

two periods came the Commonwealth, which put down the drama and practically discouraged poetry. There was, the lecturer said, no strict line of demarcation between the late Elizabethans and the early Carolines. First among those he mentioned a group of four—Herrick, the greatest of them, a writer full of life and joy, graceful, musical, melodious: next to him Carew, a poet unduly neglected, and next Suckling and Lovelace, perhaps too highly esteemed. Specimens of their writings were given, in particular Herrick's "Gather ye Rosebuds," "Bid Me to Live," and Carew's "Ask Me no More."

After these mention was made of three religious poets—Herbert, Quarles and Vaughan—and Herbert's charming poem on virtue was read. The names of Cowley and Waller were mentioned with an apology for doing no more in consequence of the shortness of the time.

The lecturer then came to the great name of John Milton, born in 1608, eight years before the death of Shakespeare, dying in 1674. Sketching his literary life, he remarked that it was divided into three periods, the first ending with the publication of *Lycidas*, the second with the Restoration, the third extending to the end of his life.

To the first period belonged the poem on the Nativity, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, *Lycidas*. To the second his prose works and some sonnets. To the third *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. While differences of judgment will always be found, the place of Milton must always be among the highest, and the judgment of literary men in general would place him next to Shakespeare, among English poets. His great distinctive qualities were loftiness and sublimity, to use Lord Tennyson's phrase, "like a seraph strong."

Mr. Saintsbury thought *Comus* the greatest of Milton's poems, whilst Mr. Mark Pattison thought *Lycidas* was the "high water mark of English poetry," *Lycidas* was a splendid poem the last of the early works, and showing Milton's growing antipathy to the existing hierarchical system. It appeared in 1637, the same year in which Hampden was tried for refusing the ship money. The Long Parliament met three years later, and in two years more the civil war broke out. One could understand that Milton had many thoughts to occupy his mind. During the years 1637 to 1657, the year before Cromwell's death, he wrote only political tracts, some of them vulgar and scurrilous, and controversial books, some of them of great power. Macaulay compared his prose to cloth of gold. The only poems written at this time were some sonnets, including the famous one on the slaughter of the Piedmontese Protestants.

The lecturer passed more briefly over *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* as being generally known, and then proceeded to speak of the later Caroline poets, referring briefly to Marvell, Butler, Sedley, Rochester, and at greater length to the great Dryden, "glorious John Dryden," as he was called, a writer who was a great critic and a great poet, representing both English and French influences. He mentioned a number of pieces, which might be taken as specimens of his style, and concluded by quoting two stanzas from Alexander's Feast.

VICTORIAN POETRY.

THE sixth and seventh lectures of the course were by the Rev. A. Pitman on the poetry of the Victorian era the former dealing with "the malady of the soul," as given voice to by (i) A. H. Clough and (ii) Matthew Arnold. The lecturer spoke first of the characteristics of the Victorian age as so distinct in its poetry from all that had gone before, giving several reasons why this should be so. After this introduction he spoke more particularly of the "poets of unrest" who reflect as in a mirror a century of restless-

ness and doubt, which is especially the case with Clough. He noticed the beauty of their characters and the gentleness of their spirit with the sweet sadness of their poems, illustrating his remarks by frequent and apt quotations from both, while at the same time he compared their points of view. Matthew Arnold's loss of faith was evidenced by selections from "The Grand Chartruse" and other poems; the sweetness and delicacy of his tones from "Requiescat"—"Strew on her Roses, Roses," while his musical power was illustrated by the chorus from "Empedocles on Etna," a few stanzas of which we may venture to quote in conclusion:

"What forms are these coming
So white through the gloom?
What garments out-glistening
The gold-flower'd broom?"

"What sweet-breathing presence
Out-perfumes the thyme?
What voices enrapture
The night's balmy prime?"

"'Tis Apollo comes leading
His choir, the Nine,
The leader is fairest
But all are divine."

ON Saturday, December 12th, Mr. Allan A. Pitman delivered the last of the Trinity Extension Lectures in Association Hall. The subject was "The Renewal of Life," as evinced by Browning, and was a continuation of his lecture of the previous week on "The Malady of the Soul." The lecturer first dwelt on Browning as an optimist. Like all truly great poets, he had his own philosophy of life, which may be summed up as "a noble optimism." Evil, however gross, has always in it a possibility of good. Even in the ghastly Morgue at Paris (depicted in "Apparent Failure"), where hope seems utterly extinguished, we must conclude "That what began best, can't end worst, nor what God blessed once, prove accurs't." Again, he was the poet of Hope. His was the large religion of tolerance and comprehension. He insisted on these cardinal and essential doctrines, "believe in God and in the soul" and "live your life as in God's presence." Browning is constantly accused of being both unmusical and obscure. Now, there is a sense in which both of these allegations are true. Some collocations of words are harsh with stony consonants and rough syntax, but that Browning can be as musical as any English poet, and can add the emotional emphasis of sound to the logical emphasis of sense, is clearly shown in such poems as "Childe Roland" and "Fra Lippo Lippi." And if by "obscure" he meant "difficult to understand," it is true that Browning is often obscure, owing to the nature of his subject, for it must naturally be difficult to express subtle thought in the language of ordinary conversation, and owing to his peculiar manner, with its swift and sudden transitions, which are characteristics of the author's rapidity of thought. Browning was the poet thinker, who touched "not deep things obscurely, but obscure things deeply." His are not the poems which can be read in an arm-chair in the last hours of the evening, nor ought anyone to commence with his shorter poems, which are undoubtedly difficult, owing to deep concentration of thought. The lecturer enlarged on Browning's strength and healthy-mindedness as the best antidote for the malady of the soul, enriching his eloquent advocacy by quotations from "The Ring and the Book," "Paracelsus" and "Evelyn Hope." Browning does not shrink at times from depicting the diseased, distorted temperament with vivid, even painful, intensity; but his worst and most degraded types are ever redeemable. Even a Ned Bratts, even a Guido Franceschini may be saved by a sudden lightning flash, which reveals to us their whole character. Browning shows forth to us a high philosophy with