

and generous mind to leave a good name as a legacy to the future. Was it a mercenary motive that impelled Milton to write the grandest epic in our language? Surely eighteen pounds was a poor compensation for so many years of labor. He, himself, declares that the incentive was not love of gain, but love of glory. "I am meditating, by the help of Heaven, an immortality of fame, but my Pegasus has not yet features enough to soar aloft in the fields of air." Again he says, "Some day I shall address a work to posterity which shall perpetuate my name, at least in the land in which I was born."

But there are still more striking incidents. Walter Scott wrote from a passionate desire to live as a person of wealth and influence, that he might "do the honors of Scotland." Bacon, "the apostle of progress," possessed ambition and intellect which exalted him to the highest honors in state, philosophy and literature.

History is full of the names of men whose love of fame has induced them to bequeath the most precious treasures of knowledge and genius to posterity, and has made them resplendent lights, shedding lustre over their age and nation.

We, then, may profit by the failures and successes of the past, neither striving to quench the thirst for power, nor yet sacrificing too much to its demands.

Ambition is a noble trait. It will uphold us in many a sea of trouble, and bear us safely over the yawning gulf of fortune. Let us have an aim, a purpose in life, and then, although we may not attain to a position of wealth or renown, life may still be a pleasure, and a success.

FRANK.

THE SAXON PERIOD OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

ABOUT the middle of the fifth century a large band of Saxon pirates, or sea-kings, landed on the east shore of the island of Britain. Through the latter half of the century, Saxons, Jutes and Angles continued to land in Britain; and, at length, the former inhabitants were driven to take refuge in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The home of these usurpers was in the land lying between the Rivers Elbe and Rhine.

Climate always has a great influence on character. The inhabitants of the sunny lands along the shore of the Mediterranean possessed, at this time, splendid literatures. Poetry and romance were for those of the warm southern clime; as for the Saxon barbarians, breathing a foggy atmosphere, and gazing on a dull, gloomy sky, they seem to think of nothing but carousal and slaughter. When the toils of the day were over the Thanes, assembling in their large dining-halls, would listen, with flashing eyes, to the minstrel as he sang of the bloody feats achieved, perhaps, by their Scandinavian forefathers; as the tale was sung ale and mead were imbibed freely, and at length both minstrel and listeners would be wrapt in a drunken slumber.

But these degraded people had some traits nobler than any which characterized the cultured Southerners. They have a certain earnestness and melancholy which lead them to noble sentiments. Courage and fidelity are the virtues most highly esteemed among them. We have the fragments of one of their poems which illustrates this esteem. The poem relates the adventures of a hero, Beowulf, whose nature is truly noble. He slays sea-monsters and dragons, endures bitter cold and hunger, rescues the distressed; and, at length, meets his death in an encounter with a dragon, undertaken to save his prince. He is brave, generous and loyal. This poem is a reflex of the manners and sentiments of the race. Uncouth and brutal as the people were, they yet had a grand spirit of courage and devotion; and, in spite of their ignorance, saw and worshipped the truly heroic. This is the race from which, in after years, comes a Cromwell.

They bowed in adoration before no images. In their minds floated dim conceptions of the infinite and the sublime. Thus Christianity was peculiarly acceptable to them. At Athens, the beautiful city of learning and culture, the Greeks erected an altar on which was the agnostic inscription, "To the unknown God." But the simple Saxons, recognizing in their darkness, the sublimity and greatness of his character, in lowly reverence paid homage to this God of the Hebrews. Cædmon's Paraphrase is full of cries of passionate devotion. One of these writers has left us a fragment of the history