

is then only that the guardian and guiding instinct of a noble purpose assumes definite form, and is clothed with human loveliness, as Duty becomes Beauty in the successful completion of a life truly heroic.

Such is the general outline of a design filled up in this poem by means of incidents which, whilst anxious to avoid too obvious an intrusion of any typical intention, I have so arranged as to identify the ideal story of Arthur, as far as I found to be practical, not only with the development of the heroic character in the individual, but with the composition and structural growth of the Nation that claims in Arthur its hero and its type. With this view a prominent position has been accorded to the Saxons, who are almost lost sight of in the French legends of Arthur, where they appear travestied into Saracens, among whom the worship of Mahomet pre-eminently flourished—a notable proof not only of the comparatively modern origin, but the completely foreign character of the fables which Sir Thomas Malory “reduced into Englysshe.” Special significance is also assigned in this poem to the nationality of Arthur’s bride, in adherence to those principles of Epic Fable which, doubtless, induced Virgil to identify the national hero of the Romans with the conquest of their Latin progenitors, and to symbolise the ultimate fusion of races by the nuptials of Æneas and Lavinia.

For the same reason, various indications have been admitted in my narrative of a distinctly Scandinavian nationality commingling with that of the other races now united under the name of Britons.