

of epithet and metaphor, perchance melancholy and foreboding, yet not without grand images and a rudely picturesque diction? It is the old Saxon, the Viking, calling aloud to the tempest from the storm-beaten crests of waves, or chanting his rude mythological legends in praise of Wodin and his master-passion—war. Do we find, during the lapse of time, that these broken threads of speech are becoming linked and joined, that the tangled knot of imagery is unravelling, that coherent fluency and the logic of composition are beginning to exert an influence on the language? 'Tis to the polish of the Latin race, the Norman French, that this development is due. Do we suddenly stumble on a barren waste, where no flower of rhetoric blooms, where not a wayside pool ripples to the influence of the breeze of imagery, where the wing of genius never rustles the vapid pulseless air? 'Tis because the (mephitic) spirit of the dark ages broods over the epoch like a pestilence. 'Tis a very realm of Sodom—no living thought can cross its baleful expanse and survive. Behold a burst of glorious sunlight! Creation has been re-created, the desert waste blossoms as the rose, 'tis peopled with myriad forms who swagger, and talk, and laugh, and jest, and brawl and love, and commit every audacity and every enormity of which humanity is capable—'tis creation run mad, and yet not so, for 'tis natural, 'tis the splendour of the Pagan *renaissance*. So long held in durance vile, now that genius has escaped, she revels in excitement, she wallows in excess, yet she is true to herself: she describes the age in which she has obtained her freedom. Taine says of this age, "Never was coarse physical laughter more adroitly produced. In this broad coarse gaiety,

this excess of noisy transport, you recognize the stout roysterer, the stalwart drinker, who swallowed hogs-heads of 'Canary,' and made the windows of the 'Mermaid' shake with bursts of humor." Shortly and unconsciously we glide into another phase of being, gloomy, terrible, black with midnight doubt, or barely luminous with the lightnings of direful threat, haunted, ghastly, hopeless, cowering beneath the avenging hand of an incensed God and almost despairing of hope itself. 'Tis the monomaniac phase of English life and English art, the terror of the Puritan rule, the epoch which gave birth to the 'Pilgrim's Progress' and to "Paradise Lost." But time moves on, rare Ben Johnson is dust, Shakespeare is nearly forgotten, Milton—blind, forsaken, outlawed—is dead, kings have been deposed and restored, and we find ourselves jostled by the courtiers and courtesans, and hurried with the ephemeral throng of the Artificial age. Polished, keen, cultivated, satirical, sensuous, godless—what will the literary product of such an epoch be? The reflection of its type, satirical, polished, and non-Anglo-Saxon. Classic it may be, Augustan it may be; but where is the honest voice of the viking? Where the good-natured bluster of a Falstaff, the conscientious promptings of a Hamlet, the moral counsel of a Portia? Gone. Not to be reproduced till other hands shall open for us a new compartment of time and therefore of expression; the noblest perhaps the world has seen, wherein modern fact and mediæval legend and ancient lore meet hand in hand, a glorious triune, and the very spirit of genius, bares its head before the honoured names of the glittering host of the modern school.

(To be continued.)