

'Seek to know no more,' said he, 'than heaven is pleased to reveal. Clouds and darkness cover its designs, and prophecy is never permitted to lift up, but in part, the veil that rests upon the future.'

The hermit ceased to speak, and Pelayo laid himself down again to take repose, but sleep was a stranger to his eyes.

When the first rays of the rising sun shone upon the tops of the mountains, the travellers assembled round the fountain beneath the tree, and made their morning's repast. Then, having received the benediction of the hermit, they departed in the freshness of the day, and descended along the hollow defiles leading into the interior of Spain. The good merchant was refreshed by sleep, and his morning's meal; and when he beheld his wife and daughter thus secure by his side, and the hackney laden with his treasure close behind him, his heart was light in his bosom, and he carolled a chanson as he went, and the woodlands echoed to his song. But Pelayo rode in silence, for he revolved in his mind the portentous words of the hermit; and the daughter of the merchant ever and anon stole looks at him full of tenderness and admiration, and deep sighs betrayed the agitation of her bosom.

At length they came to the foot of the mountains, where the forests and rocks terminated, and an open and secure country lay before the travellers. Here they halted, for their roads were widely different. When they came to part, the merchant and his wife were loud in thanks and benedictions, and the good burgher would fain have given Pelayo the largest of his sacks of gold; but the young man put it aside with a smile. 'Silver and gold,' said he, 'need I not, but if I have deserved aught at thy hands, give me thy prayers, for the prayers of a good man are above all price.'

In the mean time, the daughter had spoken never a word. At length she raised her eyes, which were filled with tears, and looked timidly at Pelayo, and her bosom throbbed; and after a violent struggle between strong affection and virgin modesty, her heart relieved itself by words.

'Senor,' said she, 'I know that I am unworthy of the notice of so noble a cavalier; but suffer me to place this ring upon a finger of that hand which has so bravely rescued us from death; and when you regard it you may consider it as a memorial of your valour, and not of one who is too humble to be remembered by you.'

With these words, she drew a ring from her finger, and put it upon the finger of Pelayo; and having done this, she blushed and trembled at her own boldness, and stood as one abashed, with her eyes cast down upon the earth.

Pelayo was moved at the words of the simple maiden, and at the touch of her fair hand, and at her beauty, as she stood thus trembling and in tears before him: but as yet he knew nothing of woman, and his heart was free from snares of love. 'Amiga,' (friend) said he, 'I accept thy present, and will wear it in remembrance of thy goodness;' so saying, he kissed her on the cheek.

The damsel was cheered by these words, and hoped that she had awakened some tenderness in his bosom; but it was no such thing says the grave old chronicler, for his heart was devoted to higher and more sacred matters, yet certain it is, that he always guarded well that ring.

When they parted, Pelayo remained with his huntsmen on a cliff, watching that no evil befel them until they were far beyond the skirts of the mountain; and the damsel often turned to look at him, until she could no longer discern him, for the distance, and the tears that dimmed her eyes.

And for that he had accepted her ring, says the ancient chronicler, she considered herself wedded to him in her heart, and would never marry; nor could she be brought to look with eyes of affection upon any other man; but, for the true love which she bore Pelayo, she lived and died a virgin. And she composed a book which treated of love and chivalry, and the temptations of this mortal life; and one part discoursed of celestial matters, and it was called 'The Contemplations of Love;' because, at the time she wrote it, she thought of Pelayo, and of his having accepted her jewel, and called her by the gentle appellation of 'Amiga.' And often thinking of him in tender sadness, and of her never having beheld him more, she would read it as if in his stead, and while she repeated the words of love which it contained, she would endeavour to fancy them uttered by Pelayo, and that he stood before her.

From the Knickerbocker for February, 1840.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

'Ah who can hope his line should long
Live in a daily-changing tongue?
We write in sand; our language grows,
And, as the tide, our work o'erflows.'

It is proposed, in the present paper, to direct the reader's attention to a brief history of the English language; to its excellencies and defects; the best means of cultivating an acquaintance with it; the danger of corruption to which, in this age of literary hobbies and imitations, it is exposed; and its future prospects, in regard to its prevalence and extension. Lest the writer should be thought, by some, to wander from his subject, in his occasional allusions to English literature, it may be proper to remark, that the intimate connection between the themes, renders such reference unavoidable.

Language forms a distinguishing characteristic of man. Brutes have inarticulate cries, which express their emotions, and the import of which they seem in a measure to understand; but they have

nothing which can be dignified with the name of language. This is the vehicle of thought; it is the instrument by which mind acts upon mind; by which the people of one nation and age converse with the people of other nations and of remote ages; and it is the means by which the social nature of man arrives at its highest gratification.

It is the testimony of the Scriptures that originally the inhabitants of the world were of one speech and of one language, and that the foundation for a variety of languages was laid in the confusion of tongues, at the building of Babel. From the nature of the case, also, it might be inferred that but one language would originally exist; and so convenient would it be for human intercourse, that all the inhabitants of the earth should continue to speak the same language, that we cannot well account for the existence of so many languages, so widely differing from each other, without supposing a miraculous interference, like that which the confusion of tongues at Babel is described to have been. The departures from the original language, however, though sufficient to prevent the different tribes from understanding each other, appears not to have been so entire as to destroy all resemblance between the different dialects. Hence, learned men have been able to trace some remote resemblances between all the various languages that exist.

Languages, like individuals, grow up from infancy to maturity; and, like nations, they advance from barbarism to refinement. The English is the youngest child in the family of languages; but, as it frequently happens to the youngest child, it has been nursed with peculiar care, and enjoyed peculiar advantages; and it exhibits a vigorous constitution, and has acquired a manly growth. From poverty it has advanced to riches, and from barbarism to great refinement. It is an interesting employment to trace its history, and to mark its progress. It has originated, not from one source, but from many sources. It has amassed its wealth not only by carefully husbanding its own resources, but by the lawful plunder of numerous other languages.

The history of the English language is intimately connected with the history of the English nation. The island of Great Britain has been the scene of its infancy, the theatre of its childhood, and the spot on which, in its maturity, it has flourished in peculiar glory. The earliest inhabitants of Britain, and indeed of all northern and western Europe, were the Celts, a people who, probably many centuries before the Christian era, wandered away from the parent tribes in Asia. They were rude and uncultivated, with the exception of the Druids, their priests, who had a humble claim to the title of philosophers. Such was the people whom Julius Cæsar found in Britain, when he raised the Roman eagle on its shores; and who, after a severe struggle, were subdued to the Roman dominion. The languages of the Welsh, of the native Irish, denominated the Erse, and of the highlands of Scotland, called Gaelic, which differ only in dialect, are the remains of the Celtic, the original language of northern and western Europe.

After the internal troubles of the Roman Empire obliged the Romans to withdraw from Britain, the inhabitants of the southern portion of the island were exposed to the incursions of the Picts and Scots from the north, whom the Roman arms, during the Roman dominion, had kept in check. In vain did the Britons call on the Romans for aid; instead of defending others, they were scarcely able to defend themselves. In their extremity, the Britons invited the Saxons to undertake their defence. The Saxons inhabited northern and western Germany, and the adjacent territory, a branch of whom was denominated the Angles, from whom the English derive their name. They were a part of the extensive Gothic nation which spread itself over central and northern Europe; a people that left the eastern tribes at a later period than the Celts, and who were considerably in advance of them in civilization and mental improvement. The Saxons, after having driven back the Picts and Scots, conquered the Britons whom they came to defend; and so complete was the subjugation, that the Saxon or Gothic entirely superseded the Celtic, or ancient language of the country, and the Saxon is to be considered as the parent of the English language. Doubtless, from an intercourse with the original inhabitants, some Celtic words were intermingled with the Saxon, but they were not so numerous as materially to alter its form. The Saxon language, from the remains of it which have come down to modern times, appears to have been capable of expressing with copiousness and energy the sentiments of a people not destitute of mental cultivation.

From the subjugation of the Britons to the Saxons, the Saxon language underwent no material alteration, during a period of six hundred years. The Danes, indeed, during this time, overran the country, and for a season held it in subjection, and doubtless some Danish words were introduced into the Saxon. These seem not to have been very numerous, and made no material change in the form of the language, which may be accounted for from the fact, that the Danish and Saxon were but different dialects of the same parent, Gothic.

A much greater change in the language was effected by William the Conqueror, who, in 1066, subdued the English. He, with his followers, spoke the Norman French, a language formed by a mixture of the Celtic, Latin, and Gothic languages. William attempted, what few conquerors have done, to give law to the language of his subjects, and to introduce the Norman French in the place of the Saxon, by causing the intercourse of the court, and the proceedings of the courts of justice, to be held in the Norman

French. But this conqueror found it more easy to subdue the English nation, than to conquer the Saxon language. Although the Norman French was, for a time, spoken by the higher ranks of society in England, and some of its words found their way into the native Saxon from this circumstance, yet the Saxon language maintained its ground in Briton, essentially unchanged. By the intercourse which took place between England and France, for several centuries afterward, many more French words were introduced into the English. These were adopted, with very little change from their original form; and hence has arisen the similarity between many words in the two languages, which is now so clearly visible.

In later times, the words of the English language have been exceedingly augmented by the introduction of many derived from the Latin and the Greek, and occasionally from the French, the Spanish, the Italian, and the German. The Latin, in latter times, has been the primary source whence the English has been enriched and adorned. This has arisen, not only from the fact that the Latin was the language of a people highly cultivated and refined, and embodied a great variety of valuable literature, but also from the circumstance that for many ages it was the common medium of communication between the learned of the nations of modern Europe, and was, therefore, well understood by every English scholar.

Still, however, after all its changes and augmentations, the Saxon remains the basis of the English language. Almost all the words in common and familiar use, and those which relate to agriculture and the mechanic arts, are of Saxon origin. He who speaks Saxon-English, speaks plain English, which every person understands. If we were to speak of the circumambient air, which is Latin English, some persons might be found who would not fully understand us. If we say the surrounding air, which is Saxon English, we shall be distinctly and universally understood.

Of all the distinguished English writers, none is more remarkable for a general use of Saxon English, than Addison. It gives a peculiar simplicity to his style, and perhaps was one means of securing to the Spectator, to which he largely contributed, the unbounded popularity which it enjoyed with the mass of readers, at the time of its first publication. Dr. Johnson, equally celebrated, is especially distinguished for the use of Latin English. His Rambler, which was issued as a periodical, like the Spectator, though it contains more depth of sentiment, and greater splendour of imagery, which have ever rendered it a favourite with scholars, was by no means as popular with the mass of readers, when it was first issued, as was the Spectator.

The terms in the English language which relate to music, sculpture, and painting, have been derived from the Italian, as it is from Italy, especially, that the improvements in these fine arts have been derived. The words which relate to navigation, have been derived from Holland and Flanders, countries which were early distinguished among the nations of western Europe for the cultivation of this art. The French have ever been celebrated in the art of war, and from them have been derived the terms which relate to military affairs. The mathematics and philosophy, which owe their advancement chiefly to scholars, have derived their terms from the Latin and the Greek.

It has generally been the case, that the refinements of a language have kept an equal pace with a nation's advancement in civilization; and the state of language, therefore, forms a good criterion of the state of general improvement among a people. This has been emphatically true of the English language. Under the reign of Elizabeth, in the sixteenth century, the national manners advanced in refinement, and the language made equal and signal advances in its character. Spenser and Shakspeare, among the poets, and Hooker among the divines of that period, gave illustrious proofs of genius, and contributed essentially to improve the language of which they were ornaments. Of Hooker, Pope Clement VIII, who would not be likely to entertain an undue partiality for a Protestant, said: 'This man indeed deserves the name of an author. His books will get reverence by age; for there are in them such seeds of eternity, that they shall continue till the last fire shall devour all learning.' The works of Shakspeare, the prince of dramatic writers, whom no man in this department has ever rivalled, or probably may ever hope to rival, are well calculated to give a very favourable idea of the respectable advances which the language had made, at the time in which he flourished. The conceptions of his transcendent genius appear to have been not at all cramped by the language in which he wrote; and what author ever wrote, who showed more versatility of talent, or who required a more flexible, strong, and copious language to give life and animation to his varied and extraordinary conceptions.

The writers of the seventeenth century nobly carried on the work of improving the English language, which their predecessors had so honourably begun. The present authorized version of the Scriptures, which was first published in 1613, under the reign of James I. considered merely in a literary point of view, is a most remarkable production, honourable to the translators, and to the character of the language, at the time when it was written. The subjects of this volume are vast and sublime; its variety is well nigh boundless; and although it is designed to be, as it is, a literal translation of the original Hebrew and Greek, it must have been no common language which could have preserved that precision, force, and beauty of the originals, which it so signally exhibits. With the