, if possible, its relationship to those which precede or follow it in the series.

Of the other poems written by Shakespeare, mention should be made of "The Passionate Pilgrim" (1559), "The Phoenix and the Turtle" (1601), "A Lover's Complaint," published in the same volume with the "Sonnets," and the few exquisite little songs scattered through his plays.

Edmund Spenser.

[223]

THE CAVE OF MAMMON.

Guyon findes Mammon in a delve¹
Sunning his threasure hore²;
Is by him tempted, and led downe
To see his secrete store.

As Pilot well expert in perilous wave,
That to a stedfast starre³ his course hath bent,
When foggy mistes or cloudy tempests have
The faithfull light of that faire lampe yblent,⁴
And cover'd heaven with hideous dreriment,⁵
Upon his card and compas firmes⁶ his eye,
The maysters of his long experiment,
And to them does the stedy helme apply,
Bidding his winged vessell fairely forward fly:

So Guyon having lost his trustie guyde,
Late left beyond that Ydle lake, proceedes
Yet on his way, of none accompanyde;
And evermore himselfe with comfort feedes
Of his own vertues and praise-worthie deedes.
So, long he yode,⁷ yet no adventure found,
Which fame of her shrill trumpet worthy reedes⁸;
For still he traveild through wide wastfull ground,
That nought but desert wilderness shewed all around.

At last he came unto a gloomy glade, [224]
Cover'd with boughes and shrubs from heavens light,
Whereas he sitting found in secret shade
An uncouth, salvage,⁹ and uncivile wight,
Of griesly hew and fowle ill-favour'd sight;
His face with smoke was tand, and eies were beard,
His head and beard with sout were ill bedight,¹⁰
His cole-blacke hands did seeme to have been seard
In smythes fire-spitting¹¹ forge, and nayles like clawes appear.

His yron cote, all overgrowne with rust,
Was underneath enveloped with gold;
Whose glistring glosse, darkned with filthy dust,
Well yet appeared to have beene of old
A worke of rich entayle¹² and curious mould,
Woven with antickes¹³ and wyld ymagery;
And in his lap a masse of coyne he told,
And turned upside downe, to feede his eye
And covetous desire with his huge threasury.

And round about him lay on every side
Great heapes of gold that never could be spent;
Of which some were rude owre, not purifide
Of Mulcibers¹⁴ devouring element;
Some others were new driven, and distent
Into great Ingowes and to wedges square;
Some in round plates withouten monument¹⁵;
But most were stamp, and in their metal bare
The antique shapes of kings and kesars straunge and rare.

Soone as he Guyon saw, in great affright
And haste he rose for to remove aside
Those pretious hils from straungers envious sight,
And downe them poured through an hole full wide [225]
Into the hollow earth, them there to hide.
But Guyon, lightly to him leaping, stayd
His hand that trembled as one terrifyde;
And though himselfe were at the sight dismayd,
Yet him perforce restraynd, and to him doubtfull sayd:

"What art thou, man, (if man at all thou art)
That here in desert hast thine habitaunce,
And these rich hils of welth doest hide apart
From the worldes eye, and from her right usaunce?"
Thereat, with staring eyes fixed askaunce,
In great disdaine he answerd: "Hardy Elfe,
That darest view my direfull countenance,
I read thee rash and heedlesse of thy selfe,
To trouble my still seate, and heapes of pretious pelfe.

"God of the world and worldlings I me call,
Great Mammon, greatest god below the skye,
That of my plenty poure out unto all,
And unto none my graces do envye:
Riches, renowme, and principality,
Honour, estate, and all this worldes good,
For which men swinck¹⁶ and sweat incessantly,
Fro me do flow into an ample flood,
And in the hollow earth have their eternall brood.

"Wherefore, if me thou deigne to serve and sew,¹⁷
At thy commaund lo! all these mountaines bee:
Or if to thy great mind, or greedy vew,
All these may not suffise, there shall to thee
Ten times so much be nombred francke and free."

"Mammon," (said he) "thy godheads vaunt is vaine,
And idle offers of thy golden fee;
To them that covet such eye-glutting gaine
Proffer thy giftes, and fitter servaunts entertaine.

[226]

"Me ill besits,¹⁸ that in derdoing, armes
And honours suit my vowd daies do spend,
Unto thy bounteous baytes and pleasing charmes,
With which weake men thou witchest, to attend;
Regard of worldly mucke¹⁹ doth fowly blend,
And low abase the high heroicke spright,²⁰
That joyes for crownes and kingdomes to contend:
Faire shields, gay steedes, bright armes be my delight;
Those be the riches fit for an advent'rous knight."

"Vaine glorious Elfe," (saide he) "doest not thou weet,²¹
That money can thy wantes at will supply?
Sheilds, steeds, and armes, and all things for thee meet,
It can purvay in twinckling of an eye;
And crownes and kingdomes to thee multiply.
Do not I kings create, and throw the crowne
Sometimes to him that low in dust doth ly,
And him that raignd into his rowme thrust downe,
And whom I lust do heape with glory and renowne?"

"All otherwise" (saide he) "I riches read,
And deeme them roote of all disquietnesse;
First got with guile, and then preserv'd with dread,
And after spent with pride and lavishnesse,
Leaving behind them grieffe and heavinesse:
Infinite mischiefes of them doe arize,
Strife and debate, bloodshed and bitternesse,
Outrageous wrong, and hellish covetize,
That noble heart as great dishonour doth despize.

"Ne thine be kingdomes, ne the scepters thine;
But realmes and rulers thou doest both confound,
And loyall truth to treason doest incline:
Witnesse the guiltlesse blood pourd oft on ground,
The crowned often slaine, the slayer cround;
The sacred Diademe in peeces rent,
And purple robe gored with many a wound,
Castles surprizd, great cities sackt and brent;
So mak'st thou kings, and gaynest wrongfull government.

[227]

"Long were to tell the troublous stormes that tosse
The private state, and make the life unsweet:
Who swelling sayles in Caspian sea doth crosse,
And in frayle wood on Adrian gulf doth fleet,
Doth not, I weene, so many evils meet."
Then Mammon waxing wroth: "And why then," sayd,
"Are mortall men so fond²² and undiscreet
So evill thing to seeke unto their ayd,
And having not complaine, and having it upbrayd?"

"Indeede," (quoth he) "through fowle intemperaunce
Frayle men are oft captiv'd to covetise;
But would they thinke with how small allowaunce
Untroubled Nature doth herselfe suffise,
Such superfluities they would despise,
Which with sad cares empeach²³ our native joyes.
At the well-head the purest streames arise;
But mucky filth his braunching armes annoyes,
And with uncomely weedes the gentle wave accloyes.²⁴

"The antique world, in his first flowring youth,
Fownd no defect in his Creators grace;
But with glad thankes, and unreproved truth,²⁵
The gifts of soveraine bounty did embrace:
Like Angels life was then mens happy cace;
But later ages pride, like corn-fed steed,
Abusd her plenty and fat swolne encrease
To all licentious lust, and gan exceed
The measure of her meane and naturall first need.

[228]

"Then gan a cursed hand the quiet wombe
Of his great Grandmother²⁶ with steele to wound,
And the hid treasures in her sacred tombe
With Sacriedge to dig. Therein he fownd
Fountaines of gold and silver to abownd,
Of which the matter of his huge desire
And pompous pride eftsoones he did compownd;
Then avarice gan through his veines inspire
His greedy flames, and kindled life-devouring fire."

"Sonne," (said he then) "lett be²⁷ thy bitter scorne,
And leave the rudenesse of that antique age
To them that liv'd therein, in state forlorne:
Thou, that doest live in later times, must wage²⁸
Thy workes for wealth, and life for gold engage.
If then thee list my offred grace to use,
Take what thou please of all this surplusage;
If thee list not, leave have thou to refuse:
But refused doe not afterward accuse."

"Me list²⁹ not" (said the Elfin knight) "receave
Thing offred, till I know it well be gott;
Ne wote but thou didst these goods bereave
From rightfull owner by unrighteous lott,
Or that bloodguiltinesse or guile them blott."
"Perdy,"³⁰ (quoth he) "yet never eie did vew,
Ne tong did tell, ne hand these handled not;
But safe I have them kept in secret mew
From hevens sight, and powre of al which them poursew.

[229]

"What secret place" (quoth he) "can safely hold
So huge a masse, and hide from heaven's eie?
Or where hast thou thy wonne,³¹ that so much gold
Thou canst preserve from wrong and robbery?"
"Come thou," (quoth he) "and see." So by and by
Through that thick covert he him led, and fownd
A darkesome way, which no man could descry,
That deep descended through the hollow grownd,
And was with dread and horror compassed arownd.

At length they came into a larger space,
That stretcht itselpe into an ample playne;
Through which a beaten broad high way did trace,
That streight did lead to Plutoes griesly rayne.³²
By that wayes side there sate internall Payne,
And fast beside him sat tumultuous Strife:
The one in hand an yron whip did strayne,
The other brandished a bloody knife;
And both did gnash their teeth, and both did threaten life.

On thother side in one consort there sate
Cruell Revenge, and rancorous Despight,
Disloyall Treason, and hart-burning Hate;
But gnawing Gealousy, out of their sight
Sitting alone, his bitter lips did bight;
And trembling Feare still to and fro did fly,
And found no place wher safe he shroud him might:
Lamenting Sorrow did in darknes lye,
And Shame his ugly face did hide from living eye.

And over them sad Horror with grim hew
Did alwaies sore, beating his yron wings;
And after him Owles and Night-ravens flew,
The hatefull messengers of heavy things,
Of death and dolor telling sad tidings,
Whiles sad Celeno, sitting on a clifte,
A song of bale and bitter sorrow sings,
That hart of flint asonder could have rifte;
Which having ended after him she flyeth swifte.

[230]

All these before the gates of Pluto lay,
By whom they passing spake unto them nought;
But th' Elfin knight with wonder all the way
Did feed his eyes, and fild his inner thought.
At last him to a little dore he brought,

That to the gate of Hell, which gaped wide,
Was next adjoyning, ne them parted ought:
Betwixt them both was but a little stride,
That did the house of Richesse from hell-mouth divide.

Before the dore sat selfe-consuming Care,
Day and night keeping wary watch and ward,
For feare least Force or Fraud should unaware
Breake in, and spoile the treasure there in gard:
Ne would he suffer Sleepe once thither-ward
Approch, albe his drowsy den were next;
For next to Death is Sleepe to be compar'd;³³
Therefore his house is unto his annex:
Here Sleep, ther Richesse, and Hel-gate them both betwext.

So soon as Mammon there arrivd, the dore
To him did open and affoorded way:
Him followed eke Sir Guyon evermore, [231]
Ne darknesse him, ne daunger might dismay.
Soone as he entred was, the dore streight way
Did shutt, and from behind it forth there leapt
An ugly feend, more fowle then dismall day,
The which with monstrous stalke behind him stept,
And ever as he went dew watch upon him kept.

Well hoped hee, ere long that hardy guest,
If ever covetous hand, or lustfull eye,
Or lips he layd on thing that likte him best,
Or ever sleepe his eie-strings did untye,
Should be his pray. And therefore still on hye
He over him did hold his cruell clawes,
Threatning with greedy gripe to doe him dye,
And rend in peeces with his ravenous pawes,
If ever he transgrest the fatal Stygian lawes.

That houses forme within was rude and strong,
Lyke an huge cave hewne out of rocky clifte,
From whose rough vault the ragged breaches hong
Embossed with massy gold of glorious guifte,
And with rich metall loaded every rifte,
That heavy ruine they did seeme to threat;
And over them Arachne high did lifte
Her cunning web, and spread her subtile nett,
Enwrapped in fowle smoke and clouds more black than Jett.

Both rooffe, and floore, and walls, were all of gold,
But overgrowne with dust and old decay,
And hid in darkenes, that none could behold
The hew thereof; for vew of cherefull day
Did never in that house it selfe display, [232]
But a faint shadow of uncertain light:
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away,
Or as the Moone, cloathed with cloudy night,
Does show to him that walkes in feare and sad affright.

In all that rowme was nothing to be seene
But huge great yron chests, and coffers strong,
All bard with double bends, that none could weene
Them to efforce by violence or wrong:
On every side they placed were along;
But all the grownd with sculs was scattered,
And dead mens bones, which round about were flong;
Whose lives, it seemed, whilome³⁴ there were shed,
And their vile carcasses now left unburied.

NOTES.

This is a selection from Spenser's great poem, "The Faerie Queene," being a part of the seventh canto of book second. "The Faerie Queene" was published in 1590, and comprises six books of twelve cantos each. The first book is the Legend of the Red Cross Knight, or Holiness; the second, of Sir Guyon, or Temperance; the third, of Britomartis, or Chastity; the fourth, of Cambel and Triamond, or Friendship; the fifth, of Artegall, or Justice; the sixth, of Sir Calidore, or Courtesy. It was Spenser's design that the complete work should contain twelve books, but of the remaining part only a fragment of one book, the "Legend of Constance," is in existence.

The versification of the "Faerie Queene" is based upon the *ottava rima*, made so popular in Italian poetry by Tasso and Ariosto. Instead of eight lines to a stanza, however, there are nine. The first eight lines are iambic pentameters, and the ninth a hexameter, the stanza thus closing with a lingering cadence which adds greatly to the melody of the verse. This is the "Spenserian stanza," a form of versification very popular with many of our later poets.

"If you love poetry well enough to enjoy it for its own sake," says Leigh Hunt, "let no evil reports of his *allegory* deter you from an acquaintance with Spenser, for great will be your loss. His allegory itself is but one part allegory and nine parts beauty and enjoyment; sometimes an excess of flesh and blood. His wholesale poetical belief, mixing up all creeds and mythologies, but with less violence, resembles that of Dante and Boccaccio. His versification is almost perpetual honey." [233]

1. delve. Dell. From A.-S. *delfan*, delve, to dig. Each canto of the "Faerie Queene" is introduced by a four-line doggerel like this, containing the argument, or a brief summary of the narrative,—in imitation, probably, of Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso."

2. hore. Sordid, miserly. Probably from A.-S. *harian*, to become mouldy or musty. The word *hoard* may be traced to a similar root.

3. stedfast starre. The pole-star. See "Faerie Queene," I, ii, 1:

"By this the northerne wagoner had set
His sevenfold teme behind the stedfast starre
That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
But firme is fixt, and sendeth light from farre
To all that in the wide deepe wandring arre."

4. yblent. Blinded.

5. dreriment. Darkness.

6. firmes. Fixes, makes firm.

7. yode. Went. The past participle of the old verb *yede*, from A.-S. *gangead*, to go, to proceed.

8. reedes. Considers. From A.-S. *ræd*, counsel, advice; O. E. *rede*.

9. salvage. Savage, wild. Fr. *sauvage*. From Lat. *silva*, forest. See "Faerie Queene," IV, v, 19:

"For all his armour was like salvage weed
With woody mosse bedight, and all his steed
With oaken leaves attrapt, that seemed fit
For salvage wight, and thereto well agreed
His word, which on his ragged shield was writ,
Salvagesse sans finesse, [233:1] shewing secret wit."

wight. Person. From A.-S. *wiht*.

"For every wight that loved chevalrie."

—Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, 2105.

griesly. Dreadful. From A.-S. *grislic*; *agrisan*, to dread. Grisly.

10. bedight. Covered. From *dight*, to dress, to deck. A.-S. *dihtan*.

11. fire-spitting. "*Spett* seems anciently to have more simply signified *disperse*, without the low idea which we at present affix to it."—*Warton*.

12. entayle. Sculpture, carving. Compare *intaglio*.

13. antickes. Odd, or fantastic, forms. From Lat. *antiquus*, ancient. [234]

14. of Mulcibers devouring element. By fire. Mulciber is a surname of Vulcan, "which seems to have been given him as an euphemism, that he might not consume the habitations and property of men, but kindly aid them in their pursuits."

15. withouten monument. Without superscription.

16. swinck. Labor, drudge. A.-S. *swincan*, to toil.

17. sew. Follow. From Fr. *suivre*.

deigne. From Fr. *daigner*, to consider worthy. Opposed to *disdain*.

18. Me ill besits. It ill becomes me.

derdoing. Dare-doing; doing daring deeds.

19. worldly mucke. "Filthy lucre."

[20. spright.](#) Spirit.

[21. weet.](#) Understand. From A.-S. *witan*, to know.

[22. fond.](#) Foolish.

[23. impeach.](#) Hinder. Fr. *empêcher*.

[24. accloyes.](#) Chokes or clogs up. Observe how the poet carries out his metaphor of the "well-head," "the purest streames," "his braunching armes," and "the gentle wave."

[25. unreproved truth.](#) Sincerity.

[26. great Grandmother.](#) Mother Earth.

[27. lett be.](#) Leave off; make an end of.

[28. wage.](#) Pledge. Observe the relationship between this word and both *wager* and *wages*.

[29. Me list.](#) I wish. Compare *methinks*, *meseems*. From A.-S. *lystan*, to choose.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth."—*John* iii. 8.

wote. Understood. See note [21](#) above.

[30. Perdy.](#) An old oath used to give emphasis to an assertion. From Fr. *par dieu*.

[31. wonne.](#) Habitation. From A.-S. *wunian*, to dwell.

[32. rayne.](#) Reign. The word is frequently used in the older poets for *realm*, or *region*.

[33. next to Death is Sleepe.](#)

"How wonderful is Death!
Death and his brother Sleep!"

—*Shelley, Queen Mab, I.*

[34. whilome.](#) At some time.

FOOTNOTES:

[233:1] Wildness without art.

PROTHALAMION; OR, A SPOUSALL VERSE.

[235]

IN HONOUR OF THE DOUBLE MARRIAGE OF THE TWO HONORABLE AND VERTUOUS LADIES, THE LADY ELIZABETH AND THE LADY KATHERINE SOMERSET, DAUGHTERS TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE EARLE OF WORCESTER, AND ESPOUSED TO THE TWO WORTHIE GENTLEMEN, M. HENRY GILFORD AND M. WILLIAM PETER, ESQUYERS.

Calme was the day, and through the trembling ayre
Sweete-breathing Zephyrus did softly play
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay
Hot Titans¹ beames, which then did glyster fayre;
When I, (whom sullein care,
Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay
In princes court,² and expectation vayne
Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away
Like empty shadows, did afflict my brayne,)
Walkt forth to ease my payne
Along the shoare of silver streaming Themmes³;
Whose ruddy⁴ bank, the which his river hemmes,
Was paynted all with variable flowers,
And all the meades adorned with dainty gemmes
Fit to decke maydens bowres,
And crown their paramours
Against⁵ the brydale-day, which is not long;
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

There, in a meadow, by the rivers side,
A flocke of Nymphes I chaunced to espy,
All lovely daughters of the Flood⁶ thereby,

With goodly greenish locks, all loose untyde,⁷
As each had been a bryde;
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs, entrayled⁸ curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,⁹
And with fine fingers cropt¹⁰ full feateously
The tender stalkes on hye.¹¹
Of every sort which in that meadow grew,
They gathered some; the violet, pallid¹² blew,
The little dazie that at evening closes,
The virgin lillie, and the primrose trew,¹³
With store¹⁴ of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegroomes posies¹⁵
Against the brydale-day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly till I end my song.

[236]

With that¹⁶ I saw two Swannes of goodly hewe
Come softly swimming downe along the lee¹⁷;
Two fairer birds I yet did never see;
The snow which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew,
Nor Jove himselfe, when he a swan would be
For love of Leda, whiter did appeare.
Yet Leda was (they say) as white as he,
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing near¹⁸:
So purely white they were,
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,
Seem'd foule to them, and bad his billowes spare
To wet their silken feathers, least they might
Soyle their fayre plumes with water not so fayre,
And marre their beauties bright,
That shone as heavens light,
Against their brydale day which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

Eftsoones¹⁹ the Nymphes, which now had flowers their fill,
Ran all in haste to see that silver brood,
As they came floating on the cristal flood;
Whom when they sawe, they stood amazed, still,
Their wondring eyes to fill;
Them seem'd they never saw a sight so fayre,
Of fowles, so lovely, that they sure did deeme
Them heavenly borne, or to be that same payre
Which through the skie draw Venus silver teeme;
For sure they did not seeme
To be begot of any earthly seede,
But rather angels, or of angels breede;
Yet were they bred of Somers-heat,²⁰ they say,
In sweetest season, when each flower and weede
The earth did fresh array;
So fresh they seem'd as day,
Even as their brydale day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly till I end my song.

[237]

Then forth they all out of their baskets drew
Great store of flowers, the honour of the field,
That to the sense did fragrant odours yeild,
All which upon those goodly birds they threw,
And all the waves did strew,
That like old Peneus²¹ waters they did seeme,
When downe along by pleasant Tempes shore,
Scattred with flowres, through Thessaly they streeme,
That they appeare, through lillies plenteous store,
Like a brydes chambre flore.
Two of those Nymphes, meane while, two garlands bound
Of freshest flowres which in that mead they found,
The which presenting all in trim array,
Their snowie foreheads therewithall they crownd
Whilst one did sing this lay,
Prepar'd against that day,
Against their brydale day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

[238]

"Ye gentle Birdes! the worlds faire ornament

"And heavens glorie, whom this happie hower
"Doth leade unto your lovers blissfull bower,
"Ioy may you have, and gentle hearts content
"Of your loves couplement;²²
"And let faire Venus, that is Queene of Love,
"With her heart-quelling Sonne²³ upon you smile,
"Whose smile, they say, hath vertue to remove
"All loves dislike, and friendships faultie guile
"Forever to assoile.²⁴
"Let endlesse peace your steadfast hearts accord,
"And blessed plentie wait upon your bord²⁵;
"And let your bed with pleasures chast abound,
"That fruitfull issue may to you afford,
"Which may your foes confound
"And make your ioyes redound
"Upon your brydale day, which is not long."
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

So ended she; and all the rest around
To her redoubled²⁶ that her undersong,
Which said, their brydale day should not be long:
And gentle Eccho from the neighbour²⁷ ground
Their accents did resound.
So forth those joyous Birdes did passe along
Adowne the lee, that to them murmurde low,
As he would speake, but that he lackt a tong, [239]
Yet did by signes his glad affection show,
Making his streame run slow.
And all the foule which in his flood did dwell
Gan flock about these twaine, that did excell
The rest, so far as Cynthia doth shend²⁸
The lesser stars. So they, enranged well,
Did on those two attend,
And their best service lend
Against their wedding day, which was not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

At length they all to mery London came,
To mery London, my most kyndly nurse,²⁹
That to me gave this lifes first native sourse,
Though from another place I take my name,
An house of auncient fame;
There when they came, whereas those bricky towres
The which on Themmes brode aged backe doe ryde,
Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers,³⁰
There whylome wont the Templer Knights to byde,
Till they decayd through pride;
Next whereunto there standes a stately place,³¹
Where oft I gayned giftes and goodly grace
Of that great lord, which therein wont to dwell,
Whose want too well now feels my freendles case;³²
But ah! here fits not well³³
Old woes, but ioyes, to tell
Against the brydale daye, which is not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

Yet therein now doth lodge a nobler peer,³⁴
Great Englands glory, and the worlds wide wonder,
Whose dreadfull name late through all Spaine³⁵ did thunder, [240]
And Hercules two Pillors³⁶ standing neere
Did make to quake and feare:
Faire branch of honor, flower of chevalrie!
That fillest England with thy triumphs fame,
Ioy have thou of thy noble victorie,
And endlesse happinesse of thine owne name
That promiseth the same;
That through thy prowesse, and victorious armes,
Thy country may be freed from forraine harmes,
And great Elisaes glorious name may ring
Through all the world, fill'd with thy wide alarmes,
Which some brave muse may sing
To ages following,
Upon the brydale day which is not long:

Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

From those high towers this noble lord issuing,
Like radiant Hesper,³⁷ when his golden hare
In th' ocean billows he hath bathed fayre,
Descended to the rivers open vewing,
With a great train ensuing.
Above the rest were goodly to bee seene
Two gentle Knights of lovely face and feature,
Beseeming well the bower of any queene,
With gifts of wit and ornaments of nature,
Fit for so goodly stature,
That like the Twins of Love³⁸ they seem'd in sight,
Which decke the bauldricke³⁹ of the heavens bright;
They two forth pacing to the rivers side,
Receiv'd those two faire Brides, their loves delight;
Which,⁴⁰ at th' appointed tyde, [241]
Each one did make his Bryde
Against their brydale day, which is not long:
Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song.

NOTES.

This poem was written and published towards the end of the year 1595. The word *prothalamium* is from Gr. *pro*, for, and *thalamos*, a bride-chamber, and would more properly be applied to a marriage-song than to "a spousall verse." Spenser had already written—earlier in the same year—the "Epithalamium" in honor of his own marriage. The singing of a hymeneal song in connection with the wedding festivities was a very ancient custom among the Greeks. Homer alludes to it in the "Iliad," XVIII, 493:

"And two fair populous towns were sculptur'd there;
In one were marriage pomp and revelry,
And brides, in gay procession, through the streets
With blazing torches from their chambers borne,
While frequent rose the hymeneal song."

See, also, Spenser's "Faerie Queene," I, xii, 38.

1. Titans. The word is used for Helios, the son of the Titans, Hyperion and Thea. Observe that the apostrophe, as the sign of the possessive case, is never used by Spenser.

glyster. Glisten, shine. From A.-S. *glisnian*, glow, or shine with a soft light.

"All that glisters is not gold."

—*Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice*, Act ii, sc. vii.

"Know one false step is ne'er retrieved . . .
Nor all that glisters gold."

—*Gray, On a Favourite Cat, etc.*

fayre. Fairly. An old form of the adverb, sanctioned by very old usage, but not current in Spenser's time.

2. princes court. Spenser had had experience of the many bitter disappointments which befall him who seeks the favor of royalty. In "Mother Hubbard's Tale" he complains in this wise:

"Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide:
To lose good dayes that might be better spent;
To wast long nights in pensive discontent; [242]
To speed today, to be put back tomorrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow;
To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;
To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeeres;
To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;
To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaire;
To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne;
To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne."

3. silver streaming Themmes. Sir John Denham's apostrophe to the Thames is well known:

"Oh, could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;

Strong without rage; without overflowing full."

—*Cooper's Hill*, 189.

And Pope praises the stream in still more extravagant terms:

"No seas so rich, so gay no banks appear,
No lake so gentle, and no spring so clear."

—*Windsor Forest*, 227.

See, also, Spenser's "Faerie Queene," IV, xi.

4. ruddy. Rooty.

5. Against. For, or in preparation for; to provide for. Compare Genesis xliii. 25: "And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon." And Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream," Act iii, sc. ii:

"I'll charm his eyes against she do appear."

6. Flood. This word was often used, as here, to denote simply a river. Pope addresses the river Thames:

"Thou, too, great father of the British floods!"

7. all loose untyde. Steevens says: "Brides formerly walked to church with their hair hanging loose behind."

8. entrayled. Twisted, interlaced.

9. flasket. A long, shallow basket. Not used here as the diminutive of *flask*. Hales says it is the name given by the fishermen of Cornwall to the vessel in which the fish are transferred from the seine to the "tuck-net."

10. cropt. Gathered, Dutch *krappen*, to cut off.

feateously. Neatly, skilfully. Compare Chaucer:

"And French she spake ful fayre and fetisly."

—*Canterbury Tales*, 124.

"A chambre had he in that hostelrie
Ful fetisly ydight with herbes sote."

—*Ibid.*, 3205.

11. on hye. In haste. Probably the same as *hie*, haste.

[243]

12. pallid. Pale.

13. primrose trew. Compare Milton's "Lycidas," 142:

"The rathe primrose that forsaken dies."

And Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale," Act iv, sc. iii;

"Pale primroses that die unmarried."

14. store. Abundance.

vermeil. Vermilion. Commonly used as a noun.

15. posies. "Posy originally meant verses presented with a nosegay or a bunch of flowers, and hence the term came to be applied to the flowers themselves."

16. With that. At the same time.

Swannes. "Paulus Jovius, who died in 1552, describing the Thames, says: 'This river abounds in swans, swimming in flocks; the sight of whom and their noise are vastly agreeable to the fleets that meet them in their course.'"—*Knight's Cyclopaedia of London*.

17. lee. Water, or river. See "Faerie Queene," V, ii, 19:

"His corps was carried downe along the lee,
Whose waters with his filthy bloud it stayned."

Also, *Ibid.*, IV, ii, 16:

"As when two warlike brigandines at sea,
With murdrous weapons arm'd to cruell fight,

Do meete together on the watry lea."

The word is of Celtic origin, and is very common as a river-name in England, Ireland, France, and other parts of Western Europe.

18. nor nothing near. In early English two negatives did not destroy each other, as now, but made the negation more emphatic.

19. Eftsoones. Soon after. From A.-S. *eft*, after, and *sona*, soon.

20. Somers-heat. The two ladies celebrated in this poem, it will be remembered, were Lady Elizabeth and Lady Katherine Somerset.

21. The Peneus river, the most important stream in Thessaly, forces its way through the Vale of Tempe, between Mounts Ossa and Olympus, into the sea.

22. loves couplement. Marriage.

23. heart-quelling Sonne. Cupid.

24. assoile. Free from, put off.

"Through long watch, and late daies weary toile,
She soundly slept, and carefull thoughts did quite assoile."

—*Faerie Queene*, III, i, 58.

25. bord. "Bed" and "board" are two associated terms, very frequently so used, which imply the performance of the two acts necessary for the maintenance of life—sleeping and eating. See Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors," Act v, sc. i: [244]

"In bed he slept not for my urging it,
At board he fed not for my urging it."

Also, "As You Like It," Act v, sc. iv:

"Wedding is great Juno's crown—
O blessed bond of board and bed!"

26. redoubled. Repeated.

undersong. Refrain, burden.

27. neighbour. See note [10](#), on Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night."

28. shend. Outshine, shame, disgrace. From A.-S. *scendan*.

29. my most kyndly nurse. Although born in London, the poet was "descended from the ancient and honourable family of Spencer, of Althorpe in Northamptonshire."

30. "When the order of the Knights Templar was suppressed in Edward the Second's reign, their London estate on the bank of the Thames was given over to the Knights of St. John; by these it was leased to the students of the Common Law, who, not finding a home at Cambridge or Oxford, were at that time in want of a habitation."—*Hales*.

31. stately place. This stood in the gardens where the Outer Temple should have been. In 1580 it was occupied by the Earl of Leicester, and here Spenser was for a time entertained, as he asserts in the following line. The great lord whom he mentions was Leicester.

32. "The want of whom I feel too well in my present friendless condition."

33. fits not well. It is not proper.

34. nobler peer. The Earl of Essex.

35. Macaulay says of Lord Essex's expedition against Spain, in 1596, that it was "the most brilliant military exploit that was achieved on the Continent by English arms during the long interval which elapsed between the battle of Agincourt and that of Blenheim."

36. Hercules two Pillors. The rocky capes on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar. It was said that Hercules erected them to mark the western limit of his wanderings.

37. Hesper. Hesperus was the evening star, also sometimes regarded as the morning star, and hence called by Homer the bringer of light. See note on Lucifer, page [80](#) and page [189](#).

38. Twins of Iove. Castor and Pollux. Two heroic brothers who as a reward of their devotion to each other were placed among the stars in the constellation Gemini. [245]

39. bauldricke. Belt, girdle, or sash. The "bauldricke of the heavens" is the zodiac.

40. Which. In early English this pronoun was very commonly used instead of *who* when referring to persons.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

EDMUND SPENSER was born in London about the year 1552. He was educated at Merchant Taylor's school, and in 1569 went to Cambridge University, where he entered Pembroke Hall as a sizar. In the same year his first poetical performances—translations from Petrarch and Du Bellay—were published in a miscellaneous collection without the name of the author. At the University he was zealously devoted to the study of Latin and Greek literature, and there he made the acquaintance of several students who afterwards became men of note. In 1579 he visited Sir Philip Sidney at Penshurst, with whom he afterwards spent some time in London at the house of Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester. In 1580 was published, but without his name, his first considerable poem, "The Shepherds Calendar"; and in the autumn of the same year he went to Ireland as secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton, the new Lord Lieutenant. With the exception of a few brief visits made to England, the remainder of his life was spent partly in Dublin and partly at Kilcolman Castle on a grant of forfeited land in the county of Cork. Between 1580 and 1589 he wrote the first three books of "The Faerie Queene," and in 1590 they were published in London, through the influence of Sir Walter Raleigh, who had recently visited the poet in Ireland. In the summer of 1594 he married a lady named Elizabeth, probably the daughter of some English settler in Ireland; and in the following year he carried to London and published the second three books of "The Faerie Queene." At about the same time were published his "Colin Clout's Come Home Again," and his "Amoretti Sonnets," and an "Epithalamium" relating to his courtship and marriage. Returning to Ireland, he resumed his labor upon the half-completed "Faerie Queene," but it was rudely interrupted by the breaking out of an insurrection among the Irish. In 1598 Spenser's house was sacked and burned by the rebels, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he and his family escaped with their lives. Indeed, it is stated, on the authority of Ben Jonson, that one little child perished in the flames. Spenser returned to London in poverty and great distress, and on the 16th of January, 1599, he died in King Street, Westminster. He was buried in the Abbey. [246]

Spenser has been very appropriately named "the poets' poet." "For," says Leigh Hunt, "he has had more idolatry and imitation from his brethren than all the rest put together. The old undramatic poets, Drayton, Browne, Drummond, and Giles and Phineas Fletcher, were as full of him as the dramatic were of Shakespeare. Milton studied and used him, calling him 'sage and serious Spenser'; and adding that he 'dared be known to think him a better teacher than Scotus and Aquinas.' Cowley said he became a poet by reading him. Dryden claimed him for a master. Pope said he read him with as much pleasure when he was old as when he was young. Collins and Gray loved him. Thomson, Shenstone, and a host of inferior writers expressly imitated him. Burns, Byron, Shelley, and Keats made use of his stanza. Coleridge eulogized him."

Hazlitt says, "Of all the poets, Spenser is the most poetical." And Taine declares that no modern is more like Homer than he.

With reference to the peculiar forms of language—comparatively obsolete even when "The Faerie Queene" was composed—which are so marked a characteristic of Spenser's poetry, Hales says: "The subject he chose for his great work drew him into the midst of the old times of chivalry, and the literature that belonged to them. With such a subject the older forms of the language seemed to consort better. To him, too, perhaps, as to Virgil, the older words and word-forms seemed to give elevation and dignity. Moreover, an older dialect was probably to some extent his vernacular, as he had probably passed his youth in Lancashire. Lastly, the only great poet who had preceded him, his great model, the Tityrus of whom he 'his songs did here,' was Chaucer. To him Chaucer's language may have seemed the one language of English poetry."

REFERENCES: Warton's *History of English Poetry*; Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*; Craik's *Spenser and his Poetry*; Morley's *English Writers*.

Thomas Wyatt.

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A LOVE SONG.

THE LOVER COMPLAINETH OF THE UNKINDNESS OF HIS LOVE.

My lute, awake! perform the last
Labor that thou and I shall waste;
And end that I have now begun:
And when this song is sung and past,
My lute! be still, for I have done.

As to be heard where ear is none;
As lead to grave in marble stone,
My song may pierce her heart as soon;
Should we then sing, or sigh, or moan?

No, no, my lute! for I have done.

The rock doth not so cruelly,
Repulse the waves continually,
As she my suit and affection:
So that I am past remedy;
Whereby my lute and I have done.

Proud of the spoil that thou hast got
Of simple hearts thorough Love's shot,
By whom, unkind, thou hast them won;
Think not he hath his bow forgot,
Although my lute and I have done.

Vengeance shall fall on thy disdain,
That makest but game of earnest pain;
Trow not alone under the sun
Unquit to cause thy lovers plain,
Although my lute and I have done.

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May chance thee lie withered and old
In winter nights, that are so cold,
Plaining in vain unto the moon;
Thy wishes then dare not be told:
Care then who list, for I have done.

And then may chance thee to repent
The time that thou hast lost and spent,
To cause thy lovers sigh and swoon:
Then shalt thou know beauty but lent,
And wish and want, as I have done.

Now cease, my lute! This is the last
Labor that thou and I shall waste;
And ended is that we begun:
Now is thy song both sung and past;
My lute, be still, for I have done.

THE COURTIER'S LIFE.

In court to serve, decked with fresh array,
Of sugared meats feeling the sweet repast;
The life in banquets and sundry kinds of play,
Amid the press of worldly looks to waste:
Hath with it joined oft times such bitter taste,
That whoso joyes such kind of life to hold,
In prison joyes, fettered with chains of gold.

The Earl of Surrey.

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FROM THE FOURTH BOOK OF VIRGIL'S "ÆNEID."

—At the threshold of her chamber door
The Carthage lords did on the Queen attend:
The trampling steed, with gold and purple trapped,
Chewing the foaming bit there fiercely stood.
Then issued she, awaited with great train,
Clad in a cloak of Tyre embroidered rich.
Her quiver hung behind her back, her tress
Knotted in gold, her purple vesture eke
Buttoned with gold. The Trojans of her train
Before her go, with gladsome Iulus.
Æneas eke, the goodliest of the rout,
Makes one of them, and joineth close the throng.
Like when Apollo leaveth Lycia,
His wint'ring place, and Xanthus, stood likewise,

To visit Delos his mother's mansion,
Repairing eft and furnishing her quire.
The Candians and the folk of Driopes,
With painted Agathyrssi shout and cry,
Environing the altars round about,
When that he walks upon Mount Cynthus' top,
His sparkled tress repressed with garlands soft
Of tender leaves, and trussed up in gold,
His quiver and darts clattering behind his back—
So fresh and lusty did Æneas seem.
But to the hills and wild holts when they came
From the rock's top the driven savage rose.
So, from the hills above on the other side,
Through the wide lawns they gan to take their course.
The harts likewise, in troops taking their flight,
Raising the dust, the mountain-fast forsake.
The child Iulus, blithe of his swift steed
Amids the plain, now pricks by them, by these;
And to the encounter wisheth oft, in mind,
The foaming boar instead of fearful beasts,
Or lion brown, might from the hill descend.

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NOTE.

This short extract is given as a sample of the first blank verse written in the English language.
The spelling has been modernized.

A SONNET.

DESCRIPTION AND PRAISE OF HIS LOVE GERALDINE.

From Tuscan' came my lady's worthy race;
Fair Florence was some time their ancient seat;
The western isle, whose pleasant shore doth face
Wild Camber's cliffs, did give her lively heat:
Fostered she was with milk of Irish breast;
Her sire an earl; her dame of princes' blood:
From tender years, in Britain she doth rest
With king's child, where she tasteth costly food.
Hunsdon did first present her to my een:
Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight:
Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine:
And Windsor, alas, doth chase me from her sight.
Her beauty of kind, her virtues from above;
Happy is he that can obtain her love.

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ON THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS WYATT.

Wyatt resteth here that quick could never rest:
Whose heavenly gifts increased by disdain,
And virtue sank the deeper in his breast;
Such profit he by envy could obtain.

A head where wisdom mysteries did frame,
Whose hammers beat still in that lively brain,
As on a stithe where that some work of fame
Was daily wrought, to turn to Britain's gain.

A hand that taught what might be said in rhyme;
That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit;
A mark, the which (unperfected for time)
Some may approach, but never none shall hit.

An eye whose judgment none effect could blind,
Friends to allure and foes to reconcile,
Whose piercing look did represent a mind
With virtue fraught reposed void of guile.

A heart where dread was never so imprest

To hide the thought that might the truth advance;
In neither fortune lost, nor yet repress,
To swell in wealth, or yield unto mischance.

A valiant corpse, where force and beauty met,
Happy alas, too happy but for foes,
Lived, and ran the race that nature set
Of manhood's shape, when she the mould did lose.

Thus for our guilt this jewel have we lost;
The earth his bones, the heavens possess his ghost.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

WYATT and SURREY are usually named together as the most illustrious poets of the earlier part of the sixteenth century. J. Churton Collins calls them, not inaptly, "the Dioscuri of the Dawn." "They inaugurated," he says, "that important period in our literature known as the Era of Italian Influence, or that of the Company of Courtly Makers—the period which immediately preceded and ushered in the age of Spenser and Shakespeare." It is to them that we are indebted for the sonnet: they were indeed the founders of our lyrical poetry. Jonson, Herrick, Waller, Cowley, and Suckling found inspiration in their ditties. Surrey's translation of the second and fourth books of Virgil's "Æneid" (1552) is the earliest specimen of blank verse in our language.

THOMAS WYATT was born at Allington Castle in 1503, and in his youth was a prominent and very popular member of the court of Henry VIII. He was knighted in 1536, and in 1537 became high sheriff of Kent. In April of the same year he was sent as ambassador to Spain, and in 1539-40 was with the court of Charles V. in the Low Countries. Returning to England he lived for the next two years in retirement, and died at Sherborne in 1542.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY, was born about 1517, and, like his friend Wyatt, passed his youth at the court of Henry VIII. He served in France in 1540, and again in 1544-46. After taking Boulogne, he became its governor; but, on account of defeat soon afterwards at St. Etienne, he was recalled to England by Henry VIII. His comments upon this action of the king caused his arrest and imprisonment in the Tower. A charge of high treason was preferred against him for having quartered the royal arms with his own, and he was beheaded on Tower Hill, January 21, 1547.

Ballads.

WALY, WALY.

O waly,¹ waly, up the bank,
O waly, waly, down the brae,²
And waly, waly, yon burn-side,³
Where I and my love were wont to gae!
I lean'd my back unto an aik,
I thocht it was a trustie tree,
But first it bow'd and syne⁴ it brak',—
Sae my true love did lichtlie⁵ me.

O waly, waly, but love be bonnie
A little time while it is new!
But when it's auld it waxeth cauld,
And fadeth awa' like the morning dew.
O wherefore should I busk⁶ my heid,
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
For my true love has me forsook,
And says he'll never lo'e me mair.

Noo Arthur's Seat⁷ sall be my bed,
The sheets sall ne'er be press'd by me;
Saint Anton's well sall be my drink;
Since my true love's forsaken me.

Martinmas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaves off the tree?
O gentle death, when wilt thou come?
For of my life I am wearie.

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'Tis not the frost that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie,
'Tis not sic cauld that makes me cry;
But my love's heart grown cauld to me.
When we cam' in by Glasgow toun,
We were a comely sicht to see;
My love was clad in the black velvet,
And I mysel' in cramasie.

But had I wist before I kiss'd
That love had been so ill to win,
I'd lock'd my heart in a case o' goud,
And pinn'd it wi' a siller pin.
Oh, oh! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee;
An' I mysel' were dead and gane,
And the green grass growing over me!

NOTES.

"This is a very ancient song," says Bishop Percy, "but we can only give it from a modern copy." It is often printed as part of a ballad relating to the history of Lord James Douglas and of the Laird of Blackwood. The lament is that of a beautiful lady whose fortunes were connected with those of Lord Douglas.

1. waly. An interjection denoting grief.

2. brae. Hillside.

3. burn-side. Brook-side.

4. syne. Then.

5. lichtlie. Slight, undervalue.

6. busk. Dress.

7. Arthur's Seat. A hill near Edinburgh, at the foot of which is St. Anthony's well.

SIR PATRICK SPENS.

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A SCOTTISH BALLAD.

[This ballad is a confused echo of the Scotch expedition which should have brought the Maid of Norway to Scotland about 1285.]

The king sits in Dunfermline town,
Drinking the blude-red wine;
"O whare will I get a skeely skipper,
To sail this new ship of mine!"

O up and spake an eldern knight,
Sat at the king's right knee,—
"Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor,
That ever sail'd the sea."

Our king has written a braid letter,
And seal'd it with his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
Was walking on the strand.

"To Noroway, to Noroway,
To Noroway o'er the faem;
The king's daughter of Noroway,
'Tis thou maun bring her hame."

The first word that Sir Patrick read,
Sae loud, loud laugh'd he;
The neist word that Sir Patrick read,

The tear blinded his e'e.

"O wha is this has done this deed,
And tauld the king o' me,
To send us out, at this time of the year,
To sail upon the sea?

"Be it wind, be it weet, be it hail, be it sleet,
Our ship must sail the faem;
The king's daughter of Noroway,
"Tis we must fetch her hame."

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They hoysed their sails on Monenday morn,
Wi' a' the speed they may;
They hae landed in Noroway,
Upon a Wodensday.

They hadna been a week, a week,
In Noroway, but twae,
When that the lords o' Noroway
Began aloud to say,—

"Ye Scottishmen spend a' our king's goud,
And a' our queenis fee."
"Ye lie, ye lie, ye liars loud!
Fu' loud I hear ye lie.

"For I brought as much white monie,
As gane my men and me,
And I brought a half-fou o' gude red goud,
Out o'er the sea wi' me.

"Make ready, make ready, my merrymen a'!
Our gude ship sails the morn."
"Now, ever alake, my master dear,
I fear a deadly storm!

"I saw the new moon, late yestreen,
Wi' the auld moon in her arm;
And, if we gang to sea, master,
I fear we'll come to harm."

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When the lift grew dark, and the wind blew loud,
And gurly grew the sea.

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The ankers brak, and the topmasts lap,
It was sic a deadly storm;
And the waves cam o'er the broken ship,
Till a' her sides were torn.

"O where will I get a gude sailor,
To take my helm in hand,
Till I get up to the tall top-mast,
To see if I can spy land?"

"O here am I, a sailor gude,
To take the helm in hand,
Till you go up to the tall top-mast;
But I fear you'll ne'er spy land."

He hadna gane a step, a step,
A step but barely ane,
When a bout flew out of our goodly ship,
And the salt sea it came in.

"Gae, fetch a web o' the silken claith,
Another o' the twine,
And wap them into our ship's side,
And let na the sea come in."

They fetched a web o' the silken claith,
Another of the twine,
And wapped them round that gude ship's side,
But still the sea came in.

O laith, laith, were our gude Scots lords
 To weet their cork-heel'd shoon!
 But lang or a' the play was play'd,
 They wat their hats aboon.

And mony was the feather-bed,
 That flattered on the faem;
 And mony was the gude lord's son,
 That never mair cam hame.

The ladyes wrang their fingers white,
 The maidens tore their hair,
 A' for the sake of their true loves;
 For them they'll see na mair.

O lang, lang, may the ladyes sit,
 Wi' their fans into their hand,
 Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
 Come sailing to the strand!

And lang, lang, may the maidens sit,
 Wi' their goud kaims in their hair,
 A' waiting for their ain dear loves!
 For them they'll see na mair.

O forty miles off Aberdeen,
 'Tis fifty fathoms deep,
 And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,
 Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

NOTES AND GLOSSARY.

This ballad in its original form is a very old one, and was probably at first a metrical story of the Scotch expedition which was sent to bring the Maid of Norway to Scotland (about the year 1285). In its sixteenth-century form it shows many changes and additions, some of which are not in harmony with the original tale. The *cork-heel'd shoon*, for example, were unknown until some hundreds of years later than the occurrence of the events here narrated. [259]

skeely, skilful.

skipper, captain.

braid, open, not private.

goud, gold.

fee (see note 13, page 105).

gane, suffice.

half-fou, a quart, dry measure.

alake, alack.

lift, sky. (Still used in Scotland.)

shoon, shoes.

THE BAILIFF'S DAUGHTER OF ISLINGTON.

There was a youthe, and a well-beloved youthe,
 And he was a squires son;
 He loved the bayliffes daughter deare,
 That lived in Islington.

Yet she was coye, and would not believe
 That he did love her soe,
 Noe nor at any time would she
 Any countenance to him showe.

But when his friendes did understand
 His fond and foolish minde,
 They sent him up to faire London,
 An apprentice for to binde.

And when he had been seven long yeares,
 And never his love could see,—
 "Many a teare have I shed for her sake,
 When she little thought of mee."

Then all the maids of Islington
 Went forth to sport and playe,
 All but the bayliffes daughter deare;
 She secretly stole awaye.

She pulled off her gowne of greene,

And put on ragged attire,
And to faire London she would go
Her true love to enquire.

And as she went along the high road,
The weather being hot and drye,
She sat her downe upon a green bank,
And her true love came riding bye.

She started up, with a colour soe redd,
Catching hold of his bridle-reine;
"One penny, one penny, kind sir," she sayd,
"Will ease me of much paine."

"Before I give you one penny, sweet-heart,
Praye tell me where you were borne."
"At Islington, kind sir," sayd shee,
"Where I have had many a scorne."

"I prythee, sweet-heart, then tell to mee,
O tell me, whether you knowe
The bayliffes daughter of Islington."
"She is dead, sir, long agoe."

"If she be dead, then take my horse,
My saddle and bridle also;
For I will into some farr countrye,
Where noe man shall me knowe."

"O staye, O staye, thou goodlye youthe,
She standeth by thy side;
She is here alive, she is not dead,
And readye to be thy bride."

"O farewell griefe, and welcome joye,
Ten thousand times therefore;
For nowe I have founde mine owne true love,
Whom I thought I should never see more."

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ROBIN HOOD AND THE WIDOW'S THREE SONS.

There are twelve months in all the year,
As I hear many say,
But the merriest month in all the year
Is the merry month of May.

Now Robin Hood is to Nottingham gone,
With a link a down, and a day,
And there he met a silly old woman,
Was weeping on the way.

"What news? what news? thou silly old woman,
What news hast thou for me?"
Said she, "There's my three sons in Nottingham town
To-day condemned to die."

"O, have they parishes burnt?" he said,
"Or have they ministers slain?
Or have they robbed any virgin?
Or other men's wives have ta'en?"

"They have no parishes burnt, good sir,
Nor yet have ministers slain,
Nor have they robbed any virgin,
Nor other men's wives have ta'en."

"O, what have they done?" said Robin Hood,
"I pray thee tell to me."
"It's for slaying of the king's fallow deer,
Bearing their long bows with thee."

"Dost thou not mind, old woman," he said,
"How thou madest me sup and dine?
By the truth of my body," quoth bold Robin Hood,

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"You could not tell it in better time."

Now Robin Hood is to Nottingham gone,
With a link a down, and a day,
And there he met with a silly old palmer,
Was walking along the highway.

"What news? what news? thou silly old man,
What news, I do thee pray?"
Said he, "Three squires in Nottingham town
Are condemn'd to die this day."

"Come change thy apparel with me, old man,
Come change thy apparel for mine;
Here is ten shillings in good silver,
Go drink it in beer or wine."

"O, thine apparel is good," he said,
"And mine is ragged and torn;
Wherever you go, wherever you ride,
Laugh not an old man to scorn."

"Come change thy apparel with me, old churl,
Come change thy apparel with mine;
Here is a piece of good broad gold,
Go feast thy brethren with wine."

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Then he put on the old man's hat,
It stood full high on the crown:
"The first bold bargain that I come at,
It shall make thee come down."

Then he put on the old man's cloak,
Was patch'd black, blue, and red;
He thought it no shame, all the day long,
To wear the bags of bread.

Then he put on the old man's breeks,
Was patch'd from leg to side:
"By the truth of my body," bold Robin can say,
"This man loved little pride."

Then he put on the old man's hose,
Were patch'd from knee to wrist:
"By the truth of my body," said bold Robin Hood,
"I'd laugh if I had any list."

Then he put on the old man's shoes,
Were patch'd both beneath and aboon;
Then Robin Hood swore a solemn oath,
"It's good habit that makes a man."

Now Robin Hood is to Nottingham gone,
With a link a down and a down,
And there he met with the proud sheriff,
Was walking along the town.

"Save you, save you, sheriff!" he said;
"Now heaven you save and see!
And what will you give to a silly old man
To-day will your hangman be?"

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"Some suits, some suits," the sheriff he said,
"Some suits I'll give to thee;
Some suits, some suits, and pence thirteen,
To-day's a hangman's fee."

Then Robin he turns him round about,
And jumps from stock to stone:
"By the truth of my body," the sheriff he said,
"That's well jumpt, thou nimble old man."

"I was ne'er a hangman in all my life,
Nor yet intends to trade;
But curst be he," said bold Robin,
"That first a hangman was made!"

"I've a bag for meal, and a bag for malt,
And a bag for barley and corn;
And a bag for bread, and a bag for beef,
And a bag for my little small horn.

"I have a horn in my pockèt,
I got it from Robin Hood,
And still when I set it to my mouth,
For thee it blows little good."

"O, wind thy horn, thou proud fellòw!
Of thee I have no doubt.
I wish that thou give such a blast,
Till both thy eyes fall out."

The first loud blast that he did blow,
He blew both loud and shrill;
A hundred and fifty of Robin Hood's men
Came riding over the hill.

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The next loud blast that he did give,
He blew both loud and amain,
And quickly sixty of Robin Hood's men
Came shining over the plain.

"O, who are these," the sheriff he said,
"Come tripping over the lee?"
"They're my attendants," brave Robin did say;
"They'll pay a visit to thee."

They took the gallows from the slack,
They set it in the glen,
They hanged the proud sheriff on that,
Released their own three men.

NOTES.

Among the earliest and most popular of English ballads are those relating to Robin Hood. This noted, half-mythical outlaw was the impersonation of popular rights as they were understood by Englishmen of the lower orders in the days of the Plantagenets. Hence the memory of him and his reputed deeds was preserved in the songs of the people. "It is he," says an old historian, "whom the common people love so dearly to celebrate in games and comedies, and whose history, sung by fiddlers, interests them more than any other." Even so late as the reign of Edward VI., "Robyn Hood's Daye" was very generally observed in the country parishes as a day of feasting and amusement.

The ballads were originally the production of wandering minstrels or gleemen, a class of men very popular in the Middle Ages, who followed the profession of poetry and music. These rude poets were held in the highest esteem and veneration by the people among whom they lived; they were received and welcomed wherever they went, and even kings delighted to honor them. In short, their art was supposed, by the Anglo-Saxons, to be of divine origin, having been invented by Odin, the great All-Father, and perfected by Bragi, the musician of the gods. As, however, civilization advanced and Christianity became established, this admiration for the minstrel and his art became modified in a degree. He was no longer regarded as a poet, but only as a singer, a sweet musician. Poetry was cultivated by men of leisure and refinement; but lyrical ballads remained the peculiar inheritance of the minstrel. For a long time after the Norman conquest, minstrels continued to gain their livelihood by singing in the houses of the great, and at festive occasions, which were never considered complete unless graced by the presence of these honored descendants of Bragi; nor did they cease to compose and sing their inimitable pieces until near the close of Elizabeth's reign. The greater number of the ballads now in existence were probably produced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and the best of them originated in the "North Country," or the border region between England and Scotland. They were not at first reduced to writing, but were handed down from one generation to another merely by oral tradition. As regards their metre and versification, the ballads were commonly composed of iambic hexameters or heptameters rhyming in couplets. These couplets are readily broken into stanzas of four lines, in which form they are usually printed.

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The first collection of English ballads ever published was probably that of John Dryden, in 1684. The collection was included in a volume entitled *Miscellany Poems*. In 1723 a work called *A Collection of Old Ballads* was published anonymously. In 1724 Allan Ramsay issued *The Evergreen*, "being a collection of Scots Poems wrote by the Ingenious before 1600." This work included many popular songs and ballads. It was reprinted in 1875.

We owe the preservation of a large number of the most interesting and beautiful ballads to Bishop Percy, who, in 1765, published the first really valuable collection of such works in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Previous to that time most of these songs had existed only in

manuscript, or, if printed at all, in the cheapest style of typography, on sheets designed for circulation among the poor. Bishop Percy's work first called the attention of scholars to the value and beauty of these neglected and half-forgotten relics, and did much to bring about that revolution in literature which took place in the latter part of the last century. And it is to these old ballads, thus rescued from oblivion, that we owe very many of the noblest literary productions of the present century. We know that they were the immediate inspiration of Sir Walter Scott, and that they exerted a wonderful influence in modifying and directing the taste and style of many other distinguished writers.

The Fifteenth Century.

[267]

"When we pass from Chaucer's age, we have to overleap nearly a hundred and eighty years before we alight upon a period presenting anything like an adequate show of literary continuation. A few smaller names are all that can be cited as poetical representatives of this sterile interval in the literary history of England: whatever of Chaucer's genius still lingered in the island seeming to have travelled northward and taken refuge in a series of Scotch poets, excelling any of their English contemporaries. We are driven to suppose that there was something in the social circumstances of England during the long period in question which prevented such talent as there was from assuming the particular form of literature. Fully to make out what this 'something' was may baffle us; but, when we remember that this was the period of the Civil Wars of the Roses, we have reason to believe that the dearth of pure literature may have been owing, in part, to the engrossing nature of the practical questions which then disturbed English society. . . . Accordingly, though printing was introduced during this period, and thus Englishmen had greater temptations to write, what they did write was almost exclusively plain grave prose, intended for practical or polemical occasions, and making no figure in a historical retrospect."—DAVID MASSON.

"Must we quote all these good people who have nothing to say? . . . dozens of translators, importing the poverties of French poetry, rhyming chroniclers, most commonplace of men; spinners and spinsters of didactic poems who pile up verses on the training of falcons, on heraldry, on chemistry, . . . invent the same dream over again for the hundredth time, and get themselves taught universal history by the goddess Sapience. . . . It is the scholastic phase of poetry."—TAINÉ.

Poets of the Fifteenth Century.

[268]

John Lydgate (1370-1440). See biographical note, page [283](#).

Thomas Occleve (1365-1450). "De Regimine Principum"; short poems.

Robert Henryson (1425-1480). See biographical note, page [283](#).

William Dunbar (1450-1513). See biographical note, page [283](#).

Gawain Douglas (1474-1522). See biographical note, page [284](#).

Stephen Hawes (-1530), "The Pastime of Pleasure"; "Graunde Amour and la Belle Pucel."

John Skelton (1460-1529). See biographical note, page [272](#).

John Skelton.

[269]

TO MAYSTRESS MARGARET HUSSEY.

Mirry Margaret,
As mydsomer flowre;
Jentill as fawcoun
Or hawke of the towre:
With solace and gladnes,
Moche mirthe and no madness,
All good and no badness,
So joyously,
So maydenly,
So womanly,
Her demenyng

In every thyng,
Far, far passyng
That I can endyght,
Or suffyce to wryghte,
Of mirry Margaret,
As mydsomer flowre,
Jentyll as fawcoun
Or hawke of the towre:
As pacient and as styll,
And as full of good wyll
As faire Isaphill;
Colyaunder,
Swete pomaunder,
Goode Cassaunder;
Stedfast of thought,
Wele made, wele wrought;
Far may be sought,
Erst that ye can fynde
So corteise, so kynde,
As mirry Margaret,
This mydsomer floure,
Jentyll as fawcoun
Or hawke of the towre.

[270]

CARDINAL WOLSEY.

[FROM "WHY COME YE NOT TO COURT?"]

He is set so hye
In his ierarchie
Of frantike frenesy,
And folish fantasy,
That in chambre of stars¹
Al maters ther he mars,
Clapping his rod on the borde,
No man dare speake a worde:
For he hath al the saying
Without any renaying.
He rolleth in his Recordes;
He saith, "How say ye, my lordes?
Is not my reason good?"
Good!—even good—*Robin Hood!*—
Borne up on every syde
With pompe and with pryde,
With trump up alleluya,²
For dame Philargyria³
Hath so his hart in hold.
Adew, Philosophia!
Adew, Theologia!
Welcome, dame Simonia,⁴
With dame Castamergia,⁵
To drink and for to eate,
Sweete ipocras⁶ and sweete meate.
To keep his fleshe chaste
In Lente, for his repaste
He eateth capons stewed,
Fesaunt and partriche mewed—
Spareth neither mayd ne wife—
This is a postel's⁷ life!

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NOTES.

- 1. chambre of stars.** The Star Chamber, a court of civil and criminal jurisdiction for the punishment of offences for which the law made no provision. It was so called because the ceiling of the room in which it was held was decorated with gilt stars.
- 2. alleluya.** In allusion to the pomp with which Wolsey celebrated divine service.
- 3. Philargyria.** Love of money; covetousness.
- 4. Simonia.** Simony; buying and selling church livings.

5. **Castamergia.** Gluttony. Greek *kastrimargia*. A not uncommon word among the monks of the Middle Ages, one of whose prayers was, "From the spirit of castrimargia, O Lord, deliver us!"

6. **ipocras.** Hippocras, or spiced wine, a drink formerly very popular in England. It was made by mixing Canary and Lisbon wines, in equal parts, with various kinds of sweet spices, and allowing the whole to stand for a few days, after which the wine was poured off and sweetened with sugar.

7. **postel.** Apostle—here ironically applied to Wolsey.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

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JOHN SKELTON was born about the year 1460. In his earlier life he was the friend of Caxton, the first English printer, and of Percy, Earl of Northumberland. He was poet-laureate under Henry VII., and tutor of the young prince (afterwards Henry VIII.), and was described by Erasmus as *litterarum Anglicarum lumen et decus*. Later in life he was promoted to the rectory of Diss in Norfolk, but was severely censured by his bishop for his buffooneries in the pulpit and his satirical ballads against the mendicants. He finally became a hanger-on about the court of Henry VIII.; and, daring to write a rhyming libel on Cardinal Wolsey, was driven to take refuge in the sanctuary of Westminster Abbey. There he was kindly entertained and protected by Abbot Islip until his death in 1529. Some of his poems were printed in 1512, and others in 1568.

Taine calls Skelton "a virulent pamphleteer, who jumbles together French, English, Latin phrases, with slang and fashionable words, invented words, intermingled with short rhymes. Style, metre, rhyme, language, art of every kind, at an end; beneath the vain parade of official style there is only a heap of rubbish. Yet, as he says,

'Though my rhyme be ragged,
Tatter'd and jagged,
Rudely rain-beaten,
Rusty, moth-eaten,
Yf ye take welle therewith,
It hath in it some pithe.'

As to the coarseness which characterizes his verses, it cannot be explained by saying that it is a reflection of the manners of the times in which he lived. For, as Warton says, Skelton "would have been a writer without decorum at any period." Yet, notwithstanding his faults, he is deserving of our notice, if for nothing else, on account of the complete originality of his style—a style unknown and unattempted by any former writer. His bold departure from the accepted rules of versification showed to those who followed him some of the possibilities in English poetical composition, and helped to open the way to the great outburst of song which followed.

Selections from Four Minor Poets.

[273]

A VISIT TO LONDON.

By JOHN LYDGATE.

Then unto London I dyd me hye,
Of all the land it beareth the pryse:
"Hot pescodes," one began to crye,
"Strabery rype, and cheryes in the ryse";
One bade me come nere and by some spyce,
Peper and safforne they gan me bede,
But for lack of mony I myght not spede.

Then to the Chepe I began me drawne,
Where mutch people I saw for to stand;
One ofred me velvet, sylke, and lawne,
An other he taketh me by the hande,
"Here is Parys thred, the fynest in the land";
I never was used to such thyngs indede,
And wanting mony, I might not spede.

Then went I forth by London stone,
Th[o]roughout all Canwyke streete;
Drapers mutch cloth me offred anone;
Then comes me one, cryed, "Hot shepes feete";
One cryde "makerell," "ryshes grene," an other gan greetee;
One bad me by a hood to cover my head,
But for want of mony I myght not be sped.

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Then I hyed me into Est-Chepe;
One cryes rybbs of befe, and many a pye:
Pewter pottes they clattered on a heape;
There was harpe, pype, and mynstralsye.
"Yea, by cock! nay, by cock!" some began crye;
Some songe of Jenken and Julyan for there mede;
But for lack of mony I myght not spede.

Then into Corn-Hyll anon I yode,
Where was mutch stolen gere amonge;
I saw where honge myne owne hoode,
That I had lost amonge the thronge;
To by my own hood I thought it wronge,
I knew it well as I dyd my crede,
But for lack of mony I could not spede.

The taverner tooke me by the sleve,
"Sir," sayth he, "wyll you our wyne assay"?
I answered, "That can not mutch me greve:
A peny can do no more than it may";
I drank a pynt, and for it did paye;
Yet sone a-hungerd from thence I yede,
And wantyng mony, I cold not spede.

Then hyed I me to Belyngsgate;
And one cryed, "Hoo! go we hence!"
I prayd a barge-man, for God's sake,
That he wold spare me my expence.
"Thou scapst not here," quod he, "under two pence;
I lyst not yet bestow my almes dede."
Thus, lackyng mony, I could not spede.

Then I convayd me into Kent;
For of the law wold I meddle no more;
Because no man to me tooke entent,
I dyght me to do as I dyd before.
Now Jesus, that in Bethlem was bore,
Save London, and send trew lawyers there mede!
For who so wantes mony with them shall not spede.

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—From "London Lickpenny."

GLOSSARY.

anone, at once.

assay, try.

bede, offer.

Chepe, the market. Cheapside, still a famous street in London.

dyght, disposed.

gere, apparel.

greete, cry out.

hyed, hurried.

lyst, wish.

mede, reward, wages.

pescodes, pease.

ryse, bough or twig.

ryshes, rushes.

spede, proceed, do.

yede, went.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

Rightwisenes chastised al robbours,
By egall balaunce of execucion,
Fraud, falsé mede, put backward fro jurours,
True promes holde, made no delacioun;
Forswearing shamed durst enter in no toun,
Nor lesingmongers, because Attemperaunce
Had in that world wholly the governaunce.

That golden world could lovë God and drede,
All the seven dedes of mercy for to use,
The rich was ready to do almës dede,
Who asked harbour, men did him not refuse;
No man of malice would other tho accuse,
Defame his neighbour, because Attemperaunce
Had in that world wholly the governaunce.

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The true marchant by measure bought and sold,

Deceit was none in the artificer,
Making no balkes, the plough was truely hold,
Abacke stode Idlenes, farre from labourer,
Discrecion marcial at diner and supper,
Content with measure, because Attemperaunce
Had in that world wholly the governaunce.

Of wast in clothing was that time none excesse;
Men might the lord from his subjectës know;
A difference made twene povertie and richesse,
Twene a princesse and other statës lowe;
Of horned boastës no boast was tho blowe,
Nor counterfeit feining, because Attemperaunce
Had in that world wholly the governaunce.

This golden world long whylë dyd endure,
Was none allay in that metall sene,
Tyll Saturne ceased, by record of scripture,
Jupiter reygned, put out his father clene,
Chaunged obrison into silver shene,
Al up so downe, because Attemperaunce
Was set asyde, and loste her governaunce.

NOTE.

"The Falls of Princes," from which this is an extract, was printed in folio in 1558. Its complete title is, "The Tragedies gathered by Jhon Bochas of all such Princes as fell from theyr Estates through the Mutability of Fortune since the creation of Adam until his time; wherin may be seen what vices bring menne to destruccion, wyth notable warninges howe the like may be avoyded. Translated into English by John Lidgate, Monke of Burye."

THE GARMOND OF FAIR LADIES.

[277]

By ROBERT HENRYSON.

Wald my gud lady lufe me best,
And wirk eftir my will,
I suld ane Garmond gudliest
Gar mak hir body till.

Off hie honour suld be hir hud,
Upoun hir heid to weir,
Garneist with governance so gud,
Na demyng suld hir deir.

Hir sark suld be hir body nixt,
Of chestetie so quhyt,
With schame and dreid togidder mixt,
The same suld be perfyt.

Hir kirtill suld be of clene constance,
Lasit with lesum lufe,
The mailyheis of continuance
For nevir to remufe.

Hir gown suld be of gudliness
Weill ribband with renowne,
Purfillit with plesour in ilk place,
Furrit with fyne fassoun.

Hir belt suld be of benignitie,
About hir middill meit;
Hir mantill of humilitie,
To tholl bayth wind and weit.

Hir hat suld be of fair having
And her tepat of trewth,
Hir patelet of gude pansing,
Hir hals-ribbane of rewth.

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Hir slevis suld be of esperance,
To keip hir fra dispair;
Hir gluvis of the gud govirnance,

To hyd hir fyngearis fair.

Hir schone suld be of sickernes,
In syne that scho nocht slyd;
Hir hoiss of honestie, I ges,
I suld for hir provyde.

Wald scho put on this Garmond gay,
I durst sweir by my seill,
That scho woir nevir grene nor gray
That set hir half so weill.

GLOSSARY.

esperance, hope.

fassoun, manners.

garmond, garment, costume.

governance, discretion.

hals-ribbane, neck-ribbon.

hoiss, hose.

hud, hood.

kirtill, skirt.

lasit, fastened.

lesum, lawful.

lufe, love.

mailyheis, eyelet-holes.

pansing, thought.

patelet, ruffet.

quhyt, white.

rewth, pity.

sark, shirt, chemise.

scho, she.

schone, shoes.

seill, knowledge.

set, suited.

sickernes, security.

suld, should.

tepat, tippet.

tholl, withstand.

weit, rain.

A MAY MORNING.

[279]

By WILLIAM DUNBAR.

Quhen Merche wes with variand windis past
And Appryle had, with her silver schouris,
Tane leif at Nature with ane orient blast,
And lusty May, that muddir is of flouris,
Had maid the birdis to begyn thair houris
Amang the tendir odouris reid and quhyt,
Quhois armony to heir it wes delyt:

In bed at morrow, sleiping as I lay,
Me thoct Aurora, with hir cristall ene
In at the window lukit by the day,
And halsit me, with visage pail and grene;
On quhois hand a lark sang fro the splene,
Awalk, luvaris, out of your slomerung
Sé hou the lusty morrow dois up spring.

Me thoct fresche May befor my bed up stude,
In weid depaynt of mony diverss hew,
Sobir, benyng, and full of mansuetude
In brycht atteir of flouris forgit new
Hevinly of colour, quhyt, reid, broun and blew,
Balmit in dew, and gilt with Phebus bemys;
Quhyll all the house illumynit of her lemys.

Slugird, scho said, awalk annone for schame,
And in my honour sum thing thou go wryt;
The lark hes done the mirry day proclame,
To raise up luvaris with comfort and delyt;
Yit nocht inccessis thy curage to indyt,
Quhois hairt sum tyme hes glaid and blisfull bene,
Sangis to mak undir the levis grene.

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Then callit scho all flouris that grew on feild
Discirnyng all thair fassionis and effeiris
Upone the awfull Thrissil scho beheld
And saw him kept with a busche of speiris;
Considering him so able for the weiris
A radius croun of rubeis scho him gaif,
And said, In feild go furth and fend the laif:

And sen thou art a King, thou be discret;
 Herb without vertew thow hald nocht of sic pryce
 As herb of vertew and of odour sueit;
 And lat no nettill vyle, and full of vyce,
 Hir fallow to the gudly flour-de-lyce;
 Nor latt no wyld weid, full of churlicheness,
 Compair hir to the lilleis nobilness.

Nor hald non udir flour in sic denty
 As the fresche Rois, of cullour reid and quhyt:
 For gife thow dois, hurt is thyne honesty;
 Considring that no flour is so perfynt,
 So full of vertew, pleasans, and delyt,
 So full of blisful angeilik bewty,
 Imperiall birth, honour and dignité.

NOTE.

This is a selection from the long allegorical poem, "The Thistle and the Rose." The thistle represents Scotland, of which country that plant is the national emblem. The fleur-de-lis, or lily, represents France; and the rose, England. The poem was written in celebration of the marriage of James IV. of Scotland to the Princess Margaret of England, and the friendly relations thus established for a time between those two countries.

GLOSSARY.

[281]

denty , favor.	muddir , mother.
effeiris , affairs.	orient , eastern.
ene , eyes.	quhen , when.
fallow , betroth.	quhois , whose.
forgit , made, created.	quhyll , while.
gife , if.	rois , rose.
halsit , hailed.	sic , such.
houris , morning orisons.	speiris , spears.
laif , rest.	splene , heart.
lemys , rays.	thrissil , thistle.
lukit , looked.	udir , other.
mansuetude , gentleness.	weid , garments.
morrow , morning.	weiris , wars.

IN PRAISE OF HONOUR.

By GAWAIN DOUGLAS.

O hie honour, sweit heuinlie flour degest,
 Gem verteous, maist precious, gudliest.
 For hie renoun thow art guerdoun conding,
 Of worschip kend the glorious end and rest,
 But quhome in richt na worthie wicht may lest.
 Thy greit puissance may maist auance all thing,
 And puerall to mekill auail sone bring.
 I the require sen thow but peir art best,
 That efter this in thy hie blis we ring.

Of grace thy face in euerie place sa schynis,
 That sweit all spreit baith heid and feit inclynis,
 Thy gloir afoir for till imploir remeid.
 He docht richt nocht, quhilk out of thocht the tynis;
 Thy name but blame, and royal fame diuine is;
 Thow port at schort of our comfort and reid,
 Till bring all thing till glaiding efter deid,
 All wicht but sicht of thy greit nicht ay crynis,
 O schene I mene, nane may sustene thy feid.

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Hail rois maist chois till clois thy fois greit nicht,
 Hail stone quhilk schone vpon the throne of licht,
 Vertew, quhais trew sweit dew ourithrew al vice,
 Was ay ilk day gar say the way of licht;
 Amend, offend, and send our end ay richt.
 Thow stant, ordant as sanct, of grant maist wise,

Till be supplie, and the high gre of price.
Delite the tite me quite of site to dicht,
For I apply schortlie to thy deuisse.

—From "*The Palice of Honour*."

GLOSSARY.

afoir , before.	guerdoun , reward.
auance , advance.	ilk , any.
ay , ever, always.	mekill , much, mickle.
but , without.	peir , peer.
conding , condign, worthy.	poureall , the poor.
crynys , diminishes.	puissance , power.
deid , death.	quhilk , who, which.
degest , grave.	quhome , without whom.
dicht , relieve.	reid , advice.
docht , avails.	rois , king.
feid , hatred.	sanct , saint.
fois , time.	site , shame.
glaiding , happiness.	till , to.
gloir , glory.	tite , quickly.
grant , giving.	tynys , loses.
gre , degree.	wicht , person, wight.

FOUR POETS OF THIS CENTURY.

[283]

JOHN LYDGATE was born at the village of Lydgate, near Newmarket, about 1370. He was a Benedictine monk attached to the monastery of Bury St. Edmunds, and is remembered as the author of three poems, which, in their time, attracted much attention. These are "The Storie of Thebes," written in ten-syllable rhyming couplets, and founded upon the "Teseide" of Boccaccio; the "Troye Book," finished about 1420, and relating the story of the Trojan war as recounted by Guido di Colonna in his Latin prose history of Troy; and "The Falls of Princes," founded on a French version of Boccaccio's "De Casibus Virorum Illustrium." In 1433, Lydgate wrote a wearisome but somewhat amusing poem, "Pur le Roy," describing a visit to London, and the pageants, processions, and other rejoicings, on the occasion of the entrance of Henry VI. into the city after his coronation. The date of the poet's death is not exactly known, but it was probably not later than 1440.

ROBERT HENRYSON, "an accomplished man and a good and genuine poet," was born about the year 1425, and died near the close of the century. He was for a time a schoolmaster and notary public at Dunfermline, in Scotland, and was connected, in some capacity, with the University of Glasgow. He was probably, like Lydgate, a Benedictine monk. His principal works are "The Testament of Cresseid," a sequel to Chaucer's "Troilus and Cresseide," and a collection of thirteen fables. He wrote also many shorter poems, of which the ballad of "Robin and Makyne" (published in Percy's *Reliques*) is the best known.

WILLIAM DUNBAR was born in East Lothian, Scotland, about the year 1450. He was educated at the University of St. Andrews, and in early life travelled somewhat extensively as a novice of the order of St. Francis. He visited England in 1501, upon the occasion of the marriage of James IV. of Scotland to the Princess Margaret, daughter of Henry VII. One of his best poems, "The Thistle and the Rose," was written in commemoration of that event. He accompanied the queen to Aberdeen in 1511, and for some time, both before and after, was in attendance and favor at the Scotch court. Nothing is known of his death, but it has been conjectured that he fell in the battle of Flodden, in 1513. Besides the poem just mentioned, he wrote "The Golden Targe," "The Dance of the Deadly Sins," and many shorter poems, most of which are allegories. The "Thistle and the Rose" has been pronounced "the happiest political allegory in our language. Heraldry has never been more skilfully handled, nor compliments more gracefully paid, nor fidelity more persuasively preached to a monarch than in this poem."

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GAWAIN DOUGLAS was a son of the famous Earl of Angus, and was born in Brechin, Scotland, about 1474. He was educated partly at the University of St. Andrews, and partly in Paris. His first

considerable poem, "The Palice of Honour," was published in 1501, and dedicated to King James IV. It is an allegory, such as was at that time the staple of poetical composition, and contains but little that is particularly original. Another allegory, printed after his death, is entitled "King Hart," and has for its subject the heart of man. His greatest work is his translation of Virgil's "Æneid" into Scottish verse. In 1509, Douglas was appointed provost of St. Giles, Edinburgh, and after the battle of Flodden he was made abbot of Aberbrothwick. In 1515 he was consecrated Bishop of Dunkeld, but was unable to gain possession of the cathedral except by force. Becoming involved in the feud between the rival families of Angus and Hamilton, he was obliged to escape into England in 1521, where towards the end of the same year he died.

The Fourteenth Century.

[285]

"In the fourteenth century there comes an Englishman nourished on this [the romance] poetry, taught his trade by this poetry, getting words, rhyme, metre from this poetry; for even of that stanza which the Italians used, and which Chaucer derived immediately from the Italians, the basis and suggestion was probably given in France. . . . If we ask ourselves wherein consists the immense superiority of Chaucer's poetry over the [earlier] romance-poetry, why it is that in passing from this to Chaucer we suddenly feel ourselves to be in another world, we shall find that his superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry. His superiority in substance is given by his large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life. . . . We have only to call to mind the Prologue to 'The Canterbury Tales.' The right comment upon it is Dryden's: 'It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty.' And again: 'He is a perpetual fountain of good sense.' It is by a large, free, sound representation of things, that poetry, this high criticism of life, has truth of substance; and Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance. If we think of Chaucer's divine liquidness of diction, his divine fluidity of movement, it is difficult to speak temperately. They are irresistible, and justify all the rapture with which his successors speak of his gold 'dew-drops of speech.' . . . Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry, he is our 'well of English undefiled,' because by the lovely charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he makes an epoch and founds a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction, the fluid movement, of Chaucer; at one time it is his liquid diction of which in these poets we feel the virtue, and at another it is his fluid movement. And the virtue is irresistible."—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Poets of the Fourteenth Century.

[286]

Geoffrey Chaucer (1328-1400). See biographical note, page [301](#).

William Langland (1332-). "The Vision of William concerning Piers the Ploughman."

John Gower (1330-1408). "Confessio Amantis."

Geoffrey Chaucer.

[287]

FROM THE "PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES."

Whan that Aprille with his schowrës swoote
The drought of Marche had perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertue engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swetë breathe
Enspired hath in every holte and heethe
The tendre croppës, and the yongë sonne
Hath in the Ram¹ his halfë cours i-ronne,²
And smalë fowlës maken melodie,
That slepen al the night with open eye,
So priketh hem nature in here corages:—
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seeken³ straungë strondes,
To fernë halwes, kouthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every schirës ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir⁴ for to seeke,

That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.⁵

Byfel that, in that sesoun on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard⁶ as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At night was come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure i-falle
In felaweschipe, and pilgryms were thei alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde;
The chambres and the stables⁷ weren wyde,
And wel we werën esed attë beste.
And schortly, whan the sonnë was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
That I was of here felaweschipe anon,
And madë forward erly for to ryse,
To take our wey ther as I yow devyse.
But nathëles, whil I have tyme and space,
Or⁸ that I forther in this talë pace,
Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun,
To tellë yow al the condicioun⁹
Of eche of hem, so as it semede me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degre;
And eek in what array that they were inne:
And at a knight than wol I first bygynne.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That from the tymë that he first bigan
To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye,¹⁰
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
Ful worthy was he in his lordës werre,
And therto hadde he riden, noman ferre,
As wel in Cristendom as in hethënesse,¹¹
And evere honoured for his worthinesse.
At Alisaundre¹² he was whan it was wonne,
Ful oftë tyme he hadde the bord bygonne¹³
Aboven allë naciouns in Puce.¹⁴
In Lettowe hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
No cristen man so ofte of his degre.
In Gernade¹⁵ attë siegë hadde he be
Of Algesir, and riden in Belmarie.
At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Greetë see¹⁶
At many a noble arive hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,
And foughten for our feith at Tramassene
In lystës thriës, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilkë worthy knight hadde ben also
Somtymë with the lord of Palatye,¹⁷
Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:
And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he was worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He nevere yit no vileinye ne sayde
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.¹⁸
He was a verray perfight gentil knight.
But for to tellen you of his array,
His hors was good, but he ne was nought gay.
Of fustyan he werede a gepoun
Al bysmotered with his habergeoun.
For he was late ycome from his viage,
And wentë for to doon his pilgrimage.

With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
A lovyere, and a lusty bachelor,¹⁹
With lokkës crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly delyver, and gret of strengthe.
And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachye,
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,
And born him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrowded was he, as it were a mede
Al ful of fressshë floures, white and reede.

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Syngynge he was, or floytynge,²⁰ al the day;
He was as fressh as is the moneth of May.
Schort was his goune, with sleevës longe and wyde.
Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and fairë ryde.
He cowdë songës make and wel endite,
Juste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and write.
So hote he lovedë, that by nightertale
He sleep nomore than doth a nightyngale.
Curteys he was, lowly, and servysable,
And carf byforn his fader at the table.

A YEMAN hadde he,²¹ and servaunts nomoo
At that tyme, for him lustë rydë soo;
And he was clad in coote and hood of grene.
A shef of pocok arwës²² brighte and kene
Under his belte he bar ful thriftily.
Wel cowde he dresse his takel yemanly;
His arwes drowpede nought with fetheres lowe.
And in his hond he bar a mighty bowe
A not-heed hadde he with broun visage.
Of woodë-craft wel cowde he al the usage.
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer²³
And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other side a gay daggere,
Harneysed wel, and scharp as poynt of spere;
A Cristofre²⁴ on his brest of silver schene.
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
A forster was he sothly, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hire smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire grettest ooth ne was but by seynt Loy²⁵;
And sche was cleped madame Eglentyne.
Ful wel sche sang the servisë divyne,
Entuned in hire nose ful semëly;
And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,
After the scole of Stratford attë Bowe,
For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At metë wel i-taught was sche withalle;
Sche leet no morsel from hire lippës falle,
Ne wette hire fyngres in hire saucë deepe.
Wel cowde sche carie a morsel, and wel keepe,
That no dropë ne fille upon hire breste.
In curteisie was set ful moche hire leste.
Hire overlippë wypede sche so clene,
That in hire cuppë was no ferthing sene
Of grecë, whan sche dronken hadde hire draughte.
Ful semëly after hir mete sche raughte,
And sikerly sche was of gret disport,²⁶
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
And peynede hir to countrefetë cheere
Of court, and ben estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hir conscience,
Sche was so charitable and so pitous,
Sche woldë weepe if that sche saw a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smalë houndës hadde sche, that sche fedde
With rosted flessch, or mylk and wastel breed.
But sore weep sche if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men²⁷ smot it with a yerdë smerte:
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semëly hire wympel i-pynched was;
Hir nose tretys; hir eyën greye as glas;
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed
But sikerly sche hadde a fair forheed.
It was almost a spannë brood, I trowe;
For hardily sche was not undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.
Of smal coral aboute hir arm sche bar
A peire of bedës gauded al with grene;
And theron heng a broch of gold ful schene,
On which was first i-write a crownëd A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*²⁸
Another NONNE with hir haddë sche,
That was hir chapeleyne,²⁹ and PRESTES thre.

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A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrye,³⁰
 An out-rydere, that lovedē veneryē;
 A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
 Ful many a deyntē hors hadde he in stable:
 And whan he rood, men mighte his bridel heere
 Gynglen in a whistlyng wynd as cleere,
 And eek as lowde as doth the chapel belle.
 Ther as this lord was keperere of the celle,
 The reule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,
 Bycause that it was old and somdel streyt,
 This ilkē monk leet oldē thingēs pace,
 And held after the newē world the space.
 He yaf nat of that text a pullēd hen,³¹
 That seith, that hunters been noon holy men;
 Ne that a monk, whan he is recchēles
 Is likned to a fisch that is waterles³²;
 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
 But thilkē text held he not worth an oystre.
 And I seide his opinioun was good.
 What³³ schulde he studie, and make himselven wood,³⁴
 Upon a book in cloystre alway to powre.
 Or swynkē with his handēs, and laboure,
 As Austyn bit? How schal the world be servēd?
 Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reservēd.
 Therfor he was a pricasour aright;
 Greyhoundes he hadde as swifte as fowel in flight;
 Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
 Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.³⁵
 I saugh his slevēs purfiled attē honde
 With grys, and that the fyneste of a londe.
 And for to festne his hood under his chynne
 He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pynne:
 A love-knot in the grettere ende ther was.
 His heed was balled, that schon as eny glas,
 And eek his face, as he hadde ben anynt.
 He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
 His eyēn steepe, and rolyng in his heede,
 That stemēde as a forneys of a leede;³⁶
 His bootēs souple, his hors in gret estat.
 Now certainly he was a fair prelat;
 He was not pale as a for-pyned goost.
 A fat swan lovede he best of eny roost.
 His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

A FRERE there was, a wantown and a merye,
 A lymytour,³⁷ a ful solempnē man.
 In alle the ordres foure³⁸ is noon that can
 So moche of daliaunce and fair langage.
 He hadde i-mad ful many a mariage
 Of yongē wymmen, at his owēn cost.
 Unto his ordre he was a noble post.³⁹
 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
 With frankeleyns⁴⁰ over-al in his cuntre,
 And eek with worthy wommen of the toun:
 For he hadde power of confessioun,
 As seyde himself, morē than a curat,
 For of his ordre he was licentiat.⁴¹
 Ful swetēly herde he confessioun,
 And plesaunt was his absolucioun;
 He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
 Ther as he wistē han⁴² a good pitaunce;
 For unto a poure ordre for to yive
 Is signē that a man is wel i-schrive.
 For if he yaf, he dorstē make avaunt,
 He wistē that a man was repentaunt.
 For many a man so hard is of his herte,
 He may not wepe although him sorē smerte.
 Therefore in stede of wepyng and preyeres,
 Men⁴³ moot yive silver to the pourē freres.
 His typet was ay farsēd ful of knyfes
 And pynnēs, for to yivē fairē wyfes.
 And certeynly he hadde a mery note;
 Wel couthe he synge and pleyen on a rote.
 Of yeddynges he bar utterly the prys.

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His nekkë whit was as the flour-de-lys.
 Therto he strong was as a champioun.
 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
 And everych hostiler and tappestere,
 Bet then a lazer, or a beggestere,
 For unto such a worthy man as he
 Acorded not, as by his faculté,
 To han with sikë lazars aqueyntaunce.
 It is not honest, it may not avaunce,
 For to delen with no such poraille,
 But al with riche, and sellers of vitaille.⁴⁴
 And overal, ther as profyt schulde arise,
 Curteys he was, and lowly of servyse.
 Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
 He was the bestë beggere in his hous,
 For though a widewe haddë nocht oo schoo,
 So plesaunt was his *In principio*,⁴⁵
 Yet wolde he have a ferthing or he wente.
 His purchas⁴⁶ was wel better than his rente.
 And rage he couthe as it were right a whelpe,
 In lovë-dayës⁴⁷ couthe he mochel helpe.
 For ther he was not lik a cloysterer,
 With a thredbare cope as is a poure scoler,
 But he was lik a maister or a pope.
 Of double worsted was his semy-cope,
 That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
 Somwhat he lipsede, for his wantownesse,
 To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge;
 And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde sunge
 His eyën twynkled in his heed aright,
 As don the sterrës in the frosty night.
 This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.

A MARCHAUNT was ther with a forkëd berd,
 In mottëleye, and hign on hors he sat,
 Upon his heed a Flaundrisch bevere hat;
 His botës clapsed faire and fetysly.
 His resons he spak ful solempnëly,
 Sownyng always the ences of his wynnyng.
 He wolde the see were kept for⁴⁸ eny thinge
 Betwixë Middelburgh and Orëwelle.
 Wel couthe he in eschaungë scheeldës⁴⁹ selle.
 This worthi man ful wel his wit bisette;
 Ther wistë no wight that he was in dette,
 So estatly was he of governaunce,
 With his bargayns, and with his chevysaunce
 For sothe he was a worthy man withalle,
 But soth to sayn, I not how men him calle.

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford⁵⁰ also,
 That unto logik haddë longe i-go.
 As lenë was his hors as is a rake,
 And he was not right⁵¹ fat, I undertake;
 But lokëde holwe, and therto soberly.
 Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy.
 For he hadde geten him yit no benefice,
 Ne was so worldly for to have office.
 For him was levere have at his beddës heede
 Twenty bookës, clad in blak or reede,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophyë,
 Then robës riche, or fithel, or gay sawtryë.⁵²
 But al be that he was a philosophre,
 Yet haddë he but litel gold in cofre;
 But al that he mighte of his frendës hente,
 On bookës and on lernyng he it spente,
 And busily gan for the soulës preye
 Of hem that yaf him wherwith to scoleye;
 Of studie took he most cure and most heede.
 Not oo word spak he morë than was neede,
 And that was seid in forme and reverence
 And schort and quyk, and ful of high sentence.
 Sownyng⁵³ in moral vertu was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

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ageyn, against.
arive, disembarkment.
aventure, chance.
ay, always.
bar, bore.
bawdrick, baldric.
ben, to be.
bit, biddeth.
byfel, it happened.
bysmotered, smuttled.
carf, carved.
cheere, manner.
chevysaunce, loans, bargains.
chivachye, military expedition.
clapsed, clasped.
cleped, called.
clerk, a scholar.
corage, heart.
courtepy, cloak.
cowde, knew.
crulle, curled.
cure, care.
delyver, active.
devyse, speak of.
digne, worthy.
don, do.
eek, also.
embrowded, embroidered.
encres, increase.
everychon, every one, all.
farsed, stuffed.
ferne, distant, foreign.
ferre, farther.
ferthing, small portion.
fetysly, neatly, well.
fithel, fiddle.
Flaundrische, Flemish.
flotyng, fluting, playing.
flour-de-lys, fleur-de-lis.
forster, forester.
for-pyned, much wasted.
frere, friar.
gawded, having gawds.
gepoun, short cassock.
goost, ghost.
grys, fur.
gynglen, jingling.
habergeoun, hawberk.
halwes, shrines (holies).
heethe, heath, meadow.
hem, them.
here, their.
heute, borrow.
holpen, helped.
holte, wood.
i-falle, fallen.
ilke, same.
i-ronne, ran.
juste, joust.

kouthe, known.
leede, cauldron.
leste, pleasure.
levere, rather.
lipsede, lisped.
luste, pleased.
maistrye, mastery.
maner, kind.
mede, meadow.
mete, meals, eating.
motteleye, mixed colors.
nightertale, night-time.
noon, not one, not at all.
not-heed, shorn-head.
pace, pass.
peyned, took pains.
pitous, full of pity.
pocok, peacock.
poraille, poor folks. [297]
pricasour, hard rider.
priketh, incites, spurs.
prys, reputation, worth.
purfiled, embroidered.
purtreye, paint.
raughte, reached.
reccheles, reckless.
reysed, ridden.
rote, a musical instrument.
sawtreye, psaltery.
schene, bright.
scoleye, attend school.
seeke, sick.
semely, becomingly.
sikerly, surely.
somdel, somewhat.
sondry, different kinds.
sothly, truly.
souple, pliant.
sovereyn, excellent.
sowning, boasting.
steepe, bright.
streit, strict. [298]
swich, such.
swynke, toil.
thilke, this.
tretys, slender.
venerye, hunting.
viage, journey.
wastel breed, cake bread.
wenden, go.
werre, war.
wight, person.
wiste, knew.
wood, mad, foolish.
wympel, wimple.
yaf, gave.
yeddynges, gleemen's songs.
yemanly, yeoman-like.
yerde, stick.

NOTES.

1. in the Ram. In the constellation Aries. "There is a difference, in astronomy, between the *sign* Aries and the *constellation* Aries. In April the sun is theoretically in the sign Taurus, but visibly in the constellation Aries."—*Morris*.

2. i-ronne. Run. The prefix *i-* or *y-* is equivalent to the A.-S. or German *ge*, and usually denotes the past participle.

3. seeken. The infinitive in early English ended in *n*, usually in *en*.

4. martir. Thomas à Becket, who was slain at Canterbury in 1170. He was canonized by Pope Alexander III. as St. Thomas of Canterbury.

5. seeke. Sick, ill. At the present time the English restrict the use of the word "sick" to nausea, and regard it in its original and broader signification as an "Americanism."

6. Tabard. A tabard is "a jaquet or sleevelesse coat worne in times past by noblemen in the warres, but now only by heraults. It is the signe of an inne in Southwarke by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Winchester. This is the hostelrie where Chaucer and the other pilgrims mett together and accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury."—*Speght*.

7. stables. Standing-places (Lat. *sto*, to stand); meaning here the public rooms of the inn.

8. Or. Before, ere (A.-S. *aer*, ere). Compare Psalm xc. 2.

9. condicioun. A word of four syllables, accented on the last.

10. chyvalrye. The profession of a knight.

11. hethënesse. Heathen countries. From *heath*, the open country. "The word *heathen* acquired its meaning from the fact that, at the introduction of Christianity into Germany, the wild dwellers on the heaths longest resisted the truth."—*Trench*.

12. Alisaundre. Alexandria was taken in 1365 by Pierre de Lusignan, king of Cyprus, but was very soon abandoned. [299]

13. he hadde the bord bygonne. "He had been placed at the head of the table, the usual compliment to extraordinary merit."—*Tyrwhitt*.

14. Pruce. Prussia. "When our military men wanted employment it was usual for them to go and serve in *Pruce*, or Prussia, with the Knights of the Teutonic order, who were in a state of constant warfare with their heathen neighbours in Lettow (Lithuania) and Ruse (Russia)."—*Tyrwhitt*.

15. Gernade. Grenada, probably at the siege of Algezir, in that country, in 1344. Belmarie was probably a Moorish town in Africa, as also was Tramassene, mentioned below. Lieys was in Armenia. Both it and Satalie (Attalia) were conquered by Pierre de Lusignan in 1367.

16. Greetë see. That part of the Mediterranean which washes the coast of Palestine.

17. lord of Palatye. A Christian knight who kept possession of his lands by paying tribute to the Turks.

18. no maner wight. No sort of person. In early English the preposition was often omitted after *manner*. Observe the double negatives in these two lines.

19. bachelor. "A soldier not old or rich enough to lead his relations into battle with a banner. The original sense of the word is *little, small, young*, from Welsh *bach*."—*Webster*.

20. floytynge. Fluting. So, in Chaucer's "House of Fame," he says:

"And many a floyte and litlyng horne,
And pipes made of grene corne."

21. he. That is, the knight. The word *yeman*, or *yeoman*, is an abbreviation of *yeongeman*. As used by Chaucer, it means a servant of a rank above that of groom, but below that of squire. The present use of the word to signify a small landholder is of more modern origin.

22. pocok arwës. Arrows tipped with peacock feathers.

23. bracer. A kind of close sleeve laced upon the arm. "A bracer serveth for two causes, one to save his arme from the stryfe of the stringe, and his doublet from wearing; and the other is, that the stringe glidinge sharplye and quicklye off the bracer, maye make the sharper shoote."—*Roger Ascham's Toxophilus*, page 129.

24. Cristofre. An image of St. Christopher, which was thought to protect its wearer from hidden danger.

25. seynt Loy. St. Eloy, or Eligius.

26. of gret disport. Fond of gayety.

27. men. This word as here used is an indefinite pronoun equivalent to *one*, or *any one*.

28. "Love conquers all things."

29. chapeleyne. Probably *assistant*.

30. a fair for the maistryë. A fair one for the chief place.

31. "He would not give a pulled hen for that text"; that is, "he cared not a straw for it." Pulled = pyllled = pilled = plucked.

32. waterles. Out of water.

33. what. Why, wherefore.

34. wood. Mad. Scotch *wud*, wild.

"An' just as wud as wud can be."—*Burns*.

35. no cost wolde he spare. For this pleasure he spared no expense.

36. "That shone like the fire under a cauldron."

37. lymytour. One who was licensed to beg within a limited territory.

38. ordres foure. The Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Carmelites, and the Augustine Friars.

39. post. Pillar, support. Compare with the modern expression, "A pillar of the church."

40. frankleyns. Country gentlemen; wealthy landholders.

41. licentiat. He had license from the pope to grant absolution in all cases. A curate's powers did not extend so far.

42. "Where he knew he would have."

43. See note [27](#), above.

44. sellers of vitaille. Givers of food, or a livelihood. The original meaning of the word *sell* was to *give*. From A.-S. *syllan*, to give.

45. "In the beginning." The first words of St. John's Gospel in the Vulgate.

46. purchas. Income from begging.

47. lovë-dayës. Days appointed for the amicable settlement of differences, without recourse to law.

48. "He wished the sea were guarded." **Middelburgh**, a port in the Netherlands. **Orëwelle**, a port in Essex.

49. scheeldës. French crowns marked with a shield. Shillings.

50. Oxenford. Not the "ford of the ox," but the "ford of the river." *Ox*, from Celtic *esk*, *ouse*, water.

51. The word *right* used, as here, in the sense of *very* is now considered a vulgarism. "A Southerner would say, 'It rains right hard.'"—*Bartlett*.

52. sawtryë. Psaltery, a Greek instrument of music.

53. sownynge. Sounding; that is, in consonance with. **Sentence** = sense. So, also, construe **forme** and **reverence**, above, as meaning *propriety and modesty*.

ON READING CHAUCER.

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"How few there are who can read Chaucer so as to understand him perfectly," says Dryden, apologizing for 'translating' him. In our day, with the wider spread of historical study, with the numerous helps to Old English that the care of scholars has produced for us, with the purification that Chaucer's text has undergone, this saying of Dryden's ought not to be true. It ought to be not only possible, but easy, for an educated reader to learn the few essentials of Chaucerian grammar, and for an ear at all trained to poetry to tune itself to the unfamiliar harmonies. For those who make the attempt the reward is certain. They will gain the knowledge, not only of the great poet and creative genius, but of the master who uses our language with a power, a freedom, a variety, a rhythmic beauty, that, in five centuries, not ten of his successors have been found able to rival."—*T. H. Ward*.

The peculiarities of diction and grammar which distinguish Chaucer's poetry seem to make its reading and comprehension difficult and often discourage the student at the outset. A very little study, however, will show that the difficulties in the way are not nearly so great as they at first appear, and, after a little patient practice in reading, they will disappear entirely. By observing the following rules you will soon acquire the ability to read with a fluency which will be highly pleasing to you:

1. Final *e* should be pronounced as a separate syllable whenever the metre demands it.
2. In all words of French origin, such as *viságe*, *coráge*, *maniér*, the final syllable is accented.

The greatest difficulty in reading Chaucer arises from the antiquated manner in which the words

are spelled; but if the reader will change an occasional *y* to *i*, and drop a final *e* or a final *n*, here and there, the words which seemed at first so strange will appear more familiar to the eye and the understanding.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, "the morning-star of English poetry," was born in London in 1328,—according to some authorities, in 1340. He was the son of a vintner, and at an early age became acquainted with many persons of distinction. He was a page in the household of Prince Lionel, and afterwards valet and squire to Edward III. In 1372 he was sent abroad as a royal envoy, and on his return he was made Controller of the Customs In London. In the meantime he had married Philippa Rouet, one of the queen's maids of honor, a sister to the wife of John of Gaunt. Being thus closely related to one of the most powerful members of the royal family, he was often employed in important and honorable commissions connected with the government. In 1386 he was member of Parliament for Kent, and in 1389 was appointed Clerk of the King's Works, at Windsor. He died in 1400, and was buried in Westminster Abbey,—"the first of the long line of poets whose ashes make that edifice illustrious." His poetical history has been divided by Mr. Furnivall into four periods: (1) up to 1371, during which he wrote the "A B C" the "Compleynte to Pit ," the "Boke of the Duchesse," and the "Compleynte of Mars"; (2) from 1372 to 1381, which saw the production of "Troylus and Criseyde," "Anelida," and the "Former Age"; (3) from 1381 to 1389, during which his best works appeared, the "Parlament of Foules," the "House of Fame," the "Legende of Goode Women," and some of the "Canterbury Tales"; (4) from 1389 to the close of his life, in which period the remainder of the "Canterbury Tales" and some short poems were written. [302]

M. Taine says, "Chaucer is like a jeweller with his hands full; pearls and glass beads, sparkling diamonds and common agates, black jet and ruby roses, all that history and imagination had been able to gather and fashion during three centuries in the East, in France, in Wales, in Provence, in Italy, all that had rolled his way, clashed together, broken or polished by the stream of centuries, and by the grand jumble of human memory, he holds in his hand, arranges it, composes therefrom a long sparkling ornament, with twenty pendants, a thousand facets, which by its splendor, variety, contrasts, may attract and satisfy the eyes of those most greedy for amusement and novelty."

Other Poems to be Read: The Knight's Tale; The Clerk's Tale; The Man of Law's Tale; The Legende of Goode Women; The Parlament of Foules; The House of Fame; Chaucer's A B C.

REFERENCES: Lowell's *My Study Windows*; Marsh's *Origin and History of the English Language*; Charles Cowden Clarke's *The Riches of Chaucer*; Morley's *English Writers*, vol. v; Carpenter's *English of the XIV Century*; Taine's *English Literature*; Lounsbury's *Studies in Chaucer*; Hazlitt's *English Poets*.

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Ellipses match the original.

Variations in spelling and hyphenation have been left as in the original.

Page 14 is blank in the original.

The following corrections have been made to the text:

Page 79: Dante's *Vita Nuova*. [original has extraneous quotation mark]

Page 81: full age of man, he might not [original has extraneous comma] improbably

Page 124: Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled, [original has superscripted 1 at the end of the line]

Page 146: *Shakespeare, King Lear*, Act i [original has ii] sc. i.

Page 146: versification of the "Faerie Queene," page 232 [original has 234]

Page 303: chyvalrye [original has chyvalyre], 298.

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