

foreign government was introduced, and introduced from the very first to stay ; but a new population was not to any great extent brought in. The Normans, however, were the rulers, and the native population the ruled. The Normans brought with them their own adopted language, known as Norman-French, which was of purely Roman or Classic origin, and which naturally, under the circumstances, became the language of the court, and of polite society, and so it remained for two centuries.

The old language, the Anglo-Saxon or English, remained firmly and uncompromisingly the language of the people, though it was the language of bondage. Norman-French was the language of the few, the cultured, the ruling class ; English, the language of the many, the unrefined, the cultivators of the soil, the people. In no way did the conquered English show their proverbial tenacity more forcibly than in this clinging* to their national speech.

The English language, then, was not killed by the Norman Conquest ; but English literature was wounded to the death—for the time almost annihilated.

Of the many chroniclers who wrote before the Conquest, only one continues to any length after the disastrous 1066.

Then came a sad time for the old Gothic tongue,—a time of obscurity and disruption, during which the stately language, with its high-sounding endings that must have delighted the ears of the nation in pre-conquest days, was split up into a number of dialects. During this gloomy period of sullen submission to their proud rulers, there was no guide, no standard. There were no poets to show the way, no chroniclers to chronicle, no brave deeds to be recited and extolled ; and yet the language lived on. The song no more was heard in Saxon halls, but the English tongue found a safe and tender refuge in the humble homes of the conquered people. The people, who spoke the different dialects, could understand each other ; but there was no standard English language. English dialects became many ; but they produced no English literature. Out of this chaos, with startling suddenness, in the middle of the fourteenth century, a standard English language sprang into existence, which from its suitability and the ready recognition of it, came to be called the "King's English," just as certain highways in the country, later on, came to be named the "King's highway."

With it two men leaped into fame : Chaucer, the Father of English verse, and Gower, Moral Gower, as he has been called on account of the moral character of his writings.

Moral Gower, who was a contemporary of Chaucer, wrote three great poems : one in French, another in Latin, and a third in English. By so doing this modest yet great poet, longing as he did to reach the greatest number of readers, showed that he dared not, like Chaucer—even when Chaucer had led the way—trust the chaotic, uncertain state of the English tongue as a language of literature.

Now, when this new English language, under the magic pen of Chaucer, burst forth into the spring-tide of a new existence it was discovered that the old Anglo-Saxon tongue had come out of the struggle against its Norman-French rival triumphantly. It had lost many of its sonorous, superfluous terminations, but had put on a simpler and less ungainly style. It had also gained such a number of words of Roman