

æsthetic effect. His final aim was to paraphrase and explain the Gospel selections of the year and, to this end, he chose the less poetic but more practical method of exposition. He meant to be a teacher of Scripture and even went so far as to discard the alliterative habit of the time, lest the sound might supersede the meaning. In the Dedication to his poem, he distinctly states his object in expounding the Bible—"iff Ennglissh folc, forr lufe off Crist, itt wolde germe (willingly) lernenn and follghenn itt."

If he succeeds in explaining the Scriptures so that the people catch its sense, he is contented, even though it be at the sacrifice of literary art. Critics must deal with the *Ormulum* from the point of view from which Orm prepared it and not on the canons of æsthetic science. Its diction is plain and practical; its form, homely and simple, and its governing aim, moral enlightenment. Even where the poet becomes diffuse and unduly figurative, as in the explanations of Cherubim and Seraphim and the Jewish Ceremonial Law, his very repetitions and metaphors are clearly on behalf of a better understanding of the truth. This didactic method was especially designed for the common people, for the "Ennglisshe lede"; the great body politic and social of the land. Whatever views these old monks may have held as to the peculiar sanctity of the priesthood and the Vulgate version of the Bible, not a few of them, in common with Orm, lived and taught on behalf of the laity, and on the basis of the vernacular Bible. They saw what Bede in the eighth century saw, and what Wiclif in the fourteenth more clearly saw—that the people if reached scripturally and spiritually, must be so reached through the medium of the "tongue in which they were born" and in methods germane to their history and condition. In a word, the aim of Orm, in the *Ormulum*, was to do good, in his time and place, as opportunity offered.

Whatever linguistic purpose he may have had, especially as connected with English Orthography; whatever bearing his work was to have upon the vernacular verse, on its literary side; his great desire was to glorify God among his countrymen and to lift them to higher levels of thought and life. The short Dedication to these Gospel Homilies is full of this idea and is well worth a rendering into the English of to-day. After telling us who he was and to what sacred fraternity he belonged; how he came to pen the *Ormulum* and with what care he guarded against every possible corruption of the sacred text he was paraphrasing, he adds—

"Iff mann wile witen (know) whi
 icc (I) hafe don thiss dede,
 whi icc till (to) Ennglissh hafe wennd (turned)
 Goddspelless hallghe (holy) lare;
 icc hafe itt don forr-thi-thatt all
 Crisstene follkess berhless (salvation)
 iss lang (dependant) uppo thatt an (only), thatt tegg (they)