

social life; the Greek world, though in decay, through which they passed, left on their minds the impress of its advancement, polish and enlightenment.

The church was even still a shield for the weak against the strong, but she had herself become an oppression, and the earliest satirical ballads against her exceed in fierce pungency the bitterest of any subsequent time. They are written in Latin, for the first notes of battle rang out among the learned. A great change had taken place since Ælfred laid the feeble foundation of English speech, and opened the gates of knowledge to his people by his elaborate rendering of the compilation of Osorius, and his pious and glowing translation of the consolations of Boethius. We must not despise the ecclesiastic statesmen who played so prominent a part down to Wolsely and Laud, sometimes a sinister part, as in the case of Laud. The large figure of Dunstan rising over the West Saxon realm stands at the fountain head of the English constitution: nor let us forget that England was rescued from a chaos of misrule by the church when the Bishop of Winchester, himself the brother of a King, enforced through ecclesiastical courts the charter of Henry. Strange and instructive is it to mark how the alternate depositions of Stephen and Matilda, by Church Councils, led the way to the depositions of Edward and Richard, and to the solemn act by which the succession was changed in the case of James, William of Orange placed on the throne, and the present Protestant dynasty secured.

It was natural the church should have assumed portentous power when she held not only the keys of heaven, but the keys of earthly knowledge, and the first blow her overshadowing authority received was when there grew up a literary class, independent of ecclesiastical garb and privilege. From Beda to the Angevins only two writers are not monks or priests, Ælfred and Ethelweard. But Walter de Map is the embodiment of the outburst of literary energy, social and religious criticism which followed the romance and free historical tone of the court of the two first Henries. He strikes with a fearless hand at the indolence, immorality and greed of the Mediæval Church. The Baronial wars entailed the loss of the great political leaders. But their cause was not buried at Evesham with the heroic de Montfort and his son. Satire, as we have seen, continued the work.

The incubus of the monks and prelates began to be sorely felt. Their corruptions and immorality were notorious. Nothing but the grossest oppression could account for the slaughter of monks and the burning of abbeys by the people, such conduct again throwing a lurid light on the social and political revolution which had taken place. Simon de Montfort, by conferring parliamentary existence on the cities and boroughs of England, had introduced a new political system, and when, in 1265, two knights from every shire and one or two members from every borough-town met with the barons and clergy at the village of Westminster, a mile or so west of Temple Bar, along the pleasant country road where the traffic of the Strand rolls to-day, the Thames flowing by, not then murky and dirty as it is now, nor hemmed in by palatial structures and noble embankment—then was enacted one of the most interesting scenes in history. The time was the morning of an imperial day—a day of warlike, commercial, literary, colonial splendour. Roger Bacon is in his room at Oxford studying nature in a scientific spirit, and foretelling the steam-ship and the railway. In the London of that day with its thatched houses who could foresee the modern Babylon? In the England of that day who could decipher the world-wide Empire of ours? Why should not Canada to-day have a future weighted with as mighty a destiny?

A series of foreign wars had impoverished the crown, and instead of calling the great barons together to bring their retainers to the field, the King now appeals more directly to the people who begin to feel the weight of taxation. Already we hear of the "King's Evil Advisers." King and aristocracy and church were interested in keeping up the oppressions under which the people groaned. Hence those espousing the popular side felt that a radical cure was needed which would strike at the root of all three. This gave rise to persecutions in which those who were neither "Levellers" nor "Democrats" suffered. The work of the cultivated slowly but surely bore fruit, and when we come to the fourteenth century, we are face to face with a popular intelligence and energy which have never since died out in the British people. The fourteenth century in England presents one of the most dark and brilliant and stirring scenes imaginable. The first quarter is hardly complete when we have great battles fought and a king deposed. The corruptions of the Church grow darker while the Commons become more and more awake; stand shoulder to shoulder for their liberties and demand redress of grievances.

A glance at the "battles, sieges, fortunes," from the accession of Edward II. to the deposition of Richard II., reveals one of the most stirring and eventful centuries in English annals:—Bannockburn, 1314; battle of Athlery (or Atherry), 1316; Edward II. deposed, 1327; the disastrous love of the fair Isabel—*la Belle* and the Earl of March—"the gentle Mortimer"; the battle of Crécy, 1346; surrender of Calais, 1347; peace of Bretigny, 1360; death of the heroic Black Prince, 1376; peasant insurrection, 1381; rise of the House of Lancaster as the century closes with the dark fortunes of Richard II. A great political movement went forward side by side with a powerful intellectual movement. They acted and reacted on each other—but an intellectual movement gave the first impulsion to the political.

Drayton has written a poem in six cantos—I suppose he meant it for an epic—on the Barons' wars, and strangely confines himself to the struggle that eddied round the queen of Edward II. and her handsome paramour. He is blind to the real light and shade in the turbulent picture of the fourteenth century. Its darker features found a poet in Piers Ploughman, who on the Malvern Hills dreams his dream of woe and denunciation, of sermon and satire. He wrote in the early part of the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Parsons, "parisshe preestes,"

Bisshopes and bachelours,
Bothe maistres and doctours,

came in for his lash, equally for their "Symonie." While the Son of God came on earth poor, the rich abbot, we are told, rode about with a retinue to insult and oppress the peasantry.

We find a reference made to a belief put forward by astrologers at the time that the great plague was due to a conjunction between Saturn and other planets. Saturn was represented by the astrologers as peculiarly noxious.

Jupiter atque Venus boni, Saturnusque malignus,
Sol et Mercurius cum Luna sunt mediocres.

Food had more to do with it than the constellations. The poor perished by thousands. "He who was ill-nourished with unsubstantial food," says Simon de Covino in Latin hexameters, "fell before the slightest breath of the destroyer," but death respected the rich and great. It was, however, all one—for as for the poor—

Grata morte cadunt, quia vivere talibus est mors.

At the time marriage was sometimes brought about by "brocage," i. e., the wooing was done by another. This Piers condemns, and most will agree with him that a man had better do his own courtship. "Regrating," i. e., buying up everything brought to market and then raising the price—the mediæval "corner"—is condemned. We find the phrases, "in a pryvee parlour" and "in a chamber with a chymenee"—a curious illustration of the change taking place in social manners. Originally the hall was the apartment where the lord of the household and the male portion of the family passed most of their time when not engaged in war or the chase; and from the huge fire-place, with its vast frogs for the logs, rose the only chimney in the dwelling. The chambers were only used for sleeping and as places of retirement for the ladies. At first they had no fire places (chymenees). The parlour was a room introduced at a late period. As its name imports, it was a place for private conferences. As refinement went forward people would wish to live with more privacy. The heads of the household gradually deserted the hall, except on special occasions; they withdrew to the parlour or to "the chambre with a chymenee." Naturally with the departure of the lord from the hall, its old festive character and its indiscriminate hospitality begun to diminish, and it ultimately disappeared. This gave rise to a popular agitation and was stigmatized as a sign of the degeneracy of the times. In some vigorous lines the hunting abbot, trafficking in land ("lond buggere"), "an heepe of hounds" following at his heels (Piers uses a coarser word) is denounced. This was a common subject of satire. Chaucer strikes at the abuses. The Archdeacon of Richmond, on the occasion of his visitation to the priory of Bridlington, had with him ninety-seven horses, twenty dogs and three hawks. The Bishop of Norwich dies, and he leaves the king—what? His crosier? His blessing? No—his pack of hounds!

The condition of "cherl" is described in pitying tones. He could make no covenant; could not even be apprenticed without his lord's leave. In a poem on the Constitution of Masonry, published in the same century, the master is warned he must not make of any "bondeman" an apprentice to masonry.

The sky is in places so dark; elsewhere so bright! Criticism, history, romance, poetry, prophecy, are flashing in auro-boreal tint and splendour. We have seen what some had done. Yonder there in Scotland the heroic Wallace asserts freedom to be "a natural right," and, hark! Wycliffe's voice—the voice of one of the greatest scholars of the time—is pealing *reveillee* of the Reformation!

We could go down to the centuries and find in each generation the men of genius proclaiming great root principles of freedom. There they are, from the wholesome Chaucer to the graceless Byron, a great shining throng. Chaucer proclaims

That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.

anticipating Burns'

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gould for a' that.

There they are—like the great Milton—battling for the people's cause, for the cause of enlightenment, of progress, of gentleness, of pity for the poor. Witness Dickens in our own day. How noble Byron is when he writes of liberty! The God-given gift feels at her true work, released from the thralldom of sense and scorn. The same is true of Swinburne. Go to ancient days and other lands. Who so great an enemy of the tyrant in Greece, in Rome, as the literary man? The courtly author or authors of Homer give the highest glory to the man whose espousal of the popular cause (Achilles' wrath following on his wise counsel to find out the cause why the people were perishing) stands in the forefront of the Iliad. The Hebrew prophets (adopt what theory you like of inspiration) were the literary men of Judah and Israel, and how they brand oppression when every other voice is dumb! The monarch, the statesman, the soldier, the lawyer, the parson, the

priest, have all at one time or another oppressed the people. But the voice of literature has ever been the same—true to nature, to humanity, to God! Genius is, indeed, itself a true and solemn consecration.

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.

LONDON LETTER.

A LIGHT mist was rising in and about Hampstead as I climbed the hill this morning—a mist which, meeting the London atmosphere, a mile or two off, turned into an unpoetic yellow fog. The delicate grey veil drifted aside now and again, when were revealed those points of view—Flask Walk, Well Walk, Church Row, and the like—which make this charming old town famous. Soon, on the heath, the air became perfectly clear and bright. The haze faded from the low-lying meadows and woods, considered of the finest quality by Cockneys; the ponds at Hendon glimmered among the leafless trees: one could almost see Windsor Castle away in the distance—visible yesterday, they tell you, and may be to-morrow, but which they can never show you to-day. The landmarks in the great city to the south-east had to be taken on trust. St. Paul's was somewhere in that dense vapour in the hollow at the back of the Pickwickian pools still frequented by tittlebats: and Westminster Abbey was yonder, making ready to do honour to Browning: and all the church spires were there that cluster about the golden-crested Monument. But, blotted by the fog out of the map spread below and around, there were no signs of the London that lay so near: you could only tell you were on the outskirts of the capital by the immense suburban fringe of roads and terraces, which stretched vague and picturesque in a shadowy half-light. With one's back to the town and its grey-brown cloak one looked at a country scene that would have delighted Caldecott. It wanted but his red-coated huntsmen to ride across the fields and vault over the gates, and "powder up and down a bit," to give the necessary touch of colour.

Turn away from the Heath, down a quiet road bordered with limes, and you come to a corner, characteristic of Hampstead, where the old and new for ever jostle each other. Here three houses stand near together, two *tempe* Queen Anne, of fine red brick pointed with stone, and surrounded by the pretty formal gardens of their century, the third built about seventy or eighty years ago in the Gothic style affected by Pugin and his followers. Outside, this turreted villa contrasts unfavourably with the beautiful architecture of its neighbours; but within, the most exacting must fail to find a fault, for here lives Mr. du Maurier, and from the moment the threshold is crossed you feel you are in the home of an artist.

The "eye" of the house, as the old dramatists say, is, of course, the studio upstairs, wide and comfortable, lighted by three large windows. In a sunny corner stands the easel, a little littered with drawings, but there is nothing else to tell the room is not a library or boudoir. There are plenty of books and papers, easy chairs and sofas in abundance, a piano at which all sorts of famous people have sung, delightful pictures on the walls, small pieces of decoration in china and bronze. On the mantelpiece stands a reduction of the Venus of Milo, and not far off hangs the diploma of the Water-Colour Society, of which Mr. du Maurier is an associate.

Mr. du Maurier sits in the light of the window near to the yellow-brown skin of his old friend Chang, that great St. Bernard whose portrait for eight years was so often to be seen in *Punch*. The fur is carefully stretched against the wall in an honoured place, and makes an uncommon ornament above the matting dado. Close to the artist are his pencils and drawing paper; on the easel in front is a little sketch at which he has been at work. But the master-hand rests quiet as the kind voice speaks of matters which have nothing to do with the delicate, graceful composition set aside for the pleasure of a casual visitor.

Would you like to know what my host is like? Picture to yourself a gentleman endowed with a certain youthful alertness in expression of face and carriage—characteristic, I think, of the inventor—which makes the statement that he was born in 1834 incredible. The thick brown hair, moustache, and imperial are hardly touched with grey: the slim figure might be that of a man of thirty. Those whom the gods favour can never grow old: when they die, they die young. Success and happiness are great beautifiers: their presence scares crow's-feet from the corner of the eyes, and wrinkles from across the forehead. It is easy to read, by a dozen of unfailing signs and tokens writ large in the mobile, refined face, that Mr. du Maurier's lines have fallen in pleasant places.

It is Mr. Lowell's opinion, expressed by Mr. Smalley sometime back in the New York *Tribune*, that Mr. du Maurier is an artist in talk as well as an artist who talks. Personally I cannot imagine anything pleasanter than to listen as the owner of this charming work-room speaks of all sorts of things, in such a fashion that, when he ceases, one would like to answer with the quotation from "Paradise Lost" addressed by Burke to Reynolds. It is not only what Mr. du Maurier says, it is how he says it, with that French neatness of method to which the *Tribune* alludes, which makes everything tell. The manner I cannot re-produce, but I would like to give you an outline of his talk.

Mr. du Maurier speaks, for this is something in the form of an interview, of a part of his young days spent in No. 1, Devonshire Terrace, a house now sacred to the memory of Dickens who lived there for some years. He describes the life in the school at Passy, where he and his