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Great Epochs in English Literature and Their
Causes—A Sketch. 2. The Chaucerian Epoch.

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BESIDES the writers already mentioned, a number of men flourished before Chaucer, whose names are well worthy of remembrance; but they are scattered over a long interval. They wrote, either before the Conquest, or when, after that event, the rugged Saxon of the English was yet struggling with the polished Norman French for supremacy. They were, as it were, the heralds announcing the coming birth of our English Literature. They watched by its cradle, they nourished its childhood, but not till Norman and Saxon became one, was it possible there could be a great literary period in England. That time came when the deep policy of Henry II and Edward I had borne its fruit in the creation of an English nation; when the rulers of the land were brought to know their Island realms to be the real sources of their power and greatness; when they abandoned the foreign tongue brought in with the Conquest; when the rude strength of the common speech had blended with the courtly polish of that which Normandy