

age or period, each of which would require more space than we can devote to all of them together, if we would fairly express or criticise their merits. This is the less necessary as the writers are so familiar to every one who boasts even a tolerable acquaintance with the literature of his country. Who has not read the dramas of Shakspeare, or been led by the magic spell of Spenser among the shadowy scenes of his allegory, or been captivated by the eloquence of Jeremy Taylor, or been carried along with the powerful argument of Barrow, or been instructed by the wisdom of Hooker, or heard of the logarithms of Napier, or found at least matter for reflection, and perhaps refutation, in the philosophy of Hobbes?

It is but a very general view that we can venture to present of these and other such writers, and the most general criticisms that we can offer.

Literature in this period—as it must in every period—divides itself again into Poetry and Prose. Poetry, we have said, generally takes the precedence of Prose in a nation's literature. During what are called the Dark and Middle Ages, and until the Reformation, there is not a single writer of prose of any eminence; while during the same period we have several poets of high name, such as Chaucer, Gower, James 1st of Scotland, Dunbar, Surrey and Sackville. The questions of the Reformation required some other vehicle than poetry for their expression, if they were to find expression at all; and these questions were such as could not limit themselves to a mere oral communication or utterance. The logical faculty as well as the poetical was now developed. Zeno, the first Logician, the father of Dialectics, was the first Greek prose writer. Parmenides, his master, announcing his views oracularly, not needing to defend them dialectically, uttered himself in Greek hexameters, as did also his immediate predecessor Xenophanes. Herodotus, the earliest historian of Greece, was about contemporary with Zeno.

On the threshold of this period we confront the theological productions of Cranmer and Jewell and Ridley; and we have the sermons, or popular addresses, *conciones ad populum*, of Latimer, the Spurgeon of our own day. It was he who said to Ridley when on the way to the stake: "Be of good comfort, Doctor Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust, shall never be put out."

Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" is the first writing in the form of a regular treatise that we possess in our language. Roger Ascham indeed had written his "Schoolmaster" sometime before, in good English, and in a pleasing and lively manner, but it is not so sustained and methodical a work as Hooker's, and is not to be named with it in point of either thought or style. Hooker's work called forth the commendation of the then reigning Pontiff, who pronounced it on a level with the best treatise that had been written in any age. This fact, I think, is noticed in the life of Hooker in that very fascinating book "Walton's Lives," itself a gem of biographical composition, as his "Angler" is on its peculiar subject.

It is worthy of notice that our early English prose is modelled evidently upon the Latin language, which had hitherto been in vogue in all prose compositions, and with which all claiming any amount of education in that age were familiar. Hence the inversions so noticeable in our earlier prose writers, especially in the stately style of Hooker, and in the march of Bacon's thought; although in his "Moral Essays" Bacon approaches much more to the unaffected ease of a later period. These inversions are particularly observable in Milton's prose, which is more involved, if possible, and, if