

for this act of supposed condescension to the rights of the native speech. At the accession of Elizabeth, there was no clear foreshadowing of the most brilliant creative epoch that has been developed in modern literature. Yet in thirty years from the beginning of her reign it was ripening into supreme vigour and splendour—the transformation is complete.

Let us note the historic influences that had produced this marvellous result. First of all—pre-eminent above all—was the lofty sense of self-respect, the stimulus to national consciousness, resulting from the splendid victory over the Spanish Armada, an achievement that may be justly described as the English Salamis. Other influences are to be enumerated. The knightly love of adventure; the spirit of heroic enterprise; the expansion of geographical and commercial knowledge; colonization; the quest of strange lands in the “unformed Occident,” were all determining forces, exhilarating agencies. Then, too, was the relation of England to foreign powers, growing out of the complex struggles of the Reformation to establish itself in the Low Countries, the Huguenot struggles in France, and the almost ceaseless strife with the power of the Spanish monarchy. The revolt of the Netherlands began in 1568. Sidney was then fourteen years of age; Bacon, eight; Shakespeare, four; Raleigh and Spenser were sixteen, being both born in 1552. In the midst of all, and in one sense above all, was the brilliant figure of Mary Stuart, the inspiration of the Catholic cause; the object of an unflinching homage, whose tragic death at Fotheringhay, in February, 1587, was the immediate occasion of the descent of the Armada upon England. Sir Philip Sidney, the purest expression of all that was noble and lovely in the manhood of Elizabethan England, breathed out his young life in Octo-

ber, 1586. During this year it is probable that Shakespeare came to London in quest of a livelihood. In 1587 appeared Marlowe’s “Tamerlane,” which forever fixed the place of blank verse in the English drama. During these same eventful years, Raleigh was founding the English colonies on Roanoke Island, and Drake was circumnavigating the globe. The age was a drama in constant progress; its moulding influences were dramatic; that its literature should have in large measure assumed the dramatic form is but the logical outcome of the events that fashioned it. Much even of its non-dramatic poetry is tinged by a dramatic radiance. The noblest allegorical expression of contemporary life has its dramatic features and its dramatic tone. The peculiar blending of the spirit of chivalry, the fantasies of the mediæval era with the rising realism of the modern world, is a marked characteristic of the Elizabethan age. Its Sidneys and Raleighs, its Galahads and Lancelots, had not outlived the fascination of the romantic day, at the same time they had developed some of the distinctive features of our modern materialistic and realistic life. They stand on the border land, where the charm of one age is receding, and the strongly marked outline of another is rising into view. The old order is changing, but the ancient economy lingers, its brilliance and its glamour are still reflected, and the new dispensation has not lost the freshness and vigour of novelty. That the literature of Elizabethan days should have assumed a creative and dramatic cast, would seem to be the mere logic of events, every historic influence converging to this grand result. No teacher is capable of estimating the character or the cause of this unparalleled era, who is not acquainted with the complex historic life of the sixteenth century. If we select the