

tial, and secular as it is, has that deep and all-pervasive seriousness about it which was germane to the Gothic and Germanic mind and cannot, to this day, be read with ethical indifference.

How striking is the imprint of this Cædmonian spirit upon those early bards who penned their verses in First and Middle English days ! It is seen especially in our second Christian English poet, the devout Cynewulf ; in such poems as *Elene* and *Judith*, in *Andreas* and *Christ* ; in the *Vision of the Holy Rood* and the *Fates of the Apostles* ; in the *Wanderer* and the *Sea-farer* ; in *Alfred's Metres of Boethius*, and in the *Fate of Byrhtnoth* ; in *Hebrew Psalms* and *Christian hymns* ; in *runes* and *threnodies* and *versified chronicles*. Throughout the poetry, as a body of song, this inherited tendency is visible, and, despite the influence of much that is legendary, immature and crude, serves to maintain the integrity of the verse as Christian. Had the spirit of a *Byron* prevailed at this early period of formative agencies, and an incipient *Don Juan* been prepared in place of the *Paraphrase*, though we would have had better poetry on the side of esthetic art, we would have lost immeasurably more than we would have gained in the *Byronic* taint at the fountain-head of our verse and literature. It is a curious coincidence, as justified by more than one prominent English critic, that the name Cædmon, given to the poet by his devoted brethren in the monastery at Whitby, was the Chaldee name of *Genesis*, taken from its opening words "In the beginning" (*b' Cadmon*), marking the character of his poetic *Paraphrase* as in fullest sympathy with the opening and governing spirit of the divine revelation.

*Beowulf* and *Cædmon*, the oldest English secular epic and sacred epic ! The one opens with a tribute of praise to the valor of the kings and warriors of the Danes in "the days of yore ;" the other, as we have seen, with praise to God, the "Guardian and Glory-King." Each of these types of song was eminently natural to the old Teutonic mind. Each has a rightful place and will ever have a place in modern English literature and life. Which of these types is to control the other, is the question of supreme importance. Is it to be the secular epic of human achievement, of valor in battle and of purely material results, or is it to be the sacred epic of character and conscience, of holy zeal and holy purpose !

It has been the object of this paper to show that, from the seventh century of English song down to the present, the spirit of Cædmon and of Milton has been abroad to keep in abeyance all lower tendencies and hold the rapidly unfolding volume of English verse loyally true to its earliest ethical standard.