

own faith, "for the erudition which overthrew the fabric of the false learning and civilized his country."

More's contemporary, the ill-fated Earl of Surrey, deserves at least passing notice. This noble scion of the warlike Howards, so illustrious for their unyielding devotion to the Catholic Church, though cut off in the flower of his age was reputed one of the best poets of the day, being thought worthy to be termed the "English Petrarch." He introduced the use of the sonnet into our literature, and was also the author of the first English poem in blank verse. William Dunbar, the "Chaucer of Scotland," flourished about the same time. He was a Franciscan friar, and the quality of his works may be estimated from Scott's eulogy of him as "a poet unrivalled by any that Scotland has since produced."

We now enter upon what is generally known as the period of Modern English, which begins with the famous Augustan age. Because the rise of this new era in English letters was contemporary with the Reformation, it has been alleged that it was a consequence of that religious movement. This is far from being the case. Even Hallam and Arnold admit that the Reformation was not an incentive, but on the contrary a great detriment to the progress of literature. Though the writers themselves were largely of the new faith, or rather lack of faith, which supplanted Catholicism in England, the change is in no way accountable for the extraordinary intellectual development of the period. As Macaulay says, "The times which shine with greatest splendor in literary history are not always those to which the human mind is most indebted." The noble literary harvest reaped during the reign of Elizabeth and her successors was the direct fruit of the seed so plentifully sown in Catholic times. The language rough-hewed by Chaucer and polished by later writers had at length acquired the proper shape for the great masters who were to mould and form it according to their various designs. The material was ready and at hand for those who rendered this literary epoch England's golden age. A plastic substance, rude and ill-shaped, under their hands it speedily assumed a form of great beauty and harmony. The language which up to this time had been rough, dull, even obscure, gave way to a diction characterized by smoothness, vigor and lucidity. Thus the work begun