

"Thou mightest better mete, the myste on Malverne hulls
Then get a momme of here moothe, but money were shiewed."

In the vision of the Seven Deadly Sins, his moral innuendo reaches its climax. Pride is represented as humbling herself as she vows she would unsew her garment and set therein an "hair shirt," to subdue the flesh. Luxury vows "to drynke but myd the doke." Blear-eyed Avarice mistakes the French word, *restitucioun* for robbery. Gluttony asserts his repentance only after imbibing all he can carry, while Sloth, in the person of a priest, knows Robin Hood better than his Pater Noster and his creed. Here and there, throughout the poem, some of the soundest prudential and ethical maxims are couched in a semi-satirical form and read as a leaf from Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanac."

"Faith with-ovte the faite (deed),
Is as ded as a dore-tree."

He is not, he says, to be asked to have mercy

"Til prechioures prechyng be preved on hem-selven."

Physicians, also, must take their turn, as he says:—

"For morthereres aren mony leches, lorde hem amende.
They do men deye thorw here drynkes, ar destine it wolde."

Thus sings the old poet for the good of his fellows, and we are struck with the eminent timeliness of his song. He wrote in the age of Edward III. as Bunyan did in that of Cromwell, and each fulfilled his mission. It was an age when satire was demanded in England as it was in Rome, in the days of Juvenal. Mere argument and direct address would not have sufficed. Writing without restraint, he wrote for all classes of men. Choosing as his chief character the plowman at his plow, with his rustic garb and honest face, he puts into the mouth of Piers these pertinent lessons of wisdom and morality.

Two or three of his special qualities as a religious satirist deserve attention.

We note, at the outset, his Christian *charity*. Love was with him the grace of the graces, and when, as a public censor, the temptation to harshness and vindictiveness was naturally strong, he says what he says in the spirit of good-will. Incensed as he was by the open abuses of the papacy, he was ever conservative rather than revolutionary, tolerant of all rightfully-established ceremonies, and often winning by his conciliatory method where he could not have won by other means. He dealt out his stern rebuke to kings and courtiers with all the incisiveness of Knox and Cromwell, and yet in loyal deference to civil order. Had he lived in the days of the Stuarts, he would have written just as pointedly, and yet have done it so discreetly as to have walked in liberty past the prisons of his less judicious colleagues. As to his *courage* in satire, he was the Luther of his day. Such a feature is, indeed, involved in the very idea of successful satire, and must