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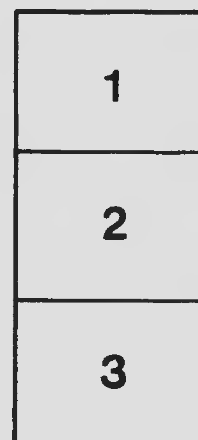

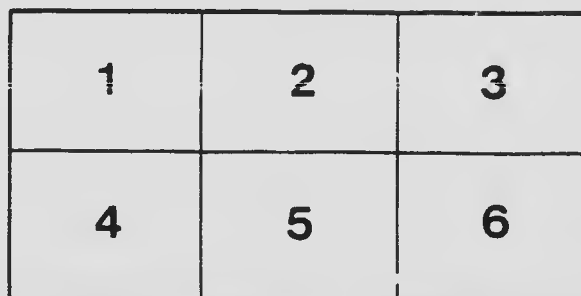

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BEGINNINGS OF THE ENGLISH ESSAY

BY

W. L. MacDONALD, Ph.D.

SOMETIME LECTURER IN ENGLISH,
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

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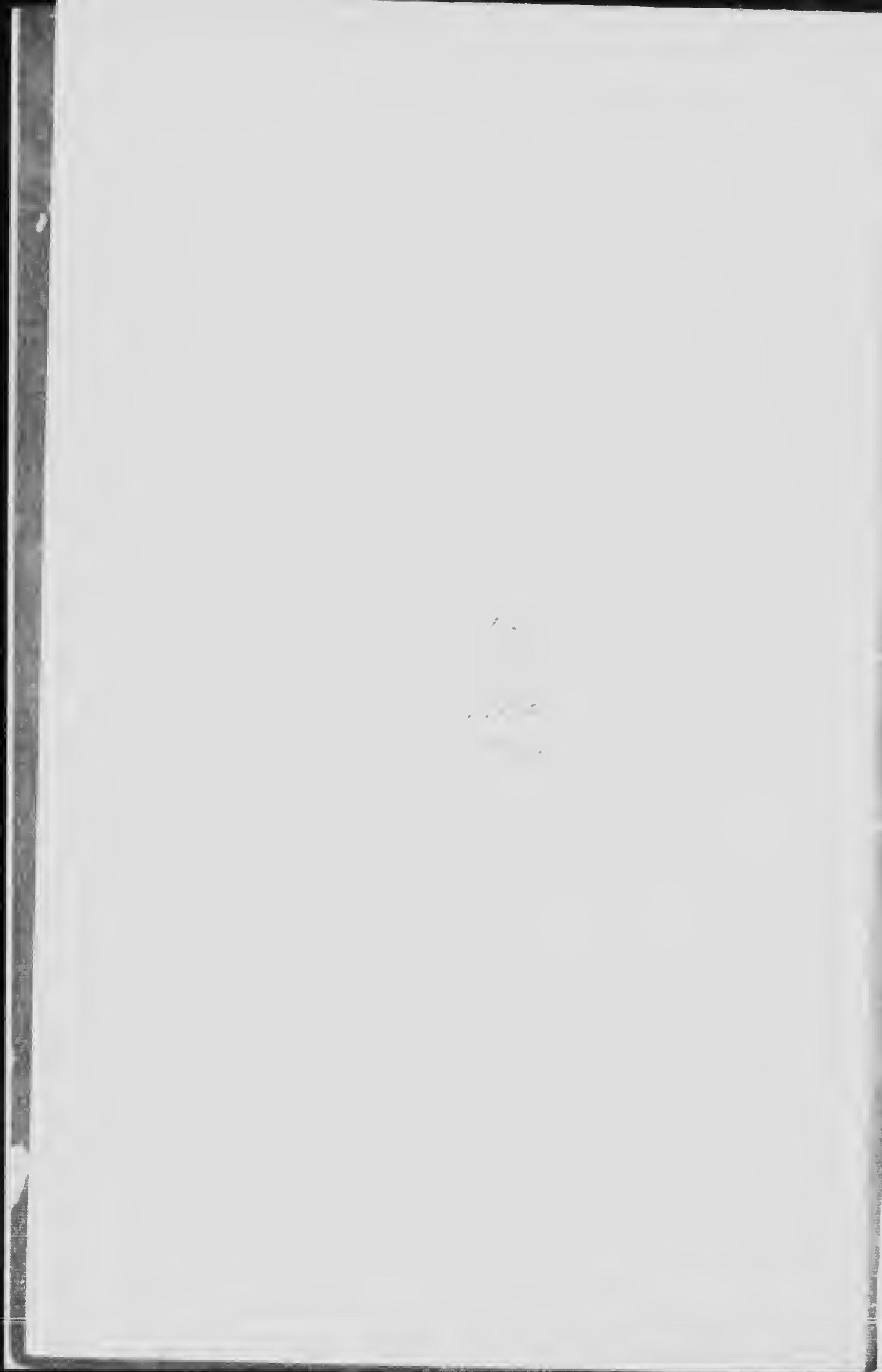

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PREFATORY NOTE

The following study comprises the first three chapters of a dissertation presented to Harvard University to satisfy part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I wish gratefully to acknowledge my obligations to Professors C. N. Greenough and W. A. Neilson, of Harvard. The former suggested the subject, indicated the way I should take, and furnished me with valuable bibliography; the latter aided me with incisive criticism as to approach and method. My thanks are also due to Professor Alexander, University College, Toronto, and to Mr. Langton, librarian of the University of Toronto, for kindly suggestions and assistance when the study was being prepared for the press.

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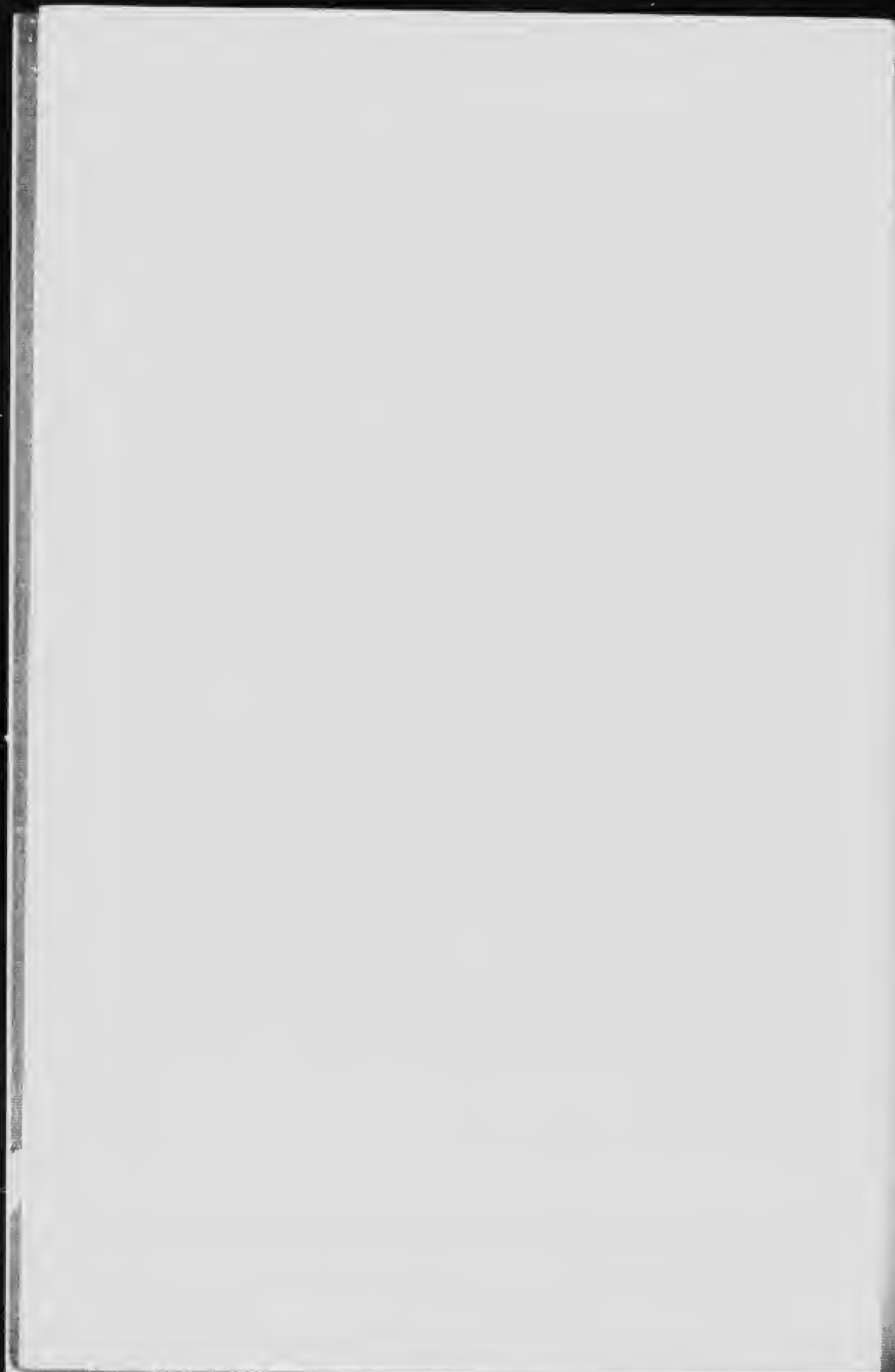

BEGINNINGS OF THE ENGLISH ESSAY

Chapter I

DEFINITION OF THE TYPE AND USAGE OF THE TERM

The purpose of this study is, first, to define the application of the word essay with special reference to the collections of essays that appeared in England before the year 1700; secondly, on the basis of this definition to point out prototypes of the form that appear in various languages, and to indicate the probable influences of these upon the earlier essayists; and thirdly, to discuss forms of literature that in length, style, matter, spirit, etc., are allied to the essay. Considerations of space forbid discussion of the several collections of essays that appeared in English between 1597, the date of the first edition of Bacon's *Essays*, and 1668 when Cowley's *Discourses by Way of Essays* was published, and even as a general introduction to the essayists of the period the following pages cannot claim to have treated exhaustively all the features indicated by the Table of Contents.

(i) The Renaissance Background

The essay, represented by the work of Montaigne, Bacon, and Cornwallis, is a more or less direct product of the later Renaissance.[1] Whatever else the term denotes, Renaissance means to the modern reader a revival of classical learning. In its widest application it implies a renewed interest in all the activities of the ancient classical world—architecture, the fine arts, science, and politics, but we are here concerned with its application to the revived interest in classical literature. The spirit which had fired Petrarch a century before became the fashion after 1453, and one of

[1] The historical remarks in this section are based mainly on Sir Richard Jebb's article, *The Classical Renaissance* in *Cam. Mod. Hist.*, Vol. I, pp. 532-599.

the great aims of rich patrons of literature was to collect and copy old manuscripts of whatever classical writings they could find. For a long time men were content with the simple possession of the manuscripts, or copies of them, and it was only secondarily that time and pains were spent in translating them. Seneca and Plutarch, whose writings have special interest in connection with the essay, both received early recognition at the hands of Renaissance scholars.

The letter is essentially a Latin form of literature and one of the earliest cultivated by the Renaissance *littérateurs.* Petrarch's letters were written in imitation of Cicero, Seneca, and St. Augustine, and his lead was followed by the scholars of the fifteenth century. Letters were written from one to another in the manner of Cicero *Ad Atticum*, discussing and criticizing literary works, but always, it should be noted, avoiding such topics as current politics, religious questions, and all subjects that would tend to break the classical illusion. Now there is, as we shall show later, a very close connection between the classical "epistola" and the essay of Montaigne, Cornwallis, and Bacon. Horace looked upon both his *Satires* and *Epistles* as *sermones*, that is, *causeries* in verse.[1] Seneca wrote in letter form what Bacon called an "auncient thing" to which Montaigne gave a new name. Furthermore, some of Plutarch's *Moralia* do not differ essentially from Seneca's Epistles on the one hand, or from the Renaissance essay on the other.

Being in a sense a revival of an old form, the essay exhibits many of the characteristics of its ancient prototype. One of the catch-words of the Renaissance is "enthusiasm", but we must carefully distinguish between the application of the word as referring to the attitude of Renaissance scholars towards classical learning, and to the spirit in which much of the neo-classical literature was written. In the pamphlets which we call "Critical Essays" the Renaissance writers were generally discussing the great theme that filled them with enthusiasm, classical literature, and consequently

[1] See J. Wight Duff, *A Literary History of Rome* (1909), p. 507.

these pamphlets generally show real ardour on the part of the writers. Thus Sidney, essentially a Renaissance type, does not fail to show his admiration of the classics, and this tradition established during the Renaissance never entirely disappeared from the so-called critical essay. When, however, we come to consider the essay proper the case is altered. With classical models before them, the Renaissance writers were obliged to observe the characteristic poise and restraint of their masters. Thus when we read the essays of Montaigne, Bacon, and practically all their successors, one characteristic that impresses us strongly is the almost entire lack of enthusiasm for the theme under discussion. Following a classical model like Seneca and Plutarch, the essayists seem to have made a point of keeping themselves detached from their subject.

(ii) DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS AND FIRST USE OF THE WORD AS APPLIED TO LITERATURE

The word "essay" is an importation from France. Furthermore, we are indebted to the French not only for the word in its general sense of "trial", but also for its special application to a form of literature. No examples of "essay" in the latter limited sense have been found in English before the publication of Montaigne's *Essaies* in 1580, and, as will be shown later, there is every reason for believing that Montaigne was the first to use the word with this meaning.

It was not until nearly a century and a half had elapsed after the appearance of Montaigne's *Essaies* that the word with this special connotation found a place in English dictionaries. All the dictionaries, of course, have the word in its earlier form "assay", in the general sense of "trial", as well as the particular sense of "testing a metal". John Baret[1] explains "*Assay* or rather *Essay* of the French word Essayer" by the "L. tentare . . . experire, *To assay*: to prove, to assaile . . . an assaying or proving before, a groping or feeling of the way with ones hande." Bullaker[2]

[1] *An Alvearie or Quadruple Dictionarie*, 1580.
[2] *English Expositor*, 1616 (ed. 1641).

and Cockeram[1] add nothing new to the definition. It is significant, however, that the word *essay* only is defined by them, *assay* apparently being omitted because it was not considered one of the "hardest words in the Language". John Minsheu[2] also omitted *assay* and defined *essay* as "... a proof, trial, preamble; among Comoedians the trial or proof of their action which they make before they come forth publickly upon the stage". Phillips[3] gave the meaning of a preamble, and Blount,[4] omitting *assay* as not being a hard word, defined *essay* in almost the exact words of Minsheu. Nathaniel Bailey[5] was the first English lexicographer to define the word as applied to a form of literature. "Essay: an attempt, proof, tryal: also a short Discourse upon a subject." Dr. Johnson[6] was more particular and picturesque, defining the word as a "Loose sally of the mind: irregular or undigested piece or composition". Finally the New English Dictionary[7] offers the following definition: "A composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of a subject; originally implying want of finish, . . . but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range." As evidence of the conscious change in the application of the word from an "imperfect offer" to a more or less finished composition, it quotes: "V. Knox 1782, Ess. (1819) I.i.I., 'Essays may now convey the idea of regular treatises'."

To sum up, we note that the original meaning of trial has never disappeared, that the present and more common meaning of a short discourse on a given subject was slow in finding its way into the dictionaries, but that since 1720 the word *essay* has become more and more associated with this restricted meaning. Essay (accented essáy) as "an attempt" is now comparatively rare.

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[1] *English Dictionary*, 1623 (ed. 1658).
[2] *Guide into the Tongues*, 1617.
[3] *The New World of English Words*, 1658.
[4] *Glossographia*, 1656 (ed. 1670).
[5] *Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, 1720.
[6] *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755.
[7] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. Essay sb. (8).

The first instance of the actual use of the term "essay" in the title of a literary composition occurs in *The Essayes of a Prentice in the Divine Art of Poesie*,[1] a collection of "juvenilia" in verse and prose by James VI of Scotland, afterwards James I of England. There can be no doubt that the author had in mind the original meaning of "trial" or "proof", yet even in this sense the ordinary form was *assay*, for as late as 1616 *essay* was amongst the "hardest words used in our language".[2] A possible explanation of the French form in this instance is suggested by King James's relations with his tutor, George Buchanan, who had been in France and for three years had taught Latin in the newly formed college at Bordeaux.[3] It was while here that he composed his four tragedies, one of which was dedicated to King James in a later edition.[4] These plays were acted by the students of the college, amongst whom was Montaigne.[5] Buchanan comes in for much praise as "the great poet of Scotland" in Montaigne's essay "Of the Education of Children",[6] and again in the essay "Of Presumption".[7] It is quite possible that as one of Montaigne's tutors, Buchanan may have seen some of the Frenchman's *Essais* long before they were given to the world, and probably he would be one of the first men in Great Britain to read the *Essais* as they appeared in print in 1580. James may have got from Buchanan the French word "essay" as an appropriate title for an experiment in the field of literature. Whatever truth there may be in this theory, however, there seems to be no doubt that it was Bacon and not King James who first popularized in England the use of the word as applied to a distinct literary *genre*.

[1] Edinburgh, 1584.
[2] Bullaker, 1616.
[3] *Dict. Nat. Biog.* Vol iii, p. 187.
[4] *George Buchanan* in *Glasgow Quartercentenary Studies:* Glasgow, 1907, p. 447.
[5] Ibid. p. 502, D.N.B. iii, p. 187.
[6] Book I, ch. 25.
[7] Book II, ch. 17. "Poetry, too, in my opinion, has flourished in this age of ours; we have abundance of very good artificers in the trade; D'Aurat, Beza, Buchanan," etc. (Cotton's translation.)

(iii) DEFINITION ON THE BASIS OF ESSAYISTS' STATEMENTS

We shall now turn to the earlier essay-writers themselves, and, after noting the different elements they consciously or unconsciously attribute to this species of writing, attempt to formulate a working definition of the essay applicable to the period. In the first place the original idea of "trial" seems never to be absent from the minds of the earlier essayists. Speaking of his own method of treating the topics that occurred to him, Montaigne says[1] in his picturesque way: "Though it happen to be a subject I do not very well understand, I try however, sounding it at a distance (je l'essaye, sondant le gué de bien loing), and finding it too deep for my stature I keep on the shore. . ." A little further in the same essay, the figure is changed: "I give a stab, not so wide but as deep as I can." Tuvil[2] in his essay "Of Poverty" says that although he has not exhausted his ideas on the subject, he chooses to stop, since it is "the humour of Essayes . . . rather to glaunce at all things with a running conceit than to insist on any". Cornwallis[3] uses the figure of a "runner trying for a start, or providence that tasts before shee buyes", and forestalls hostile criticism by reminding the reader that if his conceits prove to be nothing but words they break no promise with the world, "for they say but an Essay, like a Scrivenor trying his pen before he ingrosseth his worke". In the prefatory epistle to the reader Scott[4] makes the same claim for his title. "Him [Socrates] I try to imitate; wherein if I write nothing but words I write what the title of my Book promiseth, a triall, an Essay." The "Advertisement" to the *Moral Essayes*[5] contains the same kind of apology. "The main reason of making choice of this title has been, that Christian Morality appearing to be too vast an extent to be all entirely treated of. . . it has been thought better to Essay to treat it by parts. . ."

[1] Bk. I, ch. 50.
[2] *Vade Mecum.*
[3] *Essayes*, No. 45.
[4] *Essay of Drapery*, 1635.
[5] 1696. Pierre Nicole.

It follows almost as a corollary of the general idea of trial, shown to be ever present in the minds of writers who use the term "essay", that the subject-matter is rather crudely handled. "Undigested" is a common word to express this idea whether in reference to the borrowings from others or to the invention of the author. Thus Locke in the introductory Epistle to the *Essay on the Human Understanding* says that his work began with "some hasty, undigested thoughts on a subject I had never before considered". Cornwallis[1] says of this form of literature that "it is a manner of writing well befitting undigested motions, or a head not knowing his strength . . . " Ben Jonson[2] is quite bitter against the essayists on this score. "Some that turn over all books, and are equally searching in all papers; that write out of what they presently find or meet, without choice. By which means it happens that what they have discredited and impugned in one work, they have before or after extolled the same in another. Such are all the essayists, even their master Montaigne. These, in all they write, confess still what books they have read last, and therein their own folly so much, that they bring it to the stake raw and undigested; not that the place did need it neither, but that they thought themselves furnished and would vent it."

From the foregoing quotations it may readily be inferred that the use of the word essay on the title-page of a book implied a real or assumed modesty in the mind of the writer with regard to his literary production. In many instances the essayists explicitly disclaim credit for having done more than "sound the subject at a distance" or "glance at it with a running conceit". Montaigne, for example, in his essay *Of Friendship*[3] compares his own method with that of a painter who, having chosen the best part of a wall or panel for his design, exerts his utmost care and art in finishing his picture, while he fills in the spaces around with fantastic figures lacking any grace "but what they derive from their

[1] *Essayes*, No. 45.
[2] *Timber*, p. 25.
[3] Bk. I, ch. 27.

variety and the extravagance of their shapes. And in truth," he continues, "what are these things I scribble, other than grotesque and monstrous bodies made of various parts, without any certain figure or any other than accidental order, coherence, or proportion? . . . In this second part I go hand in hand with my painter but fall very short of him in the first and the better, my power of handling not being such, that I dare to offer at a rich piece, finely polished and set off according to art." Cornwallis refuses to accept Montaigne's modest estimate of himself, claiming that the Frenchman's writings are not properly termed essays, "for though they be short yet they are strong, and able to endure the sharpest triall: but mine are Essayes, who am but newly bound Prentise to the inquisition of knowledge, and use these papers as a Painters boy a board, that is trying to bring his hand and his fancy acquainted."[1] Again in the essay *Of Vanity*[2] he takes the same modest view of his own ability to handle a subject so deep that it is "indeed past either the nature of an Essay or my writing which agree in a short touching of things, rather then in an Histories constancy". Robert Boyle, writing on subjects far removed in point of matter from those of Cornwallis, shows the same modesty in speaking of the content of his *Physiological Essays*.[3] In the "Proëmial Essay" he says he regards the discourses which follow as "trifles, not only in comparison of those things which a knowing chymist might have delivered on the same subjects, but even more in regard to divers processes . . . wherewith I myself . . . am not unacquainted, . . . and perhaps I would have given to the following the title of 'trifles', instead of that of essays if I had not been afraid of discouraging you thereby". Dryden[4] comments on Roscommon's title, "An Essay on Translated Verse", thus:

> "Yet modestly he does his work survey,
> And calls a finish'd poem an Essay."

Locke's *Essay* seems to most of us a fairly exhaustive treat-

[1] *Essayes*, No. 45.
[2] No. 43.
[3] *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 192 sqq.
[4] *To the Earl of Roscommon on his Excellent Essay on Translated Verse.* 1684.

ment of the subject, yet the author presumably feels that his work is a very mediocre performance. "I pretend not to publish this Essay," he says, "for the Information of men of large thoughts . . . but what, being spun out of my own coarse thoughts, is fitted to men of my own size."[1] Thus throughout the seventeenth century the word essay, applied to whatever subject, or whatever kind of treatment of that subject, always implied a "modest attempt" on the part of the author.

Early essay-writers made apparently only th[illegible] general distinction between the application of the w[illegible] and that of treatise, discourse, meditation, observat[illegible] Frequently it is used as synonymous in meaning wit[illegible] words, the confusion, if there was confusion, being d[illegible] due to the desire to avoid repetition. M[illegible] fr[illegible] however, there is expressed or implied a contra[illegible] application of the terms. Thus Bacon writes to Prin[illegible] in the original dedication of the 1612 edition of hi[illegible] "To write iust Treatises requireth leasure in the [illegible]er, and leasure in the Reader, . . . which is the cause, t[illegible]ath made me choose to write certaine brief notes . [illegible]h I have called Essaies. . . . Senecaes Epistles to [illegible] yf one marke them well, are but Essaies, that i[illegible] Meditacons, thoughe conveyed in the forme of [illegible] So, too, Osborn[3] makes an implied distinction be[illegible] essay and the treatise. "I have reaped grea[illegible] be[illegible] from concise and casual Meditations on Seve[illegible]pi[illegible] than long and voluminous Treatises relating m[illegible] to and the same thing." The same general distin[illegible] i[illegible] between the essay and the "discourse". Th[illegible]il[4] sa[illegible] a passage already quoted: "The humour of [illegible]s is rat[illegible] to glaunce at all things with a running conceit [illegible]an to [illegible] on any with a slowe Discourse." Owen Felltham[5] impli[illegible] the same general distinction when he says that the essay is [illegible]

[1] *Epistle to the Reader* (1690).
[2] Preface, p. xii.
[3] *Works*, Vol. I, *Proem*.
[4] *Vade Mecum*, p. 249.
[5] *Resolves. To the Reader.*

all writings "the nearest to a running Discourse". From these and other instances of the same kind the only generalization one can safely make is that where the essayists did not use these terms synonymously to avoid repetition, they distinguished the essay from the "discourse" and "treatise" as being less formal and methodical in the treatment of the subject.

Coming now to the question of subject-matter, we find that some at least of the essayists are explicit in point of originality of the substance, however much the mode of treatment may be borrowed from others. The essay-writers seem somewhat confused in their minds with regard to the distinction between originality of matter and originality of treatment. It has therefore been found difficult to keep separate the references to these two elements.

Novelty in subject and treatment seems to have been an object aimed at by the essayists. Jeremy Collier[1] and Francis Boyle[2] both complain that the ground has been covered already, and that new subjects are hard to find. Rymer[3] is taken to task for introducing "common notions . . . which are by no means proper for an Essay where all should be New and Entertaining". Saint Evremond is complimented by Dryden for the variety and choice of his subjects. "He perpetually entertains you with some new Objects, and dwells not too long upon any of them."[4]

On the subject of borrowing and invention Montaigne as usual is the most candid. "One[5] while in an idle and frivolous subject, I try to find out matter whereof to compose a body (i' essaye veoir s'il [le iugement] trouvera de quoy lui donner corps) and then to prop and support it; another while I employ it [the judgment] in a noble subject, one that has been tossed and tumbled by a thousand hands, wherein a man may scarce possibly introduce anything of his own, the way being so beaten on every side that he must of necessity walk

[1] *Essays*, Vol. IV. *To the Reader.*
[2] *Discourses and Essays. Epistle Dedicatory.*
[3] *Vindication*, 1698.
[4] *The Character.*
[5] Bk. I, ch. 50.

in the steps of another: in such a case, 'tis the work of the judgment to take the way that seems best, and of a thousand paths to determine that this or that is the best . . . I give a s[illegible]b, not so wide but as deep as I can, and am for the most part tempted to take it in hand by some new light I discover in it." In the chapter "Of Books"[1] he says explicitly that the invention is his own, and the point to be observed is whether he has so chosen his borrowings as to "raise or help the invention". As to the borrowings themselves, he says they are rather unconscious reactions of his own mind upon the mass of material he has read than what we should be inclined to call plagiarisms. Having a poor memory he does not recall where or wh[illegible] [illegible]d a particular passage. Other reasons he gives[2] f[illegible] [illegible]aming the authors whom he has used: ". . . Th[illegible] [illegible] all, or within a very few, so very famed and ancien[illegible] [illegible]thors, that they [illegible]eem, methinks, themselves sufficiently t[illegible] [illegible]ll who they are, without giving me the trouble. In reasons, comparisons, and arguments, if I transplant any into my own soil, and confound them among my own, I purposely conceal the author to awe the temerity of those precipitate censors who fall upon all sorts of writings. . . . I will have them give Plutarch a fillip on my nose (une nasarde à Plutarque, sur mon nez), and rail against Seneca when they think they rail at me."

Felltham [illegible]lso uses borrowed material without giving his creditors' names. He justifies his practice in several ways which are interesting as bearing upon the general question of plagiarism in sixteenth and seventeenth century literature. "I do not steal," he says, "but borrow. There is no cheating, like the Felonie of Wit: He which theeves that, robs the Owner, and coozens those that heare him."[3] Fellthám challenges the reader to trace and detect him in the act of "stealing", and if successful to acquaint the world with the fact [illegible] [illegible] shame the thief. Naming the authors is necessary only [illegible] controversy. "But while I am not contro-

[1] Bk. II, ch. 10.
[2] Ibid.
[3] *Resolves. To the Reader.*

versiall I should only have troubled the Text or spotted a Margent which I always wish to leave free, for the Comments of the man that reades. Besides I doe not professe my selfe a Scholer: and for a Gentleman, I hold it a little pedanticall. He should use them rather, as brought in by Memorie, raptim, and occasionally; than by Studie, search or strict collection: especially in Essay . . . [1]"

Two writers of essays whose work is far removed in point of subject-matter from that of Montaigne and Bacon strongly insist on the fact that the substance of their work is original. Robert Boyle, in the *Proëmial Essay* cited above, laments the tendency of chemists to write "systems". This tendency, he says, has too frequently led scientists to handle many matters with which they were not thoroughly conversant in order that the finished product might be a complete "system". Furthermore, he contends that this practice leads them to repeat what has already been said on the subject, while their own original observations are overlooked because embedded in a mass of borrowed material. On the other hand, the advantage of writing books as "essays" rather than as "systems" is that one may publish the results of original investigations before he has a stock of experiments sufficiently large to justify him writing "systematically". Such quotations as he has made from other authors he defends on the ground that they are used not to add bulk, but to elucidate and verify his own observations by the added experience of others. Locke also, in his Epistle to the reader,[2] says that his work is concerned with original ideas, for "'tis not worth while to be concerned what he says or thinks, who says or thinks only as he is directed by others".

The style of the normal essay, as will afterwards be shown, tends to be epigrammatic, yet several of those who use this form assert that stress is laid on the substance rather than the language. Bacon, for instance, says his "brief notes"[3] are "sett downe rather significantlye, then curiously".

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[1] *Works*, Vol. I, p. 194.
[2] *Essay*.
[3] *Preface*, p. xii.

Blount, the publisher of *Horae Subsecivae*, apologizes thus for the somewhat lengthy essays contained in his volume: "If the fault grow by multiplicity of words, repetition or affected variation of Phrase, then your dislike is well grounded. But when you have read and finde the length to have proceeded from the matter and variety of it, I know your opinion will easily alter."[1] Again in the prefatory epistle to *A Collection of Miscellanies*[2] the writer says he has used "as much Brevity and clearness as are consistent with one another and to abound in sense rather than words".

Another characteristic of essays or collections of essays, but one spoken about by the authors generally in a somewhat apologetic way, is variety of subject-matter. Whether the variety refers to the contents of the book as a whole or to the substance of each essay is not always clear, since it frequently happens that the claim could be about as well substantiated by an examination of one essay as by a perusal of the whole collection. Montaigne[3] confesses frankly that the titles of his chapters "do not always comprehend the whole matter". "I love the poetic progress," he says, "by leaps and skips . . . 'Tis the indiligent reader who loses my subject, and not I . . . " A cursory reading of the chapter on *Resemblances of Children and Fathers* will convince any one that he speaks the truth. The letter to the reader, prefixed to *Horae Subsecivae*, calls attention to the "mixed matter by way of observations or Essayes". "There have been," it continues, "so many precedents of this kinde, and (when they have come out of the hands of good Writers) always so approved that there needs no Apologie for putting in one Booke, so different Arguments." So Osborn[4] speaks of his *Miscellaney* as being a "mixture of all things". Dryden[5] praises highly the Essays of Saint Evremond on the ground that the variety and choice of his subjects please one no less than what he writes upon them. "He perpetually entertains you with some New Objects . . . "

[1] *To the Reader.*
[2] John Norris, *To the Reader.*
[3] Bk. III, ch. 9.
[4] *Works*, Vol. I, *Proem.*
[5] *The Character.*

From the quotations already given which have a bearing on the application of the term "essay" and on the variety of subject-matter treated by essayists, the conclusion may safely be drawn that the method of treatment, so far as there is a method at all, is extremely haphazard. Most of the essay-writers are quite frank on the subject. Of all the essayists Montaigne is the most prolific in ideas and haphazard in the ordering of them. Judging from the discrepancy between the titles and the contents, this rare Frenchman, as has been said of a noted preacher, goes into the bush loaded for bear, and follows every red squirrel that crosses his track. He invariably gets the squirrel, and by the time the reader has ended the chase he hardly wonders what has become of the bear, or whether there was a bear at all, so delighted is he with the wonderful assortment of squirrel-skins. As usual, however, Montaigne best explains his own method. "You will there find the same air and mien you have observed in his [the author's] conversation: and though I could have borrowed some better or more favourable garb than my own, I would not have done it: for I require nothing more of these writings but to present me to your memory such as I naturally am."[1] Yet he claims that his wandering from the subject is "rather by license than oversight; my fancies follow one another, but sometimes at a great distance, and look towards one another but 'tis with an oblique glance".[2]

Several of the English essayists speak in much the same way of their method of treatment, though none is so frank as Montaigne. The possibility of imitating the Frenchman's "method" is of course dependent on the writer's type of mind. Bacon's scientific mind, for instance, was incapable of thinking desultorily on every idea suggested by the main theme, consequently we find in him a certain ordering of ideas. Cowley's essays show the same tendency. Cornwallis's mind works in much the same way as Montaigne's, at least

[1] Bk. II, ch. 37 (in the part addressed to Madame de Duras).
[2] Bk. III, ch. 9.

so far as the ordering of ideas is concerned. In the chapter, *Of Essaies and Bookes*,[1] he speaks thus: "Nor if they [the essays] stray, doe I seeke to amend them, for I professe not method, neither will I chain my selfe to the head of my Chapter." In the *Silent Woman*[2] Jonson makes one of his characters censure the essayists in much the same spirit as his own strictures are conceived in *Timber*, quoted above.[3] "*Daw.* The dor on Plutarch and Seneca! I hate it: . . . I wonder these fellows have such credit with gentlemen. *Ciercmont:* They are very grave authors. *Daw:* Grave asses! mere essayists: a few loose sentences, and that's all . . ."

Locke explains the (to him) unsystematic treatment of his topic by sketching the history of the growth of the *Essay*.[4] It began in some "hasty and undigested thoughts on a subject I had never before considered . . . ; thus begun by chance [it] was continued by Intreaty: written by incoherent parcels, and after long intervals of neglect resum'd again, as my Humour or Occasions permitted". In the Advertisement to the *Moral Essayes*[5] the author says it was thought better to "essay to treat" the general subject of Christian Morality by parts, "now applying ones self to the consideration of one duty; now to another . . . to advance several Truths as they have offer'd themselves without undergoing the trouble of disposing and ordering them according to Method. And this is what is mark'd out by the Word Essays." He then proceeds to point out the advantages of this "method", and these are in effect the same as Boyle had claimed for scientific "essays" as contrasted with "systems".[6]

It follows as a necessary corollary of the haphazard method, and the idea of experiment implied in the word "essay", that the essayists considered their treatment of subjects as imperfect and incomplete. This is almost self-

[1] No. 45.
[2] Act II, Sc. 2.
[3] Page 7
[4] *Epistle to the Reader.*
[5] Pierre Nicole.
[6] See p. 12, above.

evident and needs not to be dwelt upon at length. Robert Johnson calls his book "Essaies, or rather Imperfect Offers".[1] Bacon's[2] object is rather to "give you an appetite, then to offend you with satiety". Cornwallis considers the nature of Essays and that of his own writing to agree in being "a short touching of things" rather than in having the consistency of history. Tuvil claims that he refrains from adding further arguments to his Essays since "the humour of Essaye is rather to glance at all things . . . than to insist on any". Boyle[5] confesses that his *Essays* are immature on account of his youth, yet he adds that the fear of death makes him hasten to publish his observations in their imperfect state. Osborn[6] complains that many scholars, unlike himself, are "of so vast an extension in the prosecution of any (though but a seeming) Errour as they will leave no Argument un-urged, be it never so weak. Forgetting that a Triumph is easier obtained, than a victory so discreetly moderated, as may give us occasion to think it either tedious or over severe: it being a work impertinently superfluous, to give Two Blows where One may suffice". In *The Character* prefixed to Saint Evremond's *Miscellaneous Essays*, Dryden says, "As to method it is Inconsistent with his Design, neither pretends he to write all that can be said". Glanvill[7] claims that the design of his essays is simply to lay a foundation for a good habit of thought, both philosophical and theological. Many more examples could be brought forward to show that the essayists always considered their efforts as a mere breaking of new ground.[8]

As to the normal length of an essay, most of the writers

[1] 1607.
[2] *Preface*, p. xii.
[3] No. 43.
[4] *Vade Mecum*, p. 240.
[5] *Works*, Vol. I, p. 192.
[6] *Proem.* Vol. I.
[7] *Epistle Dedicatory.*
[8] Cf. in this connection Richard Whately's edition of Bacon's Essays (Lond. 1856), in which the ideas of the author are enlarged in the editor's annotations.

who have committed themselves on this point seem to be agreed that a "sounding of the subject at a distance" does not require any extended treatment. When essays do extend to such a length as to make one suspect that they are rather discourses or treatises, an explanation or apology is generally offered. Montaigne thus explains[1] the length of the later as compared with the earlier chapters of his work: "The frequent breaks into chapters that I made my method in the beginning of my book, having since seemed to me to dissolve the attention before it was raised, . . . I, upon that account, have made them longer, such as require proposition and assigned leisure (qui requierent de la proposition et du loisir assigné)." Dryden praises the *Essays* of Saint Evremond because they do not dwell "too long" on any subject. Blount[2] apologizes for the greater length of the essays in *Horae Subsecivae* as compared with others of the same kind by various authors, but assures the reader that the extension is due to matter, not to vain repetition of words.

Concerning the stylistic qualities of essay-writing, more is to be learned by inference from statements by essayists, and more still from the practice of essayists, than from the plain statements themselves. Jonson, as we have seen, speaks disparagingly of the "loose sentences" of the essay-writers, but it is evident that he had in mind the "undigested" matter which they are trying to assimilate, rather than their style of writing. I. B., on the contrary, in his commendatory verses to Breton's *Characters upon Essays*,[3] speaks of the condensed style of the author:

"While I essay to character this book
And these Charactered Essays o'erlook,
I herein find few words great worth involve
A Lipsian style, terse phrase; and so resolve
That as a stone's best valued, and best prized
When best 'tis known, so this, when best revised."

And again:

"Where words and matter close and sweetly couch'd
Do show how truth, wit, art, and nature touch'd."

[1] Bk. III, ch. 9.
[2] *To the Reader.*
[3] Nicholas Breton, 1615.

But here we must remember that the "character-essays" thus praised are of a very special kind and are written with a special purpose or from a very special point of view.[1] Less specific is Bacon's statement that his "brief notes" are set down "rather significantlye then curiously". Notwithstanding his assertion, however, when we come to examine the author's practice, we find that the said notes are both significantly and curiously written. Norris[3] makes the general observation with regard to his own essays that they have "as much Brevity and Clearness as are consistent with one another and to abound in sense rather than words". Boyle's[4] reason for not having been "so solicitous as most writers are wont to be . . . to adorn them [their essays] with acute sentences, fine expressions, or other embellishments borrowed from eminent writers" is not that he despises such graces of style, but that the weakness of his eyes has prevented him reading much of late. The fact that we are not certain whether he has other essayists in mind or is speaking of a common practice in current literature generally, detracts from the value of the quotation for our purpose. Cornwallis has a passage which is especially interesting since it is the only statement I have been able to find regarding an element common in the practice of most of the essayists. "[It is] no tryall" he says,[5] "to have handsome, dapper conceits run invisibly in a braine, but to put them out, and then look upon them." Urbanity of wit, here specifically mentioned, is a very common stylistic quality of many of the essayists.

Most of the essay-writers have said something about their own particular object in writing. A few have a serious, sometimes didactic purpose in view, but are very chary of expressing it. Gilden,[6] for instance, says: "I have intermixt things Historical, Moral, Amorous and Gallant with the

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[1] See section on *Character and Essay*, ch. 3, below.
[2] *Preface*, p. xii.
[3] *To the Reader*.
[4] *Works*, Vol. I, p. 203.
[5] No. 45.
[6] *Preface*.

rougher Critical Discourses. Some will gratify the fancy, others the Judgment, or at least I design'd they should." Glanvill's object was to "lay a foundation for a good habit of Thought both Philosophical and Theological". Dryden[2] comments thus on Saint Evremond's *Essays*: "He does not set himself up for a teacher, but he instructs you unawares and without pretending to it." Both Osborn and Francis Boyle seem to have had a serious purpose in publishing, though not in writing, their *Essays*. The former[3] thus gives his reason for appearing in print: "At the Foot of whose [Opinion's] Tribunal I should never have fallen, but to redeem the World out of a Common Error, by shewing men are not so unhappy in the absence of Learning, as Scholars pretend." And Francis Boyle,[4] after stating how he came to compose his *Essays*, continues: ". . . and this I have done that I may reform the Indiscretion and Idleness of mankind."

But by far the most common purpose of essay-writing is simple recreation, and this we find expressed by writers whom we should least suspect of such an innocent motive. Locke,[5] for example, says: "I here put into your hands what has been the diversion of some of my idle and heavy hours." So, too, Francis Boyle in his preface[6] assures the reader that the *Essays* following are "the small issue and Recreation" of his own private thoughts and meditations during two years' retirement in the country. Osborn's[7] original object in composing his essays was "rather for the intent to divert myself, than to busy others". Felltham[8] wrote because he "lov'd his studie", and Montaigne assures the reader that in contriving his "honest book" he proposed to himself no other than "domestic and private" ends.

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[1] *Epistle Dedicatory*
[2] *The Character.*
[3] *Works. Proem* Vol I.
[4] *Essays and Discourses Moral and Divine. Preface to the Reader.*
[5] *Epistle to the Reader.*
[6] *Essays and Discourses Moral and Divine.*
[7] *Works*, Vol. I, *Proem.*
[8] *Resolves. To the Reader.*

This last consideration, the fact that several of the essayists wrote as a pastime, makes a natural approach to what seems to be one of the most characteristic features of the essay, namely, the spirit in which it is written. As can be shown by an examination of the contents of various essays or essay books, the normal essay avoids controversy, avoids the discussion of contemporary events, and shuns the path that leads through contemporary life. On the contrary it loves to discourse of the deeds of the ancients: "gesta regumque ducumque et tristia bella"; it loves to meditate on the abstract qualities virtue, vice, anger, valour and the like. Frequently it allows itself to become an oracle through whose mouth the essayist conveys advice, more or less covert, to the reader; and sometimes it becomes what has been called a "prose lyric" containing the personal experiences, the cogitations, desires, aims, habits, in short the inner life of the author. But our purpose in this section is to let the essayists speak for themselves.

Only one of the writers of the seventeenth century confesses to having written in a controversial spirit, and this he does not openly but by implication, not in an essay so called but in defence of an essay. Thomas Rymer had been censured in an *Answer* to his *Essay Concerning Critical and Curious Learning*, for using "common notions" as if they were "fine things", the said "notions" being "by no means proper for an Essay". In his *Vindication* Rymer retorts: "The commonest notions are always the most proper medicines, the best and surest Basis to reason upon . . . and therefore whoever writes (Essays or Pamphlets[1]) with a design to convince must not neglect the use of them." Fellthani,[2] on the other hand, clearly disavows any controversial object. He defends his failure to quote authors from whom he has borrowed on the ground that such recognition is pedantic and needed only in controversy. "But while I

[1] Apparently an insertion by the editor.
[2] *Resolves To the Reader.*

am not controversiall, I should only have troubled the Text or spotted a Margent." So, too, Boyle[1] explicitly disclaims any controversial purpose in his essays. "You will easily discern . . . that I have purposely in the ensuing essays refrained from swelling my discourse with solemn and elaborate confutations of other men's opinions . . . For it is none of my design to engage myself with or against any one sect of Naturalists, . . . but when at any time I have been induced to oppose others . . . I have endeavoured to use that moderation and civility that is due to the persons of deserving men."

The modest spirit in which many essays are presumably written has been referred to already. Here it is mentioned as forming a transition to what is perhaps the most marked feature of the essay mood or spirit. Cornwallis[2] likes "much better to doe well, then to talke well, chusing to be beloved, rather than admired, aspiring to no more height then the comfort of a good conscience, and doing good to some, harme to none". In this modest pronouncement the writer gives the key in which a great number of the most interesting essays of our period are composed. Osborn[3] says in his Proem: "Nor should I but for a thorough Essay of my Fortune venture such stuff as is likely to follow. . . . I remember to have heard from Sir William Cornwallis (esteem'd none the meanest Wits in his Time) that Montaigne's Essays was the likeliest Book to advance Wisdom, because the authors own Experiences is the chiefest Argument in it." Bacon tried to make his "brief notes" "of a nature whereof a man shall find much in experience, little in books". The "experience" which forms the background of his essays is the experience of one Francis Bacon. Montaigne, however, as usual, makes the most explicit statement in words as he gives the best exposition in practice of the personal element. "Reader," he says in the prefatory epistle, "thou hast here an honest book: it doth at the outset forewarn thee that, in

[1] *Works*, Vol. I, p. 200.
[2] No. 45.
[3] *Works*, Vol. I.

contriving the same I have proposed to myself no other than a domestic and private end: I have had no consideration at all either to my service or my glory . . . I have dedicated it to the particular commodity of my kinsfolk and friends, so that, having lost me (which they must do shortly), they may therein recover some traits of my conditions and humours, and by that means preserve whole, and more lifelike, the knowledge they had of me. . . . I desire therein to be viewed as I appear in mine own genuine, simple and ordinary manner, without study and artifice: for it is myself I paint: my defects are therein to be read to the life, and my imperfections and my natural form, so far as public reverence hath permitted me. . . . Thus, reader, myself am the matter of my Book." It is this personal element present in some of the productions of most essayists in some degree, present in the essays of only a very few writers in a marked degree, that justifies the term "prose lyric" as applied to the essay.[1] The term must not, however, be applied indiscriminately to essays in general, but only to that particular kind in which the author's personal experience is the burden.

To sum up now what essay-writers have said or implied concerning the essay form of literature, we note in the first place that in the application of the word the original meaning of "attempt" or "trial" is never absent, at least in the period preceding 1700. The word therefore implies that the subject is handled in a tentative, experimental or immature way, as contrasted with what we ordinarily find in the "Discourses" or "Treatises" of the same period. Yet to avoid repetition these terms are frequently applied to what is properly an essay. As to subject matter, invention and novelty are sought, and emphasis is laid on the substance rather than the style. The method of treatment is unmethodical and haphazard. All possible arguments or ideas on the subject are (presumably) not brought forward, in other words the treatment is incomplete from the writer's point of view. There are hints that condensed phraseology, "curiousness"

[1] C. B. Bradley: *The English Essay*; in University of California *Chronicle*, 1898, Vol. I, p. 383 (No. 5).

of expression and "acute sentences" are not uncommon elements in the essay style. The length varies from "certaine brief notes" of Bacon's 1612 edition, to such a length as requires an apology, as we find, for example, in the preface of *Horae Subsecivae*, the longest essay of which extends to somewhat over five thousand words. The purpose of essays is sometimes to teach or reform, sometimes to lay a foundation for further thought or investigation, but far more frequently, generally in fact, the aim of the author is diversion simply. The spirit pervading the essay is rarely controversial, on the contrary the tone is generally moderate. Above all, it is very frequently personal, the writer speaking directly from his own experience to the reader either to give him the benefit of that experience or to entertain him with interesting autobiography.

But to formulate a working definition of the essay of the seventeenth century, one must take into account the actual practice of essayists as well as what the latter have said about their chosen form of expression. Locke's prefatory remarks, for example, do not adequately indicate the scope of his *Essay*, chiefly because they give little idea of the kind of subject matter. This observation would apply to several of the prefaces. Thus, although one would learn, for instance, that Robert Boyle's *Essays* deal with natural science, and that Locke's *Essay* deals with the workings of the human mind, there is no hint that Wilkins's *Essay Towards a R[illegible] Character*, Scott's *Essay of Drapery*, Locke's *Essay of the Human Understanding* or Boyle's *Physiological Essays* are any less technically essays than the observations of Bacon, Tuvil, Johnson, and Cornwallis.

This consideration forces upon us the necessity of making an arbitrary distinction in the use of the word essay when used in the title of a book. Since it is obviously impossible to treat briefly and adequately subjects so widely different as those indicated above, we propose limiting the term to include essays on a particular kind of subject. Consequently when we speak of the practice of essayists, we refer to the practice of a particular kind of essay-writer.

A glance at the Table of Contents of essay-books will show that the great majority of themes are the abstract subjects of arrogance, ambition, affectation, visitations, death, religion, reading, etc., and a further glance into the essays themselves will satisfy the reader that for the most part these consist of philosophic reflections on the kind of subjects just indicated. Frequently one meets with such titles as Masters and Servants, Gardens, Plantations, Alehouses, but in the great majority of cases such subjects appear only sporadically amongst subjects of the former kind. That observations or meditations on such abstract subjects were considered to be the basis of the normal Essay we have evidence in a book of rhetoric called *The Scholar's Guide* by a schoolmaster, Ralph Johnson, dated 1665. As its title would indicate, this book contains rules for spelling and parsing, for arranging arguments in a debate and for writing various kinds of themes such as a "fable", a "character" and an "essay". The definition and rules may be here quoted in full, as they take note of many of the elements proposed to be used by the writer of this study in limiting the term:

> An Essay is a short discourse about any virtue or vice or other commonplace. Such be Learning, Ignorance, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, Drunkenness, Usury, Love, Joy, Fear, Hope, Sorrow, Anger, Covetousness, Contentation, Labour, Idleness, Riches, Poverty, Pride, Humility, Virginity, etc.
>
> Rules for making it:
>
> (1) Having chosen a subject express the nature of it in two or three short Definitions or Descriptions.
>
> (2) Show the several parts or kinds of it with their distinctions.
>
> (3) Show the several causes, objects and effects of each sort or kinde.
>
> (4) Be careful to do this briefly without tautology or superfluous words, in good and choice language.
>
> (5) Metaphors, Allegories, Antithetons and Paronomasias do greatly adorn this kind of exercise.
>
> (6) In larger and compleat Essays (such as Bacon's, Feltham's, etc.) we must labour compendiously to express the whole nature of it with all observations about our subject.

The only part of the definition that calls for comment is the phrase "other commonplace". In its context the term obviously excludes ephemeral subjects such as the political and religious questions of the day, or contemporaneous

events. Thus, for instance, while "Of Sickness" or "Of Plagues" might well be the subject of a "regular" essay, "The Plague of 1665" would be excluded from treatment in this form on the ground that it is a definite event in contemporary history,—that it is not, in short, a commonplace in the experience of all times.

Coming then to our own definition on the basis of the preceding discussion, we should say that the essay is a prose composition of moderate length, written in a leisurely manner and in an urbane, non-controversial spirit, in which are developed, according to a plan more or less vague, the writer's "undigested" ideas on such commonplace subjects as love, fear, death, etc., although sometimes the theme is autobiographical. The style, usually aphoristic and epigrammatic, is enlivened by illustration and anecdote drawn, in the great majority of cases, from classical literature. Usually the purpose is diversion simply, but frequently there is present a more or less distinct didactic tone.

That this definition may be perfectly clear, and that the elements therein mentioned may be freely used in the later discussion, certain parts require further explanation. By the clause "in which are developed . . . ideas", it is not meant that a logical plan of development must be observed, though of course such a scheme is not excluded. On the other hand, the piece must consist of something more than a succession of mutually independent, epigrammatic statements such as we find in the normal "Character". The requirements for development are satisfied when two or more phases of the general subject are dwelt upon in a few more or less connected sentences. Thus the first edition of Bacon's essay *Of Discourse* is practically a succession of aphorisms, yet two general phases of the subject are discussed: (1) the wrong view of discourse, (2) rules for good conversation; and within each of these divisions we find sentences the thoughts of which are more or less loosely connected with one another. For example: "It is good to varie and mixe speech of the present occasion with argument, tales with reasons, asking of questions, with telling of opinions, and iest with earnest,

¶ But some things are priuiledged from iest, namely, Religion, matters of state, great persons."[1]

Definite limits, of course, cannot be set to define what is meant by the "phrase "moderate length". Whether a writer requires five hundred or five thousand words to develop his thoughts depends upon a variety of circumstances, the kind of mind, his style, his purpose and method of writing, the nature of the subject, his interest in it. Bacon's shortest essay, *Of Delaies*, contains 322 words, his longest, *Of the true Greatnesse of Kingdomes and Estates*, over 3000; and when we consider the nature of his mind and his condensed style we are inclined to think that an essay ought to have at least 300 words to be entitled to the name. On the other hand, since Bacon in one instance required 300 words to say what he had to say, we are not surprised when we find Cornwallis using about 9500 words in his essay *Of the Instruments of a Statesman*. Generally speaking, one might say that it is an unusually short essay that contains no more than 300 words, while one that extends to 5000 words is unusually long.

The only other elements that seem to call for explanation are those indicated by the words "urbane", "non-controversial", "commonplace" and "diversion". Excluded from the list of commonplaces are the subjects that bear upon contemporary events and questions of immediate interest in politics and religion. Not only must controversial themes be avoided, but the tone must be that of the urbane man of the world who writes in a moderate, dispassionate spirit in order to while away his time and that, perhaps, of readers of his own type of mind.

(iv) VARIATIONS IN THE USE OF THE TERM

In very few essays are found all the qualities we have ascribed to the normal essay. Sometimes, indeed, we find pieces whose only claim to the title lies in the fact that they occur in collections of essays. Thus Bacon's *Of Gardens*,

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[1] *Bacon's Essaies, being a facsimile reprint of the First Edition.* Dodd, Mead & Co., N.Y. 1904. A comparison of the first and third editions of this Essay (see *A Harmony of the Essays* in Arber's *Reprints*, pp. 14 sqq.) will show that most of the additions in the later edition are illustrations of general statements.

Of Building, and *Of Plantations* are not really essays at all as we have defined the term; in truth they would be much more in place as chapters of "Conduct Books" such as "The Complete Gardener", "The Complete Builder" or "The Complete Coloniser". The general title of the book in which they occur carries them through, however, and the ordinary reader is hardly aware that there is a real difference between these and other pieces in the collection.

Certain compositions called essays but not occurring in collections have to be rejected altogether as falling outside the scope of our definition. Thus Locke's *Essay*, did it fall within the period we propose discussing, would have to be omitted from consideration, not on account of the subject, for the "Human Understanding" might well recommend itself to any of the essayists as a sort of "blanket" title for philosophic observations, but on account of the length, the exhaustiveness and the technical method of treatment.

Five works of this class, however, do fall within the limits of our period and shall be briefly considered here.[1] The first of these is Thomas Palmer's *An Essay of the Meanes how to make our Trauailes, into forraine Countries, the more profitable and honourable.* (London, 1606.) This is a quarto volume of 131 pages wherein the author attempts to give some general directions to those who wish to travel, interspersing them with much learning and sage advice. Four folded folio sheets giving an elaborate abstract of the contents belie the use of the term essay. Yet the book seems to have been a pioneer in its day. "It seemeth unto me (vertuous Reader)," says the author, "a faire dutie (where other worthie men have beene so long silent, in giving a perfect rule for Trauailing, as it is in use at this day) to begin the hewing out of one, that by some master workman, it may

[1] The following essays are not available, but apparently they belong to the "extended" form: Nicholas Byfield: *The Signes or an Essay Concerning an Assurance of Gods Love and Mans Salvacon.* (Stat. Reg. July 1, 1614.) *An Essay on the Comparative Merits of Competition and Co-operation* . . . 1634. (Brit. Mus. Cat.) Henry Pe[a]cham: *The Truth of our tymes by way of an Essay* (Stat. Reg. July 26, 1637). S[eth] W[ard]. *A Philosophical Essay towards an eviction of the being of God.* 1652. (Brit. Mus. Cat.) *Essay towards a Settlement*, 1659. (Thomason Tracts, ed. G. J. Fortescue, 1908.)

hereafter be better planed, formed, and tried." These words are the only justification, from our point of view, for entitling the work an essay. The book contains much essay-material, but as a whole it does not come within the scope of our discussion.

William Scott's *Essay of Drapery or the Compleate Citizen* (London, 1635) is a duodecimo volume of 169 pages which, as the alternative title implies, belongs to the "Conduct Book" *genre* to be discussed later.[1] The significance of the use of the word is sufficiently explained in the part of the preface already quoted. "[Socrates] I try to imitate, wherein if I write nothing but words I write what the title of my book promiseth, a triall an Essay." From another passage in the preface it is clear that the author knew he was not writing an essay of the ordinary type, and this itself would justify us in ignoring the work. There are, however, one or two features of interest in the book. First, it is written for the middle classes. We have the "Complete Gentleman", the "Complete Courtier", the "Complete Governor", all written for the aristocracy. This is the first conduct book noted that is thoroughly democratic in tone. As in the previous case, the subject-matter is elaborately divided and subdivided. Thus the first part:

I. He shall live Justly:
 1 Ways a man may deceive.
 2 Ways a man may be deceived.
  a. by Flattery.
  b. by Dissimulation.
  c. by Lying.

These latter sections, as is pointed out elsewhere,[2] approach the ordinary essay very closely. Several passages show that the author had Bacon's Essays in mind when he wrote. For instance, an extract on the subject of "Counsel": "Take the matter back into your owne hands, to make it apeare to the World that the finall directions (which, because they came forth with prudence and power are resembled to Pallas armed) proceeds from your selfe and not from the authority of your Counsellors;"[3] is merely a paraphrase of part of

[1] Chapter II.
[2] Chapter II.
[3] P. 134.

Bacon's essay on the same subject.[1] Again, the sentence "precipitation is an enemy to businesse and the Stepmother of all good actions" clearly proceeds from Bacon,[2] and we may further note that Scott becomes epigrammatic only when imitating his master.

Robert Boyle's *Certain Physiological Essays and other tracts*[3] from which quotations have already been made, bears the date 1661. In the first place, it is to be noticed that "essay" here does not mean "experiment". All are written in the form of letters, ostensibly to a young scholar friend, Pyrophilus by name. The first of the series, *A Proëmial Essay*, explains Boyle's reason for writing in this style.[4] The second is called *Of the Unsuccessfulness of Experiments*, the third, *Of Unsucceeding Experiments*. The title *A Physico-Chymical Essay containing an Experiment relating to Salt-Petre* will be sufficient to explain why these pieces are not discussed along with the essays of Bacon and Cowley.

John Wilkins's *Essay towards a Real Character and Philosophical Language* is another instance of the use of the word in the original sense of "trial". "I am not so vaine," the author says in the Epistle, "as to think that I have completely finished the great undertaking. . . . " The work itself, read before the Royal Society, April 13, 1668, and published in November of the same year,[5] is what the title implies, a scientific discussion of language, especially of the proper significance of words. It is divided into four parts, the whole occupying 454 folio pages without the appendix.

One famous piece excluded from this discussion by our definition is Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* which was first published in 1668, or perhaps in the December preceding.[6] This composition fills 92 pages of the Scott-Saintsbury edition of Dryden's works and is in the form of a Platonic dialogue. The persons of the dialogue are actual literary

[1] *Essay* 20.
[2] Cf. *Essay* 25: *Of Dispatch*.
[3] *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 192 sqq.
[4] See quotations above from this *Essay*.
[5] Terms Catalogue.
[6] *Works of John Dryden*, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, Vol. XV, p. 275 (Lond. 1892).

men and the conversation deals with a controversial subject — the relative excellence of modern as against ancient drama. The matter is very carefully arranged, in complete contrast to the haphazard method of the essay we propose to consider. In short, with the exception of the urbane spirit which pervades the controversial discussion the work has very few points of contact with our subject.

Dryden's essay suggests a whole body of so-called essays which ought to be disposed of in this place. Mr. Gregory Smith and Mr. Spingarn within recent years have edited two excellent compilations of literary criticism; the former *Elizabethan Critical Essays*,[1] in two volumes, and the latter three volumes of *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*.[2] It is hardly necessary to say that scarcely a single one of these "essays" comes within the scope of our discussion.

Various essayists touched the fringes of literary criticism, but always in a very general and unmethodically "tentative" way. Thus Bacon's *Of Discourse* treats of the art of conversation; *Of Masques and Triumphs* deals with the rules for the proper presentation of two forms of entertainment more or less connected with literature. John Stephens's essay *Of Poetry*[3] suggests Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* in many places, and one would be inclined to say he had the *Defence* in mind were it not that the ideas in that excellent treatise had long since become common-places of literary criticism. Stephens's *Essay* differs from Sidney's pamphlet in that it "speaks right on", while the latter is carefully arranged. Not that it is entirely devoid of method, but within the various divisions of the composition, for example, in the discussion of verse and rime,[4] the ideas succeed one another without any definite sequence. Cornwallis's *Of Essayes and Bookes*[5] touches upon almost every kind of literature in the author's usual desultory manner, and Felltham rambles over the same ground, pausing

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[1] Oxford, 1904.
[2] Oxford, 1908.
[3] *Essayes and Characters*, pp. 126–143. (No. vii.)
[4] Ibid. pp. 131 sqq.
[5] No. 45.

here and there to examine tentatively the questions of literary criticism made current by Sidney's *Defence*.

The essays we have just been discussing occur in collections. Most of the "essays" of Mr. Smith's and Mr. Spingarn's collections appeared originally in pamphlet form. The fact is that until the seventeenth century was fairly well advanced, few seem to have thought of applying the word essay to an extended treatise of any kind. In the first decade we have Palmer's *Essay of . . . Travailes*,[1] in the second, what is apparently an example of the "pamphlet" essay, *The Signes*;[2] in the fourth we have mentioned three and in the sixth decade two examples of the same kind. After the year 1668, essays of this nature appear much more frequently. Thus we notice that there was a gradual extension of the application of the word to include a lengthy treatment of subjects not originally included amongst orthodox essay-themes. As early as 1634[3] we find the word essay used with the preposition "on" instead of "of", and this suggests that the title was beginning to carry an implication similar to that contained in the titles "Poem on . . . " or "Sermon on . . . ". In other words, the idea of "essay" as a literary form was gradually becoming disengaged from the idea of essay meaning "trial", "tentative effort", although, as has been previously stated, the original meaning, always remained somewhere in the background throughout the seventeenth century. Perhaps it was the apology implied in the term that recommended the essay, now a recognized literary form, as a vehicle for conveying ideas, more or less elaborately arranged, concerning the very broad subject of literature. In 1668 we have the term applied to a fairly exhaustive "discourse" on "Dramatic Poesy" by a man who, though not yet at the zenith of his influence, was looked upon as the leading man of letters of his day. Once established in its extended form, "essay" seems to have become the fashionable way to designate works of literary criticism, which, had they been

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[1] P. 27 *supra*.
[2] See p. 27 *supra* (footnote).
[3] *An Essay on the Comparative Merits* . . . (See footnote to p. 27).

published in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, woul probably have appeared as pamphlets with the titles "Dis course", "Treatise", "Defence". That the original ide of "tentative effort" was tending to disappear from the word at least as applied to literary criticism, is shown by the fac that Congreve's article, *Concerning Humour in Comedy* (1695), which he speaks of as a private "essay", is writte in the form of a letter to a friend. "There is infinitely mor to be said on this subject, thô perhaps I have already said t much . . . I believe the subject is entirely new, and wa never touch'd upon before; and if I would have anyone se this private Essay it should be someone who might b provoked by my Errours in it to publish a more Judiciou Treatise on the Subject." It would seem probable that ha not such elaborate treatises as Dryden's *Essay of Dramati Poesy* and Temple's *Essay of Poetry* (1690) been in the hand of the public, Congreve would not have hesitated to call hi piece an essay, since it avowedly has the essential feature o that form, namely, the tentative effort, or as he calls i "a breaking of new ground". In other words, the qualify ing word "private" apparently implies a distinction i Congreve's mind between the "modest attempt" and th "long and labour'd Discourse" intended for publication.

It is easy to explain the titles of the two collections o critical essays already mentioned. The term essay call up to the modern mind works of the scope of Macaulay's Carlyle's and Arnold's essays, which are really essays in th nineteenth century meaning of the term. When therefor one makes a compilation of similar pieces of the sixteenth an seventeenth century one is quite justified in calling the collec tion by a title which indicates to us the scope of the piece included.

[1] See Spingarn III, p. 242.

Chapter II

PROTOTYPES

(i) Ancient

"The word is late, but the thing is auncient. For Senacaes *Epistles* to Lucilius, yf one marke them well, are but Essaies, —That is dispersed Meditacons, Thoughe conveyed in the forme of Epistles."[1] Such was Bacon's opinion of the ancestry of the essay and it will be our object in this chapter to show that this opinion is sound, much sounder in fact than Bacon himself knew.

One indication of the antiquity of the form is the pagan spirit pervading the modern essay. Even the casual reader cannot fail to be struck by the almost entire absence of the Christian element from the early collections of essays. On the other hand, almost every one of Bacon's, Cornwallis's, Robert Johnson's and of the *Horae Subsecivae* might have been written by an enlightened pagan. Let it be further noted that perhaps as many as nine-tenths of the illustrations and quotations in the essays we have to discuss are taken from the literature of classical antiquity.

We find the essay not only in the embryonic but also in the mature state in writings that antedate Seneca and Plutarch by centuries, and in literatures which these men probably never knew. In fact it would almost seem that the essay was a form of writing indigenous to every people given to philosophical speculation on the common phenomena of life.

Professor Moulton has pointed out the probable way in which the essay developed in Biblical literature.[2] The elements he notices in the Biblical essay are the fragmentary treatment of the subject, the lack of bond between the details, excepting their individual relevancy to the general subject,

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[1] Bacon, p. xii.
[2] *The Literary Study of the Bible*, pp. 264 sqq. (London, 1898.)

and the gnomic origin of the parts. The proverb, on this theory, is the basis of the essay; the "cluster" of proverbs collected about a common theme, each retaining its independence and fixed gnomic form, is the intermediate stage; and the free interworking of these component parts into a new style makes up the essay as we find it in the "Wisdom" books of the Apocrypha and Bible. As an example of these stages, Professor Moulton places side by side three compositions,[1] "the matter of which is largely the same, and it is clear that the later authors have borrowed from the earlier". To the "proverb cluster" he gives the title "On the Government of the Tongue",[2] and points out that "each paragraph is an independent saying, which has a bearing upon the general subject, but no bond with the other paragraphs". In the second extract, "On the Tongue",[3] he points out that the consecutive sentences have been fused into a connected whole, with a considerable number still in proverb form. In the third passage, on "The Responsibility of Speech",[4] "the free flow of essay style has prevailed completely over the independence of sentences that belong to proverbs; only here and there the turn of a sentence reminds us of the gnomic origin of this class of essay".

On the basis of Professor Moulton's definition, these last two compositions are good examples of the Biblical essay. We cannot agree, however, with the statement that "the details of this composition need have no mutual bond except their relevancy to the topic which stands as title of the essay". As has been pointed out elsewhere,[5] the essay is a "meditation" in writing, and that implies a chain of thought with the parts forming a more or less connected sequence. In a great many of the so-called essays given by Professor Moulton we find little more than a miscellaneous heap of unconnected thoughts, as if the author's real intention had been merely to make a collection of sententious sayings on a

[1] Ibid. p. 265.
[2] Ecclesiasticus v. 9—vi. 1.
[3] Ibid. xxviii. 12-26.
[4] Epistle of St. James iii. 1-12.
[5] *Character and Essay*, ch. III, below.

given subject. The extremely sententious character of these compositions, the constant tendency to personify when the subject is abstract, and to present the object before our eyes in vivid pictures,[1] combined with what might be called the agglomerative style noticed above, suggest rather the "character"[2] than the essay, or at least the combination which has been elsewhere called the "essay-character". An example of this sort of composition has been quoted in the third chapter.[3] On the other hand, a number of the examples given are really essays. "The Responsibility of Speech"[4] and "On Counsels and Counsellors",[5] while hardly in the dilettante spirit of the pagan philosopher, show sufficient development of the topic to entitle them to the term essays.[6] In the "Origin and Development of Idolatry"[7] we notice the speculation of the mind on the origin of things which suggests a parallel with Howell's letter-essays on the origin and development of the European languages,[8] parts of Temple's essay *On Poetry*, and, in another vein, Lamb's *Essay on Roast Pig*. As for the hortatory and devotional tone which we constantly find in these Biblical pieces, we must bear in mind that this is merely a theological colouring—that the Hebrew theologian speaks of wisdom, virtue and the like in terms of deity as naturally as the Greek metaphysician speaks of them as abstractions.

In the literature of ancient China we find not only the germs of the essay, but even parallels to the compositions of Bacon and Earle. Many of the teachings of Lâotze (604?—?), supposed author of *Tâo Teh King*, "The Way" (of Nature), are simply groups of aphorisms with illustrations, on such subjects as gentleness, economy, shrinking from taking precedence, humility, and the like, with the practical aim of

[1] E.g. Wisdom of Solomon v. 8–14 (Transitoriness of Riches, Pride, etc.).
[2] E.g. Ecclesiasticus xix. 25-30. (*The Subtle Man.*) I Esdras iii. 18-24 (*Wine*); iv. 2–12 (*The King*); iv. 14–32 (*Women*); iv. 34-40 (*Truth*).
[3] P. 98 below.
[4] Moulton, op. cit. p. 267.
[5] Ibid. p. 269.
[6] For other examples see list in Moulton, op. cit., Appendix ii, p. 506.
[7] Wisdom of Solomon xiii. 10–19.
[8] *A New Volume of Letters*, pp. 147 sqq.

teaching for action. The following is the section on the topic "The Attribute of Humility":[1]

> What makes a great state is its being (like) a low lying, down flowing stream); it becomes the centre to which tend (all the small states) under heaven. (To illustrate from) the case of all females:—the female always overcomes the male by her stillness. Stillness may be considered (a sort of) abasement. Thus it is that a great state, by condescending to small states, gains them for itself, and that small states, by abasing themselves to a great state, win it over to them. In the one case the abasement leads to gaining adherents, in the other case to procuring favour. The great state only wishes to unite men together and nourish them; a small state only wishes to be received by, and to serve, the other. Each gets what it desires, but the great state must learn to abase itself.

The *Sayings*[2] of Confucius are supposed to be aphorisms collected by pupils from notes taken in lectures or perhaps recalled from memory in after days. They consist of a number of short "sentences" by master and pupil, generally introduced in the manner of Epictetus' Discourses. The style is generally aphoristic and epigrammatic, as, for example "The master said, 'Not to be known should not grieve you grieve that ye know not men'" (Bk. I, 16). Frequently the sayings are personal in their nature. "The master said, 'At fifteen I was bent on study; at thirty, I could stand; at forty, doubts ceased; at fifty, I understood the laws of Heaven; at sixty, my ears obeyed me; at seventy, I could do as my heart lusted, and never swerve from right" (Bk. II, 4). In Book III, 19, Confucius tells in a sentence the proper relation between a king and his ministers and in Book XX, 2, in about two hundred words he tells how a man must govern other men.

Confucius, however, comes nearest to the style of the essayist in what is rather a "character" than an essay. "The Conduct of the Scholar"[3] is a character-sketch of the ideal scholar. The translation does not give the impression of its being elaborately stylistic like the seventeenth century character, yet such a sentence as "The scholar lives and has his associations with men of the present day, but men of antiquity are the subjects of his study" reminds us

[1] *Sacred Books of the East.* Vol. xxxix, pp. 104–5. The division into fo[ur] subsections is omitted.

[2] Translated by L. A. Lyall. (London, 1909.)

[3] *Sacred Books of the East.* Vol. xxviii, pp. 402–10.

Butler's "Antiquary".[1] In the following passage[2] on "Humanity" the style of the essay-character is apparent:

> "Gentleness and goodness are the root of humanity, respect and attention are the ground on which it stands, generosity and large-mindedness are the putting forth of it, humility and courtesy are the ability of it, the rules of ceremony are the demonstration of it, speech is the ornament of it, singing and music are the harmony of it, sharing and distribution are the giving of it. The scholar [illegible] all these qualities in union and has them, and still he will not venture to [illegible] perfect humanity on account of them: such is the honour he feels [illegible], and the humility with which he declines it for himself."

Whatever truth there may be in Professor Moulton's statement that the early essayists, Bacon, Feltham, and Earle, owed largely to the influence of *Ecclesiasticus* and kindred books "the sententiousness of their style and the asyndeton of their sentences",[3] it is to Montaigne's Essays and to his models in classical Greek and Roman literature that we must look for the direct ancestry of the seventeenth century essay. In discussing these classical models we shall not attempt to observe chronological order, but rather such an order as will show a line of approach to the essay as we have it in Montaigne, Bacon, Cornwallis, and Cowley.

Quintilian's *Institutiones Oratoriae*, with the exception of introductory "letters" to certain chapters, consists of a series of sections on subjects varying from the thesis "The orator must be a good man" to minute examination of vowels and consonants and their values. It is, therefore, not on account of the essay-quality of his writings that Quintilian is interesting to us, but rather because he throws out a suggestion which makes it seem probable that he wished boys to be trained in theme-writing along the same lines as those indicated by Ralph Johnson[4] in 1665. Quintilian's influence on educational methods, especially in the time of the early Empire and the Renaissance, is a commonplace of pedagogy, and it seems probable that he may have been the originator of the essay-writing tradition which plays so large a part in modern school education. In the ninth chapter of

[1] Cf. Butler. "An Antiquary is one that has his being in this age, but his life and conversation are in the days of old."
[2] *Sacred Books of the East.* Vol. xxviii, p. 409.
[3] Moulton, op. cit. p. 267.
[4] See p. 24 *supra*.

the first book of the Institutes,[1] he gives some directions for the education of boys who are still too young for the teacher of rhetoric. They should learn to relate orally the fables of Aesop, and to take to pieces the verses of poets and then express them in their own words.

> "Let *sententiae*, also, and *chriae*, and *eth*[illegible] the le[illegible] with the occasions of the sayings added [illegible] be[illegible] these depend upon reading [illegible] the nature of [illegible] different, because a *sententia* is a general prop[illegible] certain persons. Of *chriae* several sorts [illegible] the *sententia* which is introduced with a simple statement [illegible] was [illegible] to say'; another which includes its subject [illegible] asked, or 'When this remark was made to him, replied [illegible] 'When someone had' [illegible] people some think there [illegible] *chr*[illegible] beat his tutor', and there [illegible] do not venture to call by the same name [illegible] having been accustomed to carry the [illegible] carrying a bull'." Translated [illegible] Rev. J. S. Watson in Bohn [illegible]

Any one acquainted with the essays of the seventeenth century will at once recognize that Quintilian has here touched upon certain features of that form of literature. The essay frequently consists of a "Sententia", that is, a general proposition, expanded or expounded or both, with one or more examples or illustrations. The essays are full of what Quintilian calls *chriae*,[3] while the very example he gives of the χρειώδεις is actually used by one of the essayists.

Epictetus' *Discourses*[4] present a few parallels to the modern essay, but in many respects they are quite different from it. Discourse, in the sense in which it is applied to Epictetus' teachings, is about equivalent to Johnson's definition. "The act of understanding by which it passes from premises to conclusion."[5] This is the manner of the Platonic dialogues, and the elaborate process of question and answer by which the false is eliminated is far removed from the haphazard, tentative method of the essay. Frequently Epictetus employs the

[1] Marcus Fabius Quintilianus. *De Institutione Oratoria.* Ed. Spalding. Paris, 1821. Vol. I, §10.

[2] E.g. Bacon, *Of Studies.*

[3] Bacon, *Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and States.* "Desired at a feast to touch a lute, he [Themistocles] said, 'He could not fiddle,'" etc.

[4] Epicteti Dissertationes. Ed. Schenke, Lipsiae, 1894.

[5] *New Eng. Dict.* "Discourse" (2).

dialogue at considerable length,[1] but the larger part of his Discourses are of what we might call essay length. The subjects treated are those we ordinarily find in collections of essays: *Of Progress* (Bk. I, I), *Of Providence* (I, 6), *Of Contentment* (I, 12), *Of Desire of Admiration* (I, 21), *Of Tranquillity* (II, 2), *Of Anxiety* (II, 13), *Of Freedom* (IV, 1), *Of Purity* (IV, 11). The Discourses, however, are all strongly didactic, teaching abstract doctrine with a view to action. The teacher assumes the rôle of an Isaiah, and seldom loses the scolding tone of the indignant pedagogue. He is always intolerant of others who do not live "according to nature", i.e., according to the law of righteousness. The mood of Epictetus is thus quite different from that of Bacon, who is a temporizer, or from that of Montaigne, whose works breathe the spirit of tolerance.

The opening part of the chapter *Concerning those who seek preferment at Rome*,[2] however, might have been written by Montaigne himself:

> [illegible] all applied ourselves as heartily to our proper business, as the old [illegible] at Rome to their schemes, perhaps we too might make some profi[illegible] know a man older than I am who is now a commissary at Rome. [illegible] passed through the place, on his return from exile, what an account [illegible] of his former life! and how did he promise, that for the future, when [illegible] returned, he would apply himself to nothing but how to spend the re[illegible] of his days in repose and tranquillity. 'For how few have I remaining!' [illegible] 'You will not do it', said I. 'When you are once within reach of Rome, [illegible] forget all this, and, if you can but once gain admittance to court, you [illegible] rejoiced and thank God.' . . . Before he entered the city, he was met by [illegible] from Caesar. On receiving it he forgot all his former resolutions, and [illegible] ever since been accumulating business upon himself. I should be glad now [illegible] have an opportunity of putting him in mind of his discourse upon the road, [illegible] pointing out by how much I was the truer prophet."

On the whole, this chapter really resembles the essay in its familiar conversational tone, the severely logical question and answer method not being employed to the same extent that it is in most of the Discourses.

Parts of the preface of Aulus Gellius to his *Noctes Atticae*[3] might have been written by Montaigne, and in fact it shows

[1] E.g. "Of Freedom". (Bk. iv, 1.)
[2] Bk. I, ch. 10. Trans. by T. W. Higginson. Boston 1865.
[3] A. Gellii Noctum Atticarum Vol. I. Ed. Hertz. Lipsiae, 1861.

some very close parallels with passages in the latter's essays which relate to his object and method.

Even in the preface, however, we see how far he comes short of Montaigne. His object is to record what he has read or heard, not what he has thought. He hopes that his readers may pursue the subject suggested by the aid of either books or tutors. The essayists, on the other hand, write observations of life. Frequently these observations are suggested by passages in classical authors, as in the case of many of Montaigne's essays, but never do they become mere commentaries on the text.

The actual work of Aulus Gellius belies the promise of the preface. Arm-chair philosopher as he seems to be, he seldom becomes an essayist. His business and amusement, through many long winter nights spent in Attica for the most part, consisted in writing down a synopsis of the particular work he had been reading, to aid his memory when the books themselves were not available. Such, for example, is the "Story of the son of Croesus, from Herodotus",[1] and Chapter 15 of Book III. Sometimes the chapters consist of quotations from different authors on a certain subject, interspersed with comments.[2] A fairly near approach to the essay is to be found in Chapter II of Book I. The passage begins with a narrative account of a personal experience of the author and two friends with a boastful man, who is finally reproved by a passage from Epictetus read by one of the company.

Thus in the actual writings of Gellius we find little of the essay excepting the germ. The germ, however, is surely there. Let Gellius, the fireside philosopher, close his book and allow his mind to speculate in a rambling but still coherent way upon the ideas suggested in the book by his side, and it is not difficult to imagine, not Gellius, but Montaigne, meditating in the library chair.

The personal reflections of Marcus Aurelius (*τὰ εἰς ἑαυτόν*) should be considered rather as an influence upon the essay than as a prototype. This influence, if he exerted

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[1] Bk. V, ch. 9. *Historia de Croesi filio muto ex Herodoti libris.*
[2] E.g. Bk. I, _

an influence on the essayists, would be in two directions. First, it would tend to direct personal observations to the soul rather than to outward manifestations in action, that is, to make the personal element more introspective and abstract. Secondly, there can be little doubt that the popularity of the *Meditations* had its influence upon the "conduct" books, and later upon the "essay of advice". The reflections were written down for the author's own use, but, like Felltham's *Resolves*, the advice is there for whoever wishes to be advised. Much of the first book consists of character-sketches,[1] with the emphasis as usual upon inner qualities of mind, scarcely anything being said of external features. Throughout the whole of the *Meditations*, there is no more than occasional reference to anecdote. This work connects itself with the devotional meditation to be discussed in the chapter dealing with allied forms.

To judge by the preface and the subjects, Cicero's *Paradoxes* should call for notice here. The subjects treated are such as: "That virtue is the only good" (No. 1), "That all misdeeds are in themselves equal, and good deeds the same" (No. 3), "That every fool is a madman" (No. 4), etc. The paradoxes are of essay length (*ca.* 500–1500 words), and in a few other respects they resemble essays. On the other hand, however, they are in the manner of the scholastic treatises, argumentative[2] with a view to persuading to a course of life; some, addressed to persons against whom the author has a personal spite, are vituperative;[3] all are rhetorical as one would expect from the passage in the preface where Cicero says, "tentare volui, possentne [paradoxa] proferri in lucem, id est, in forum, et ita dici, ut probarentur".

Much more important for our purpose are the two so-called essays, *Old Age* and *Friendship*. The subjects suggest

[1] *M. Antoninus Imperator ad se ipsum.* Recog. I. H. Leopold. Oxon. 1908. Bk. I, §16. (ιϛ′) "In my father I observed mildness", etc. Trans. by Geo. Long. Boston, 1864.

[2] E.g. No. 3.

[3] E.g. No. 4.

the essay, but the form and length at once class them with the Platonic dialogues. The careful arrangement of the material shows that Cicero was not simply "feeling out" after his subject, but, on the contrary, that he had well assimilated it in his mind. Notwithstanding the pains the author takes to say that the discourses do not contain the observations of the professional philosopher, we hardly feel that we have here the tentative effort of the essayist.

But though the matter of the discourse as a whole is in each case carefully, almost elaborately, arranged, there are sections in both *Friendship* and *Old Age* that we may quite properly call essays. Thus, for instance, in the latter we have an essay "Of Agriculture".[1] This subject, like many similar pieces in these two discourses, is not treated exhaustively,—the author simply converses freely upon a theme in which he is personally interested. He talks of the development of the seed from the time it is planted until it stands in ear, of the vineyard and the garden, and, in the manner characteristic of the essayists, calls to mind some of the men of old who employed their time upon the farm.

In the discourse on *Friendship* there are several such passages which, taken from their context, with the alteration of a few words, would read like true essays. For instance, the passage[2] beginning "querebatur quod" down to "amicitiam nisi inter bonos esse non posse", would stand as an essay of about 450 words "On the Choice of Friends" that might have been written by Bacon.

Better examples still of the Baconian essay are the passages "On plain speaking between friends"[3] and "Of Flattery".[4] Omitting the connective (sed), the former begins: "Quum tot signis eadem natura declaret, quid velit, anquirat, ac desideret: obsurdescimus tamen nescio quomodo; nec ea, quae ab ea monemur, audimus." After this general introduction Cicero goes on to speak of the chances of offence and sus-

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[1] Ch. 15-17.
[2] Ch. 17, sect. 62-65.
[3] Ch. 24, sect. 88.
[4] Ch. 25, sect. 91: "Sic habendum est nullam . . . credulorum senum."

picion that must arise in the varied and complex intercourse between friends. It is needless to quote further, as the spirit and style of Bacon are apparent. This essay also parallels the typical Baconian essay in length (about 300 words); the following one, "Of Flattery and Flatterers", is somewhat longer, extending to about 1,000 words. In the context there is a natural transition from the subject we have just been discussing to that of flattery, but omitting this transition and beginning, "Habendum est, nullam in amicitiis pestam esse majorem, quam adulationem, blanditiam, assentationem", we have a real essay. The composition, it must be confessed, has some elements that rather suggest the "character" —a certain acerbity of tone, references to contemporary political events, and what approaches a character of the "Flatterer" toward the end. All these elements, however, are sometimes present even in the normal essay, and the final impression left on one's mind after a perusal of the whole piece i that of the essay rather than the character.

The types we have so far considered probably had no more than an unconscious influence in the evolution of the essay. When we come to consider Seneca, however, we are dealing with one whom the early essayists consciously imitated. Something has been said elsewhere of the relation between the letter and the essay as forms of literature.[1] It is sufficient here to observe with regard to Seneca's *Epistles* that they were intended for publication,[2] that in addressing Lucilius he was addressing the unsophisticated world from the vantage ground of mature experience. Mr. G. A. Simcox calls Seneca's *Letters* a "philosophical diary";[3] they "turn upon cheerfulness and fearlessness and self-possession, and say nothing about external duties". Sometimes one would hardly suspect the fact that a particular composition was written as a letter[4] were it not for the "Seneca Lucilio suo salutem" at the beginning and the concluding "Vale".

[1] *Infra*, p. 87.

[2] Teuffel's *History of Roman Literature*. Trans. by G. C. W. Warr. Vol. II, p. 46 § 289: 5). (Lond. 1891.)

[3] *A History of Latin Literature*. Vol. ii, p. 6. (Lond. 1883.)

[4] Epistola xii.

Mr. Walter C. Summers asserts[1] that Seneca is undoubtedly the best representative of the "pointed style", a characteristic of the later period of Latin literature which we call the silver age. In modern literatures this peculiar style, which "without sacrificing clearness or conciseness regularly avoids in thought or phrase or both, all that is obvious, direct and natural, seeking to be ingenious rather than true, neat rather than beautiful, exercising the wit but not rousing the emotions or appealing to the judgment of the reader"—this style is characterized by the "epigram", "conceit", "turn" and "parody". These qualities of style have already been pointed out as characteristic of the usual essay, and since we know that at least Bacon[2] and Montaigne[3] were familiar with Seneca's writings, the significance of his style is at once apparent.[4]

Another quality of Seneca's style pointed out by Summers is the power to tell a good story in clear, terse language, a quality implied in the Latin word "urbanitas". Examples of this are not plentiful in the epistles, but of "urbanitas" in our sense of refinement, "urbanity", aloofness, especially

[1] *Select Letters of Seneca.* Introduction, pp. xv sqq. (Lond. 1910.)

[2] *Essays*, p. xii.

[3] *Essaies* I, 25.

[4] In tracing the development of this style up to Seneca's time, Mr. Summers makes some interesting observations. (Introduction, pp. xxix-xxxvi.) The new régime, he says, "the absolute monarchy of point", was not established until the closing years of the rule of Augustus, and the two main causes to which it owed its power were the degeneration in the teaching of rhetoric and the increase in the influence of the rhetorical schools upon literature. The older philosophers seem to have been contented with giving their pupils such common-places as "Is knowledge attainable?" or, "Which is preferable, Town life or Country Life?" as subjects of composition. The later rhetors "preferred themes drawn from ethics, legends and mythology of which they liked to give new paradoxical versions". The next change was to fictitious subjects akin to those that might arise in declamations before the law courts, the senate or the popular assembly, yet the older paradoxical subjects were still thriving in the time of Polybius who speaks of the "excellence of Thersites" or the "faithlessness of Penelope" as favourite subjects for schoolboy essays. In the time of Seneca the style of declamation had again changed, for now it was little more than the presentation of the legal aspect of a situation in a new light for the purpose of gaining applause. For this purpose the "pointed style" was indispensable. "Any one who reads a page or two of the work [Seneca's *Oratorum et Rhetorum Sententiae, Divisiones, Colores*] itself will find it a collection of close-packed sentences bristling with antitheses." The preceding throws some light upon the very interesting question already suggested, namely, how far the custom of writing schoolboy themes in preparatory schools influenced the development of the essay.

[5] Ibid. p. lxxii.

aloofness from the throng, there are many examples. This is a second quality which we have noticed that Seneca and the early essayists possess in common.

A third[1] point which Summers calls attention to is the wealth of illustration which lies at Seneca's command. This quality, of course, finds a parallel in Montaigne's essays, and, to less extent, in those of Bacon and Cornwallis. For, as is pointed out elsewhere,[2] one of the characteristic features of the essay is the insertion of anecdote or simile, in the majority of cases drawn from classical literature, to illustrate a general truth or principle.

Of Seneca's influence upon mediaeval writers something will be said in the next section. His influence upon Bacon and Montaigne has already received some attention. We shall now examine some of the *Epistles* to see how far we are justified in considering them as being in the direct line of ancestry of the essay.

In the first place, no apparent care has been taken in the arrangement of ideas, and yet there is a general sequence of thought bearing on the particular precept the author has in mind. A topic suggested by a real or imaginary letter from his correspondent, or some incident that has occurred to himself, gives the author a starting-point. Thus he begins Epistola 47: "Libenter ex his qui a te veniunt, cognovi familiariter te cum servis tuis vivere: hoc prudentiam tuam, hoc eruditionem decet." This is a sort of topic sentence for the letter, and he proceeds to elaborate on the proper relations between servant and master, a subject upon which most of the essayists have delivered themselves. Again, the riot of the Saturnalia[3] gives him occasion to expatiate on the blessings of poverty and abstinence, and, as usual, to enunciate sound precepts of morality. The plan of this letter indicates in a general way Seneca's usual practice. Beginning with some incident or request, or, it may be, some abstract

[1] Ibid. p. lxxiii.
[2] *Supra*, p. 25.
[3] Epistle 18.

idea, he proceeds to meditate upon the principles of human life, thereby suggested to his mind, and as a rule he ends in a strongly didactic tone which, notwithstanding its direct address to Lucilius, forcibly reminds us of Felltham's *Resolves*.

Although there are in all 124 epistles, the variety of the subjects treated is not so great as one might reasonably expect. The themes touched upon are indeed numerous, but Seneca's custom of harping constantly on one chord, "self-applause at the abiding victory over the world",[1] tends to drown all other sounds, or at least to make them merely subsidiary to a single grand theme. The nature of these secondary subjects varies from physics and the scientific discussion of words to the essay commonplaces such as "Old Age". Letters 4–10 form a sequence dealing with the general Stoic theme of "flee from the crowd and dwell with yourself, only be sure that you yourself are good company".[2] Amongst the essay subjects which we can say that Seneca develops are: "Reading" (No. 2), "Old Age" (No. 12), "Friends" (No. 3), "Riot and Abstinence" (No. 18), "Master and Servant" (No. 47), "Observations occasioned by a Sea Voyage" (No. 53), "Good and evil Use of Leisure" (No. 55). The one that approaches nearest to the essay in general tone and treatment is the epistle on "Old Age". The length of this letter makes it impossible to quote it in full, but an analysis will be given with a few quotations to show how close Seneca's Epistles sometimes approach to the Renaissance essay.

"On which side soever I turne my selfe I perceive the proofes of mine olde age: I repaired lately to my countrie farme . . . and complayned of my daily expence in reparations, and my Bayliffe, that had the keeping thereof, answered me, that it was not his fault, alleging that he had done the best that he could, but that the building was over-olde and ruinous; yet notwithstanding it was I myselfe that builded it. I leave it to thee to iudge of mee since the stones of mine age decay so much through antiquitie . . . ."

He goes on to complain that the trees are not well attended to, but the bailiff says that they too are old, and Seneca remembers that he had planted them himself. Next he sees the old porter at the door, and recalls the fact that he him-

[1] Simcox, op. cit. ii, p. 8.

[2] Cf. similar "sequences" of essays in Bacon, e.g., 7 and 8, 9 and 10, 16 and 17, 43 and 44.

self used to give childish presents to his now toothless servant. He then proceeds to meditate on the advantages and disadvantages of old age, and takes comfort in the thought that as apples are mellowest when ripe, so life should be most pleasant when mellowed by age. An imaginary person raises the objection that death stares the old man in the face, but he answers the objector by saying that death also faces the youth, and that even the oldest hopes to live at least one day more. Finally, he examines the ambiguous saying of Heraclitus that "one day is like to all",[1] and concludes his examination with the words:

> "Therefore ought we to dispose of every day, in such sort as if it did leade up the rereward of our time and should consummate our lives."

This conclusion he illustrates by an anecdote related of Pascuvius, and near the end of his "letter" (the first suggestion that it is an epistle) leaves this parting advice with Lucilius:

> "It is an evill thing to live in necessitie, but there is no necessitie to live in necessitie, for the way that leadeth unto libertie is on every side open, short, and easie to keepe."[2]

It is hardly necessary to call attention to the personal, narrative opening, the first sentence that immediately fixes the attention, the epigrammatic style, the meditation on the benefits of old age, the quotation from Heraclitus, and the illustrative anecdote from antiquity to impress the fact that we have here a genuine essay.

Not only in the Epistles but also in the Discourses *Of Benefits*, *Of Happy Life*, *Of Anger*, and *Of Clemency* do we find matter closely allied to the essay. These works are long treatises divided into many chapters, which thus correspond to the "sequences" of Epistles on various general topics. Each of the chapters deals with some phase of the general theme, and frequently they approach the essay in general style and treatment.[3]

But in conclusion, not to overestimate Seneca's influence on the essayist, we must call attention to the constant harping on the subject discussed by the various philosophic schools,

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[1] "Unus, inquit, dies par omni est."
[2] Lodge's translation.
[3] E.g. ch. 12, "Of Anger", on the subject "Of Wrath and Revenge".

such as, for instance, "Is Virtue the chief good?" While the essayists write on abstract subjects, their method is far removed from the logic grinding of the ancient schools of rhetoric. Simcox says[1] that "Seneca's philosophy deals with temper, not with conduct, or only with conduct as far as it is connected with temper". To call attention to the contrast between Seneca and Bacon it is necessary only to mention this point. Seneca is constantly giving direct advice based on abstract precepts in the manner and spirit of the preacher. Bacon, on the other hand, speaks as the man of affairs, giving sound advice based on actual experience and having for its object the guidance of a young prince in the various circumstances of actual life.[2]

In the work of Plutarch that goes under the general title of *Morals*,[3] we find a prototype of the essay that is even more striking than Seneca's *Epistles*. One might even go further and say that in two cases at least we have the essay itself. That both Montaigne and Bacon were acquainted with the *Morals* we know from frequent reference and quotation. Montaigne, for instance, says in the chapter *Of the Education of Children*: "I never seriously settled myself to the reading any book of solid learning but Plutarch and Seneca; and these, like the Danaides, I eternally fill, and it as constantly runs out; something of which drops upon this paper, but little or nothing stays with me."[4] Bacon gives a version of a passage from Plutarch's essay *Of Superstition*[5] with acknowledgment of his indebtedness.[6] The *Morals* were available to men like Bacon and Montaigne in a Latin translation which appeared in Rome shortly after 1470. Amyot's version in French appeared in 1572 and Holland's English version in 1603.

[1] Vol. II. p. 6.

[2] It seems just possible that I.H..E. in his *Mirrour of Worldly Fame*, 160[illegible] (reprinted in *Harl. Misc.* 1808, Vol. ii, pp. 515-534), wrote in imitation of Seneca without being aware that the word "essay" had been used to designate the kind of thing he was writing. He does not use the term in the prefatory material. The ten pieces are apparently letters to one, Philosarchus, whom the author warns against the vanities of the world.

[3] Plutarch's Morals. Translated from the Greek by several hands. Collected and revised by W. W. Goodwin. (Boston, 1870.)

[4] Bk. I, ch. 2[illegible]

[5] Bacon, *Essays* 17.

[6] For other references to Plutarch, see Scott's edition of Bacon's *Essays* cited above.

Plutarch's general mood, style, and method of treatment is best illustrated by an example, and below is given in full his essay on *Envy and Hatred*. By way of preface may be quoted what Croiset says of Plutarch's work in general: "Jamais, la disposition des parties ne résulte chez lui du développement organique d'une idée. Non pas qu'il aille au hasard en dissertant. Il semble qu'en général le sujet à traiter devait lui apparaitre d'abord sous la forme d'une provision d'anecdotes, de traits historiques, d'apophtegmes, d'où se degageaient immédiatement un certain nombre de réflexions. Le travail de composition consistait à répartir rapidement ces éléments dramatiques sous un certain nombre de chefs, qu'il rangeait ensuite eux-mêmes suivant un plan propre à les faire valoir. Ordannance le plus souvent superficielle, mais agréable et claire. . . . On se promène, pour ainsi dire, à travers le champ à explorer; à chaque pas, on y découvre quelque aspect intéressant."[1] This might have been written upon an essayist who combined, as Plutarch undoubtedly did, the outstanding characteristics of Bacon and Montaigne.

OF ENVY AND HATRED.[2]

1. Envy and hatred are passions so like each other that they are often taken for the same. And generally, vice has (as it were) many hooks, whereby it gives unto those passions that hang thereto many opportunities to be twisted and entangled with one another; for as differing diseases of the body agree in many like causes and effects, so do the disturbances of the mind. He who is in prosperity is equally an occasion of grief to the envious and to the malicious man: therefore we look upon benevolence, which is a willing our neighbour's good, as an opposite to both envy and hatred, and fancy these two to be the same because they have a contrary purpose to that of love. But their resemblances make them not so much one as their unlikeness makes them distinct. Therefore we endeavour to describe each of them apart, beginning at the orignial of either passion.

2. Hatred proceeds from an opinion that the person we hate is evil, if not generally so, at least in particular to us. For they who think themselves injured are apt to hate the author of their wrong; yea, even those who are reputed injurious or malicious to others than ourselves we usually nauseate and abhor. But envy has only one sort of object, the felicity of others. Whence it becomes infinite, and, like an evil or diseased eye, is offended with every thing that is bright. On the other hand, hatred is always determined by the subject it adheres to.

3. Secondly, hatred may be conceived even against brutes: for there are some men who have an antipathy to cats or beetles or toads or serpents. Germanicus could endure neither the crowing nor the sight of a cock: and the Persian Mag were killers of mice, as creatures which they both hated themselves and

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[1] *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque.* Par Alfred et Maurice Croiset. Vol. v, p. 493 (Paris 1899).

[2] *Morals, ed. Goodwin,* Vol. II, pp. 95–99.

accounted odious to God. In like manner also all the Arabians and Ethiopi
abhor them. But envy is purely a human passion, and directed only agai
man.

4. Envy is not likely to be found among brutes, whose fancies are not mov
by the apprehensions of each other's good or evil; neither can they be spiri
with the notions of glorious or dishonorable, by which envy is chiefly stirred
Yet they have mutual hatred, they kill each other, and wage most incredible w
The eagles and the dragons fight, the crows and the owls, yea, the little titmo
and linnet, insomuch that it is said, the very blood of these creatures, when sla
will by no means be mixed, but though you would temper them together, they w
immediately separate again. The lion also vehemently hates the cock, and
elephant the hog, but this probably proceeds from fear, for what they fear,
same are they inclined to hate.

We see then herein a great difference betwixt envy and hate, that the
is natural to brutes, but they are not at all capable of the other.

5. Further, envy is always unjust, for men wrong by being happy, and up
this sole account they are envied. But hatred is often just, for there are so
men so much to be avoided and disliked, that we should judge those wort
to be hated themselves who do not shun and detest them. And of this it is
weak evidence, that many will acknowledge they hate, but none will confess th
envy, and hatred of the evil is registered amongst laudable things.

Therefore, as some were commending Charillus, the nephew of Lycurg
and king of Sparta, for his universally mild and gentle disposition,—How,
swered his colleague, can Charillus be a virtuous person, who is pleasing even
the vicious? So the poet too, when he had variously and with an infinite cur
sity described the deformities of Thersites's body, easily couched all the basen
of his manners in a word,

Most hateful to Achilles and Ulysses too,

for to be an enemy to the good is the greatest extravagance of vice.

Men will deny the envy, and when it is alleged, will feign a thousand excus
pretending they were angry, or that they feared or hated the person, cloak
envy with the name of any passion they can think of, and concealing it as
most loathsome sickness of the soul.

6. Moreover, these disturbances of the mind, like plants, must be nouris
and augmented by the same root from which they spring, therefore hatred
creases as the persons hated grow worse, while envy swells bigger as the env
rise higher in the true braveries of virtue. Upon this consideration Themistoc
whilst he was yet young, said that he had done nothing gallant, for he was not
envied. And we know that, as the cantharis is most busy with ripe fruits a
roses in their beauty, so envy is most employed about the eminently good a
those who are glorious in their places and esteem.

Again, extreme badness makes hatred more vehement and bitter.
Athenians therefore had so utter an abhorrence of those who accused Socra
that they would neither lend them fire, nor answer them any question, nor wa
with them in the same water, but commanded the servants to pour it out
polluted; till these sycophants, no longer able to bear up under the pressure
this hatred, put an end to their own lives.

Yet envy often gives place to the splendour of matchless prosperity.
it is not likely that any envied Alexander or Cyrus, since they arrived at
height of their conquests and became lords of all. But as the sun, where he pas
highest and sends down his beams most directly, has none or very little shad
so they who are exalted to the meridian of fortune, shining aloof over the he
of envy, have scarce any thing of their brightness eclipsed, while envy retir
being driven away by the brightness overspreading it.

On the contrary, h[illegible] not vanquished by the greatness and glory of
objects. For though Alexander had not one to envy him, yet he had many hate
by whose treacheries at last he fell. So on the other side, ill fortunes cause en

to cease, but take not enmity away; for men will be malicious even toward abject enemies, but none envy the distressed. However, what was said by one of our Sophists, that the envious are tenderly inclinable to pity, is true, and in this appears a great unlikeness of these passions, that hatred leaves neither the happy nor the miserable, but envy becomes languid when its object has either prosperity or adversity in excess.

7. We shall better understand this from the poising them together.

Men let go their enmity and hatred, when either they are persuaded they were not injured at all, or if they now believe them to be good whom before they hated as evil, or, lastly, when they are appeased by the insinuations of a benefit received. For as Thucydides saith, A later service or good turn, if it be done at the right moment, will take away the ill resenting of a former fault, though this was greater than the recompense.

Yet the first of these removes not envy, for men will persist in this vice, though they know they are not wronged, and the two latter (the esteem or credit of a person, and the bestowing a favour) do exasperate it more. For they most envy the virtuous, as those who are in possession of the chiefest good; and when they receive a kindness from any in prosperity, it is with reluctance, as though they grudged them not only the power but the will of conferring it; the one of which comes from their happy fortune, the other from their virtue. Both are good. Therefore envy is an entirely distinct affection from hatred, since, as we see, the very things that appease the one only rouse and exasperate the other.

8. Now let us consider a little the inclination and bent of either passion.

The design of hatred is to endamage, and hence they define it, an insidious desire and purpose of doing hurt. But envy aims not at this. Many envy their familiars and kinsfolk, but have no thoughts of their ruin nor of so much as bringing any troubles upon them; only their felicity is a burden. Though they will perhaps diminish their glory and splendour what they can, yet they endeavour not their utter subversion; being, as it were, content to pull down so much only of an high stately house as hindered the light and obscured them with too great a shade.

To show how closely alike are Bacon's and Plutarch's methods of treating the subject of envy, we give below such a parallel analysis of the two essays as will bring out the main points of similarity:

PLUTARCH.	BACON.
Length: ca. 1550 words (in English translation).	Length: ca. 1580 words.
General subject: Envy and hatred; their similarity which causes them to be mistaken for one another.	General subject: Envy and love, their similarity.
How they arise at the sight of their objects.	How they arise at the sight of their objects.
Points of difference:	Kinds of men apt to envy or be envied:
(1) Hatred regards the hated person as evil, envy regards only the felicity of others.	(1) A man that has not virtue in himself envies virtue in others.
(2) Brutes may hate, but never envy brutes.	(2) Man that is busy and inquisitive is commonly envious.
(3) Envy is always unjust; hatred is sometimes just.	(3) Those especially who carry their greatness in an insolent manner.
(4) Envy often ceases when the object rises to supreme power: hatred never ceases.	(4) "Public Envy seemeth to beat chiefly upon principal officers or ministers, rather than upon kings and estates themselves."

[illegible] a few general observations [illegible] modern disciples. [illegible] essays is worthy of [illegible]. Bacon [illegible] "There be none of the [illegible] to fascinate or bewitch but love and [illegible] style of opening which we find [illegible] frequent occurrence in Plutarch, [illegible] analysed above. Another [illegible] the essay, *How* [illegible] Goodwin, Vol. II, [illegible] of himself is [illegible] ill-bred com- [illegible] does not digress. The [illegible] arranged or [illegible] has a bear- [illegible] successive [illegible] develop- [illegible] again, Plutarch, like [illegible] with many anecdotes [illegible] poets. Bacon, on the other [illegible] anecdotes and quotes but [illegible] Furthermore, Plutarch, like Montaigne [illegible] air of the arm-chair philosopher than [illegible] general, while Bacon seems ever [illegible] of his remarks to the public li[illegible] Add to this the fact that Plutarch [illegible] himself into his essays, and on [illegible] made above, that Plutarch [illegible] characteristics of Montaigne and Bacon, [illegible] with those of the Frenchman [illegible]

[illegible] Plutarch's *Morals* at once recall themes treated [illegible] *Cure of Anger* (ed. Goodwin, Vol. I, p. 34; cf. Bacon [illegible] ii, p. 95, cf. Bacon 9); *Love of Wealth* (ii, p. 294, cf. Bacon [illegible] *inoffensively praise himself without being liable to Envy* (ii, [illegible] 54), *Fortune* (ii, p. 475, cf. Bacon 40); *Conjugal Precepts* [illegible] 8), *Superstition* (i, p. 168; cf. Bacon 17); *Love* (iii, p. 254 [illegible] *Acquaintance* (i, p. 464; cf. Bacon 27) [illegible] above.

(ii) Mediaeval and Early Modern Period

Contemporaneous with the decay of the Roman Empire and the barbarian invasions is the rise of Christianity as the dominating force in religion, politics, and literature. Our concern here is primarily with literature, and with the others only as they influenced it. The passing of the pagan Empire into the hands of primitive Christianity marks the exit of pagan literature before the entrance of patristic writing. The spirit of the new age differs entirely from that of the old. The early Church Fathers, thoroughly persuaded of the all-importance of their mission, had no place for the dilettante speculations of the later pagan writers. To them eternal life was the supreme good, and eternal damnation the supreme evil;[1] thus they were guided by one overpowering motive—the soul's salvation. This object was to be obtained only by formulating the doctrines of the Church and by establishing ecclesiastical authority. They did not despise pagan literature, but as happened with everything that came into their hands, they transformed the spirit of it to answer the spiritual needs of humanity. "Augustine brought all intellectual interests into the closure of the Christian Faith, or discredited whatever stubbornly remained without."[2] Modes of reasoning common amongst the later Greeks were used in dogmatic treatises;[3] when it was read, classical poetry was interpreted allegorically to make it bear witness to the Scriptures; history likewise passed into the service of the Church and gradually became transformed into a body of edifying tales, mostly of miracles;[4] the strange allegorical parallels of the *Physiologus* bear ample witness of the transformation of even the pseudo-science of such writers as Pliny. Naturally, since the Christian Faith was trying to establish itself, most of the writings in which these elements appear are polemical or controversial treatises directed against pagans, Jews or heretical Arians.[5]

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[1] Henry Osborne Taylor: *The Mediaeval Mind*. Vol. I, p. 64. (Lond. 1911.)
[2] Ibid. p. 65.
[3] Ibid. p. 68.
[4] Ibid. p. 70.
[5] Ibid. p. 69.

From what has just been said the probabilities are that any search for direct parallels to the dilettante, pagan essay in the early Middle Ages will be futile. The fanatical enthusiasm of a new religion fighting for life and recognition is not the spirit of the essay. Before we again meet with men who divert themselves by half-serious speculations on the common-places of life, it is probable that we shall have to wait until the first flush of victorious enthusiasm has faded, or until the new lords of the earth can contemplate their prostrate foe without fear of serious revolt, or until, in the seclusion of the monastery, the ministers of Christianity have time to turn the leaves of long-forgotten books.

In the period before us three currents of literature are to be considered. The first is the deeply devotional "meditation" represented by the *Confessions* of Augustine, and the equally devotional mediaeval sermon; the second continues the classical tradition of Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch, issuing in a form very much like the essay in John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus*; the third is the literature of advice, carrying on the traditional "advice to a son", and finally issuing in the "conduct books", the most famous examples of which are Castiglione's *Courtier* and Machiavelli's *Prince*. This last current carries us far into the seventeenth century, the period *par excellence* of the essay.

1. *Devotional Meditation and Sermon*

The first of these currents need not detain us long as the devotional meditation is only a subsidiary influence on the essay. It doubtless had its influence when, in the Puritan period, the essay was taken over as a fit means for teaching Christian morality.[1] This form of devotional exercise is indeed personal since it discovers the writer's spiritual experience, but, on the other hand, in mood and style it differs essentially from the essay. It has as a rule but one subject, the yearning of the soul for perfect life as a means to eternal salvation. This yearning is the key to the form in which it is generally written—direct address to the Godhead in

[1] Cf. the title *Miscellanea Spiritualia or Devout Essayes.* 1648.

rhetorical, eloquent, often ecstatic language. Here is a passage taken at random from Augustine's *Confessions*,[1] which will illustrate this kind of meditation:

> "O my God, let me remember in Thy sight, with thanksgiving, and confess Thy mercies upon me: Let my bones be pierced with Thy love, and let them say, O Lord, who is like to Thee? Thou hast broken my bonds asunder, I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise. I will now relate in what manner Thou didst break them, and all that worship Thee, hearing it shall say, blessed be the Lord in Heaven and on earth, great and wonderful is His name," etc.

This is clearly an imitation of the psalmist. Of the same nature are Richard Rolles' *Meditatio de Passione Domini*[2] and the passages assigned to the "Disciple" in Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*.

In the work just mentioned we find the deep devotion that belonged to the Church Fathers, but we note also in these "meditations" the attitude of a man retired from the world who, without any overflowing enthusiasm reflects on various phases of Christian life. In several of the chapters of the first two books of the *Imitation* we find passages resembling the letters of Seneca and the *Morals* of Plutarch transfused with the spirit of Christianity. Most of the subjects of the *Imitation* could be paralleled in the writings of the pagan authors. They are simply the commonplaces of life as they appear to the devout Christian who has withdrawn from the world. A few extracts may be given from the chapter, *Meditations Concerning Death*:[3]

> Since life is of short and uncertain continuance, it highly concerns you to look about you and take good heed how you employ it. To-day the man is vigorous and gay and flourishing, and to-morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little time carries him out of our sight, and a very little more out of our remembrance. O the hardness of men's hearts! O the wretched stupidity that fixes their whole thoughts and care upon the present, and will not be prevailed with to look before them, or bear any regard to that which must come hereafter! Whereas, in truth, every work and word and thought ought to be so ordered as if it were to be our last, and we instantly to die and render an account of it. . . . However flesh and frailty may impose upon us, yet be assured 'tis greater wisdom to be afraid of sinning than to be afraid of dying, a greater blessing to preserve our innocence than to prolong our lives. . . . Alas! to-morrow is uncertain: neither you, nor I, nor any man can depend upon it. Or if we could, yet what does it avail to live, though it were much longer, when we by longer-

[1] *Collectio Selecta SS. Ecclesiae Patrum CXXXII. S. Augustinus XXV.* Parisiis, 1839. *Confessionum*, Lib. viii, cap. 1, p. 250.
[2] Ed. by C. Horstman, Vol. I, p. 82 sqq. (Lond. 1895.)
[3] Bk. II, ch. 23.

living grow so little better? Assure yourself, long life is far from being always a blessing. . . . Happy is that man who can comfort himself with having employed any one day of his life so perfectly well as he might and ought to have done. . . . Consider then, my friend and fellow Christian, consider what a risk you run by your delays. . . . Learn *now* to die daily, to die to sin and the world, that you may then begin to live with Christ. . . . How often have you been surprised with the news of this friend being run through, another drowned in crossing the water, a third breaking his neck by a fall. . . . Use time then while you have it: make haste to be rich toward God, and let religion and your salvation be your chief, your only concern . . . that when God calls you may readily follow in person, and make a happy exchange of this miserable world for a better.

Another influence that we must notice here is the recurrence in mediaeval sermons and religious treatises of themes which later become essay subjects. In Saint Augustine's *City of God*, for instance, we find a section of about the ordinary essay length on the subject "That the friendship of good men cannot be securely rested in so long as the dangers of this life force us to be anxious". The treatment of this theme is not essentially different from what we might expect in an essay, unless we insist on the presence of references to the classics and illustrations as indispensable to that form of literature. The conclusion, that it is better to hear of the death of useful public men than to learn that they had fallen from the Faith, is a good illustration of the point emphasized at the beginning of this section, namely, that the soul's salvation was the all-powerful motive with the early Church Fathers.

The subjects most commonly treated in mediaeval sermons and treatises are the seven deadly sins and the seven cardinal virtues. These are "commonplaces" in the sermon just as surely as they are commonplaces of life. Dan Michel in his *Ayenbite of Inwit*[1] treats in characteristic mediaeval fashion the "seven heads of the beast" which Saint John saw in his vision. Pride with its seven boughs, unworthiness, arrogance, ambition, etc., are discussed at length. The passage on envy,[2] the second head, is almost a character-essay. Then follow discussions of hate, dislike of well-doing, sloth, avarice, etc., with the various subdivisions of each.

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[1] Matzner: *Altenglische Sprachproben.* Prosa. pp. 60 sqq.
[2] Ibid, p. 82.

So, too, in *The Ancren Rewle*[1] the "sustren" are warned to shun various sins such as evil speech,[2] which sin is divided in the manner of Dan Michel into three categories,—"Idel speche is vuel, ful speche is wurse, attri speche is the wurste". The author of this treatise quotes from Scripture, from the Saints and also from Ovid, Horace, and Seneca, though the authenticity of the quotation from Seneca seems doubtful.[3]

Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* is little more than a discourse on the seven deadly sins and their "remedia", followed by a shorter discourse on patience. The author whom Chaucer is translating quotes copiously from the Saints, especially from Saint Augustine, and less frequently from the Bible itself. In the *Tale of Melibeus* the same virtue is recommended more on the authority of Tully and Seneca than even that of the Saints.

In the modern period this kind of writing was of course continued. Thomas More's *Treatyce (unfynished) uppon these wordes of holye scripture: "Memorare novissima*[4] . . ." discourses in the style of a sermon upon the "Remembrance of Death"[5] and its efficacy as a medicine for different human frailties. Then are treated in order the subjects "Of Pride",[6] "Of Envy",[7] "Of Wrathe",[8] "Of Couetise",[9] "Of Gluttony",[10] and "Of Slouth".[11] The style of these treatises is that of the meditation, exhortation, sermon, and essay combined. The spirit is essentially devotional; the quotations are taken mostly from the Bible, but occasionally from Cicero and Pliny. Yet stylistic qualities like the "figure of our dead bony bodies biten away ye flesh",[12] and "from the first fote ye set forwarde to go forth",[13] are evidence that More was not

[1] Ibid, pp. 8 sqq.
[2] Ibid, p. 24.
[3] Ibid, p. 7.
[4] 1522. In *Workes* (Lond. 1557), pp. 72 sqq.
[5] Pp. 77-82.
[6] P. 82 (2½ folio pages).
[7] P. 85 (1½ folio pages).
[8] P. 86 (2 folio pages).
[9] P. 88.
[10] P. 95.
[11] P. 100.
[12] P. 77 E.
[13] P. 81 F.

so entirely carried out of himself by his devotion as to forget graces of style.

The purpose of the section just completed has been to show that throughout the Middle Ages there was kept alive in the ecclesiastical treatise and sermon the discussion of the abstract qualities of pride, envy, hatred, patience, prudence, etc. In men like Augustine and Saint Bernard, we look for and find true enthusiasm based on knowledge and conviction. In such sermons as those of Bernard of Clairvaux[1] on the subject of detraction, humility and patience, we note that the Saint draws his authority from the fountain-head, the Bible. Later writers such as the author of the *Parson's Tale* quote the authority of the Saints, while the author of the moral *Tale of Melibeus* cites mostly pagan authorities. Following up this suggestion it is not difficult to imagine a condition of affairs where a preacher, either from dearth of devotional spirit or from pride in classical learning or from a combination of these two, might ignore his duty as a preacher and, in the true spirit of dilettante aloofness, entertain his hearers with essays on virtue, patience, envy, hatred, and the like, keeping to the orthodox subjects but entirely changing the spirit and treatment.[2]

2. *Continuation of the Classical Tradition*

Of Plutarch's influence in the Middle Ages very little seems to be known, more than that there are numerous references to him by mediaeval writers. Of Seneca's influence,[3] however, we have more definite information. While the grammarians ignored his prose style, Macrobius borrowing two long passages from him without troubling himself to acknowledge the debt, apparently on the supposition that his prose had been forgotten, the early Christians were learning to appreciate Seneca's matter. Jerome placed him in the catalogue of the saints on the basis of the spurious *Correspondence*

[1] *Life and Works of Saint Bernard.* Trans. and ed. by S. J. Eales. Vol. IV pp. 143 and 224. (Lond. 1896.)

[2] *Infra*, p. 87, footnote 3.

[3] For this discussion of Seneca, see Summers' *Introduction*, p. xcvi sqq. cited above, p. 44.

between Seneca and St. Paul. In the sixth century works were composed by a Christian archbishop which are little more than mosaics of Senecan epigrams, and several anthologies have come down to us under the titles *Monita* (Senecae), *Liber (Senecae) de Moribus Senecae Prouerbia.* "In the Middle Ages Seneca was Cicero's equal. The oldest manuscripts belong to the ninth and tenth centuries: Gerbert (940–1003) quotes from his works. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he is on all enlightened lips and pens. Heloise meets Abelard with a passage from him as an argument against their marriage. John of Salisbury defends him against unfair interpretations of Quintilian's 'Critique'. Peter of Blois rebukes a greedy monk with language that owes a good deal of its force to him, Alain de Lille and Gerald of Cambray know him well. Vincent de Beauvois quotes him freely in his *De eruditione filiorum regalium.* Among the works which Roger Bacon desired, but found so expensive, were those of Seneca. . . . We also find Seneca in lighter products of this period, such as the *Gesta Romana* and the *Bataille des sept Arts.* . . . Dante mentions him in a list of sages in the *Inferno.* . . . Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale* contains three anecdotes from the *De Ira*, and the poet specifically quotes the 'flour of moralitie as in his tyme'[1] more often than any other author save Ovid. . . . An interesting testimony to the position of Seneca at this time is afforded by the fact that at the University of Piacenza, founded about the end of this century [fourteenth], there was, in addition to a Professor of Philosophy, a Professor of Seneca."[2] Of Seneca's influence on writers like More, Elyot, and especially on Montaigne it is needless to speak here, as the Senecan vogue is clearly established in the preceding quotation.

During the twelfth century, in John of Salisbury,[3] the cultivation of Latin literature reached its zenith so far as the Middle Ages are concerned. Other authors of this time

[1] *Monk's Tale*, 507. Cf. also *Tale of Melibeus.*
[2] Summers' *Introduction*, pp. xcix–ci.
[3] D. C. Munro: *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.* Am. Hist. Assn. 1906.

were thoroughly conversant with the beauties of Lati literature and wrote creditable prose and verse. But John o Salisbury was fighting a losing battle. He had to take th field against the opponents of the classics who at this ver time were decrying the devotion to non-practical studie Classical literature as such was doomed to a period of com parative neglect during the thirteenth century, when scholar were working as best they could to digest the encyclopaedi knowledge of Aristotle.[1] From this neglect it was to emerg only in the days of the Italian Renaissance.

That John of Salisbury[2] knew both Plutarch and Senec is evident from the number of references to them. That h read and enjoyed classical literature, and that he wrote wit a zest is clear from the general tone as well as from a fe specific statements in the Prologue to the *Policraticu* Speaking of the "fruit of letters" he says: "Besides all th solace in grief, recreation in labour, cheerfulness in povert modesty amid riches and delights, faithfully are bestowed l letters."[3] The following passage from the article in th *Dictionary of National Biography* describes the contents the book: "The name was probably intended to mean 'Th Statesman's Book'; but its two-fold design is indicated l the alternative title 'De Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philos phorum'. The book is neither a satire 'on the varieties courtiers' nor a set treatise on morals. It deals with t principles of government, with philosophy and learnin but the digressions, illustrations, reminiscences are so num ous that the work is less a systematic composition, though has a scheme of its own, than an encyclopaedia of miscellani the aptest reflection of the cultivated thought of the mid of the twelfth century." This description might well sta for Montaigne's Essays with the century changed from t twelfth to the sixteenth. The subjects of some of t chapters come very near to those in the essay-collections,

[1] Taylor, op. cit., ii, 118.

[2] *Joannis Saresberiensis Policraticus*, ed. C. C. J. Webb, (Oxon. 1909) In also Vol. II, Prolegus, p. 1.

[3] Taylor, op. cit., ii, 115.

for instance: "De dissimilitudine Augusti et Neronis";[1] "De reuerentia personarum et rerum, et quot modis persona sit uenerabilis";[2] "Pecuniam contemnendam esse pro sapientia; quod etiam ueterum philosophorum probatur exemplis";[3] "De Amore diuitiarum, et quod eis anima non quiescit";[4] "De inuidis et detractoribus";[5] "De frugalitatis commendatione, et nota Quintiliani in Senecam. . . ."[6] To show how John of Salisbury treats these commonplace themes, the reader may be referred to the essay *Of the love of Riches*[4]; not that it is necessarily the best example, but because the subject is so common with essayists. The speaking of the possessor of the quality and the rather satiric tone throughout incline one to call the piece a "character" rather than an essay, but, on the other hand, the incisive opening, "Qui solas diuitias congerere curant, nichil in uita potius credi volunt uia quam ceteris praetulerunt", the general sense of which is clear, the numerous quotations and the reflective mood of the philosopher rather than the reformatory zeal of the prophet turn the balance in favour of the essay.

The thirteenth century we pass entirely, and come to Richard of Bury's *Philobiblon*,[7] composed about 1345. In the Prologue the author says: "We have drawn up a little treatise, in the lightest style indeed of the moderns (for it is ridiculous in rhetoricians to write pompously when the subject is trifling), which treatise will purge the love we have had for books from excess. . . ."[8] We cannot say that he has always accomplished the "purgation" of his love, for the very first chapter "On the commendation of Wisdom, and of Books in which Wisdom dwelleth" is partly an enraptured apostrophe to wisdom. "Oh celestial gift of divine liberality, descending from the Father of Light to raise up the rational

[1] Vol. I, Lib. 1. Cap. 7.
[2] Vol. I, Lib. 5. Cap. 4.
[3] Vol. I, Lib. 5. Cap. 17.
[4] Vol. II, Lib. 7. Cap. 16.
[5] Vol. II, Lib. 7. Cap. 24.
[6] Vol. II, Lib. 8 Cap. 13.
[7] Ed. by John B. Inglis. (Albany, 1861.) Eng. trans. on opposite page.
[8] Ibid. p. 47.

soul even to heaven!" There is a further tendency to eulogize (in another apostrophe to books) by attributing various qualities to them or by comparing them to various useful objects. This character-style does not permit the development of thought which we require in the essay treatment. Chapter 4 is a "Complaint" of books against those who neglect them. The bitter spirit sometimes displayed[1] is, of course, merely another instance of the absence of restraint and aloofness, two elements which we have become accustomed to look for in the paganized essayists of the Renaissance. The pervading spirit of Christianity is felt everywhere, but is especially prominent in the closing paragraph of the last chapter: "Finally, let them beseech God with holy prayers . . . that he may bring back the spirit created in the image of the Trinity . . . through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen."[2]

On the other hand, not only do many of the subjects suggest the essay, but in several cases the treatment of the subjects is in the essay style. "Of the wisdom contained in books",[3] "That books are to be preferred to Riches",[4] "The Ancient Students surpassed the Modern in Fervency of Learning"[5] are all subjects frequently met in collections of essays. Furthermore, the length of the chapters, the strong personal element throughout the book,[6] the frequent references to classical authors,[7] poetic quotations,[8] the insertion of anecdotes,[9] the tendency to give advice,[10]—all these are characteristics we have noted in the essay. Chapter 13, "A Vindication of Poetry and its Utility", on the whole comes nearest to being an essay; in fact one sees no reason why it should not be called by that title. The subject, to be sure, is not one of the commonplaces noted in the first chapter, but the general theme of poetry would allow it to enter the field.

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[1] E.g., chs. 4 and 9.
[2] P. 201.
[3] Ibid. ch. 1.
[4] Ibid. ch. 2.
[5] Ibid. ch. 9.
[6] E.g., chs. 1, 8.
[7] E.g., ch. 9.
[8] E.g., ch. 9.
[9] E.g., ch. 3.
[10] E.g., ch. 17.

With Petrarch the dawn of the Renaissance is breaking, and we leave our discussion of the mediaeval humanists with little more than a reference to the great Italian. To quote again from Summers: "When Petrarch records in his copy of Virgil the date of Laura's death, it is to Seneca that he turns for a quotation, and he chooses him to be one of the nine ancient authors to whom are addressed letters in the fourteenth book of his *Epistulae de rebus familiaribus*. 'Every day', he says, 'I listen to you with an intentness almost beyond belief; it is perhaps not unreasonable to wish you to listen to me for once. . . .' His works are full of quotations and adaptations from Seneca. The *Epistulae* in particular are Senecan rather than Ciceronian."[1] It must be said, however, that these letters[2] for the most part fall under what has already been briefly discussed as the critical essay, and therefore do not closely ally themselves with the essay proper. They are, in other words, an example of the observation made elsewhere that, when writing about the authors of classical antiquity the Renaissance students speak with the utmost enthusiasm. The constant personal address, the rhetorical style, the depth of devotion to classical studies — all these qualities remove Petrarch's letters to a considerable distance from the Renaissance essay. One at least of his letters, however, approaches in style and substance the Senecan epistle, and thus the modern essay. The epistle to Tommaso di' Messina,[3] "On the Impossibility of Acquiring Fame during one's Lifetime", begins thus: "No wise man will regard as peculiar to himself a source of dissatisfaction which is common to all. Each of us has quite enough to complain of at home; a great deal too much in fact. . . . Death first gives rise to praise—and for a very simple reason; jealousy lives and dies with the body." Then follows a passage addressed to the correspondent, after which the author

[1] *Introduction*, p. ci.

[2] The following observations are based on the letters contained in J. H Robinson's *Petrarch, The first Modern Scholar and Man of Letters* (N.Y. 1898), and *Petrarch's Letters to Classical Authors*. Trans. by M. E. Cosenza. (Chicago' 1910.)

[3] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 409 sqq.

continues: "Let us look for a moment at those whose writings have become famous. Where are the writers themselves? They have turned to dust and ashes these many years." On the whole, however, the letters are disappointing from our point of view, especially when we consider the title of the book and Petrarch's admiration of Seneca.

3. *Literature of Advice*

Apparently the literature of advice has always been very popular in every language. The Proverbs of Solomon, the teachings of Confucius and Epictetus are representatives of this class of writing in ancient times. Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* is a representative of the literature of advice in the Middle Ages, and when we come to the modern period we find it, in its best known form of the "conduct book", represented by such works as *The Complete Gentleman, The Complete Citizen, The Complete Angler*. The first book printed in England by William Caxton in 1477, *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*,[1] contains amongst other grave observations and "sententiae", considerable advice to a prince or king. For example: "A Prince should take a friend that loves him before Kinsmen that desire his wealth." The next step, the "essay of advice" such as we find in Bacon, connects this class of literature with the form we are particularly interested in.

Machiavelli's *Discourses*[2] might almost bear the title "The Complete Politician". On the other hand, they connect themselves with the critical essay and with the essay as we have it in Montaigne. The purpose of the book is clear from the preface,—to show how history can guide us if we read it aright. The method of the author is to note incidents recorded in Livy's History and to deduce therefrom practical lessons of statecraft. In many respects these short observations resemble the essay. Frequently they begin in an informal narrative[3] manner In reading this history of Titus

[1] "Translated from the French of Guillaume de Tignonville", who in 1410 had translated it from the Latin compilation dating from about 1350. Facsimile reprint, Lond. 1877.

[2] *Opere di Niccolo Machiavelli.* Milano, 1804 Vol. II.

[3] Translation by N. H. Thomson. Lond 1883

Livius with a view to profit by it . . . ;"[1] "I have often heard it disputed by men well versed in military affairs . . .,"[2] "When in the year 1505 Pope Julian II . . ." Again, the subjects are frequently the stock themes of the essay; for example: "Men often err in thinking to subdue Pride by Humility."[3] Further, the circumstances under which they were written suggest the origin of Montaigne's essays. The observations of both are occasioned by reading classical story. But just here we find the quality of Machiavelli's *Discourses* that effectually separates them from the essay. Instead of sitting back in his chair and allowing his mind free rein to speculate upon the ideas suggested, as Montaigne does, Machiavelli reads, then asks himself the definite question: "How can I use this episode of Roman history to inculcate principles of efficient statecraft in prince and minister?" To show further the practical turn of mind, we note that he chooses most of his illustrations from contemporary Italian history instead of from classical literature.

Machiavelli's *Prince*[4] seems to have had an enormous influence on statecraft during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and its influence is clearly reflected in Bacon. The various chapters are of ordinary essay length and some very strongly suggest Bacon. For example, chapter 22, "Concerning Ministers of Princes",[5] in general treatment of that subject rather than in the ideas presented, recalls Bacon's method. Machiavelli first emphasizes the necessity of a wise choice, the choice itself showing wisdom in a prince. He then divides all men into three classes: (1) Those who understand things through their own insight—a very rare class, (2) those who understand things when they are explained, and (3) those who cannot understand things either of themselves or when explained. The chief business, then, for a prince is to discover a good adviser, and the test Machiavelli proposes is whether he thinks more of his prince's than of his own interests. If he

[1] Bk. II, ch. 33.
[2] Bk. II, ch. 12.
[3] Bk. II, ch. 14.
[4] *Opere*. Vol. I.
[5] Translation by W. K. Marriott. Lond. 1908.

qualities on this basis, then the prince should retain his services by heaping wealth and honours upon him. Such a chapter is distinguished from certain of Bacon's essays chiefly by the almost entire absence of abstract reflections. Every sentence has to do with actual, living men. Doubtless the comparatively rare reference to incidents of classical story is due to the fact that Machiavelli found in contemporary history examples better suited to illustrate the particular point he was trying to emphasize. His purpose, we must remember, was not to while away a few spare hours by writing essays, but to teach his prince how to govern effectively. The best example of abstract treatment of a subject is the first part of chapter 25, "What Fortune can effect in Human affairs, and how to withstand her". But after a single page he "confines himself more to the particular", and proceeds in the usual way.

Two books which in their practical teachings ally themselves with Machiavelli's *Prince*, being in reality "Guides to Statesmen", are *The Quintessence of Wit*,[1] and Robert Dallington's *Aphorismes Civill and Militarie*.[2] Discussion of these books is deferred to the chapter on "Allied Forms";[3] they are mentioned here to call attention to the tendency of writers of conduct books to approximate to the essay method.

In the conduct books so far considered it has been pointed out that the spirit and purpose have been eminently practical. We have now to con[illegible]orks of the same class whose purpose and spirit are e[illegible]thical[1]. First, we shall examine Gascoigne's mora[illegible] *Glasse of Government*[4] (1575). This is indeed n[illegible] conduct book, but the title and the strong note of Puritanic didacticism pervading the work are our justification for considering it in this place. In Gnomaticus' exhortations to the four youths

[1] "Sansovino, Francesco. The quintesence of wit. Translated out of the Italian tung by R. Hichcock. London 1590."

[2] "Amplified with Authorities and exemplified with Historie, out of the first Quarterne of Fr. Guicciardine." [illegible]don, 1629 Seco[illegible]tion.

[3] *Infra*, pp. 150 sqq.

[4] *Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, ed. J[illegible]unliffe, Camb. 1910. Vol. II, pp. 5 sqq.

we find passages which we may call with certain reservations "moral essays". For instance, the disquisition on "patriotism" begins with the words: "[And] as ingratitude is the most heinous offence against God, so have I taught you that it is the greatest faulte in humayne actions, amongst the which it sheweth it selfe no way more untollerable then if you shoulde happen to bee unthankefull unto your country. Tully in his offices sayth,"[1] etc., and concludes with the sentence: "Meneceus, the Sonne of Craeon, refused not voluntary death, when he understoode that the same might redeeme the citye of Thebis from utter subversion."[2] Other essays of the same general nature are the passages on the subjects of duty to elders[3] and duty to parents.[4] The most prominent feature of these moral discourses is their didacticism. There is no attempt at epigram, and the plan, like that of Chaucer's *Tale of Melibeus*, consists of a few general statements copiously illustrated from classical literature.

The Book of the Courtier,[5] one of the most notable conduct books in any language, is cast in the mould of the Platonic dialogue. This work presents a picture of the ideal Renaissance gentleman, and its influence was deeply felt in England, France, Spain, and the Low Countries.[6] In it are discussed in dialogue form the chief qualities and accomplishments of a gentleman—noble birth, dancing, writing, and speaking. These passages, however, do not approach very closely even to the essay of advice on account of the form in which the whole is cast. The nearest approach to the essay proper is the discourse in the author's own person on the subject incidentally suggested, "How old people praise bygone times and censure the present".[7] This we might almost say is a real essay on old age. But

[1] Ibid. p. 29.
[2] Ibid. p. 31.
[3] Ibid. p. 31 beginning, "In your countrie have always especiall respect . ."
[4] Ibid. p. 32 beginning, "I will partly include the same . . "
[5] *Il Cortegiano del Conte Baldesar Castiglione*, annotato e illustrato da Vittorio Cian. In Firenze, 1894. Trans. by L. E. Opdyke, N. Y. 1903.
[6] *Camb. Hist. Eng. Lit.* Vol. III, p. 437.
[7] *Il Cortegiano.* Opening of Book II, *circa* 1000 words in the English translation.

when the author continues the theme and defends present-day conditions, especially at Court, from the aspersions of hostile critics, the essay quality partly disappears, since the whole discourse then assumes a mildly controversial tone. "Let them cease then to censure our time as full of vices, for in removing the vices they would remove the virtues too; and let them remember that among the worthies of old, . . . there were also to be found many very bad men. . ."

We have next to consider conduct books which more nearly ally themselves with our subject since they occupy a position between the essentially "practical" motive of Machiavelli, on the one hand, and the essentially ethical writings of Gascoigne, on the other. First of these is Sir Thomas Elyot's *Boke Named the Gouvernour*[1] (1531), an exhaustive treatise on the kind of education magistrates ought to receive. Chief amongst the accomplishments of one destined to become a ruler is dancing,[2] and on this subject Elyot makes a discourse that resembles the "essay of information", being historical, narrative, speculative, besides abounding in anecdotes. He describes the different movements of the dance[3] and explains their significance. Dancing, he says in effect, may be an introduction to prudence whose branches represented by various movements—are honour, celerity and slowness with their mean maturity, providence, industry, circumspection, election, experience, modesty, and idleness. Here we have not only the essay subjects but what, taken out of their context, we may consider as real essays. "Industrie", for example, "is a qualitie procedyng of witte and experience, by the whiche a man perceyueth quickly, inuenteth fresshly and counsayleth spedily. Wherefore they that be called Industrious, do moste craftily and depely understande in all affaires what is expedient, and by what meanes and wayes they maye sonest exploite them. . . ."[4] The author then proceeds to illustrate what he means by

[1] Ed. H. H. S. Croft. Two Vols. Lond. 1880.
[2] Vol. I, ch. 20.
[3] Vol. I, ch. 22
[4] Ibid. pp. 249 sqq.

citing Alcibiades and Julius Caesar. Of the same nature is the passage on idleness.[1]

A Spanish writer who seems to have exerted a considerable influence on English literature in the sixteenth century is Antony de Guevara.[2] One of his works which appeared in England as *A Looking Glasse for the Court*[3] has very many of the qualities of a book of essays centring on a single theme, "A dispraise of the Courtie 's life", as the running page-heading goes. Some of the chapter-titles are: "Of certaine Courtiers which ought to complaine of none, but of them selues" (ch. 1); "That the rusticall lyfe is more quiet and restfull and more beneficiall then that of the court" (ch. 5); "That in the village the dayse seeme more long, and the ayer more clere and better" (ch. 6). These headings all indicate a prejudiced point of view, and this of course partly destroys the value of the book for our purpose. Most of Cowley's essays, however, are written with the purpose of persuading to a certain view of life, but there is lacking in them the bitterness that appears in the *Looking Glasse*,[4] especially in the later chapters which deal with the dark side of Court life. Nevertheless, even making allowance for this spirit, which as a matter of fact appears in a somewhat milder degree in certain of Cowley's essays, some of these chapters approach very near to the personal essay in that they contain that autobiographical element which gives such a charm to Montaigne's collection. Chapter 18, for instance, is an account of the author's experiences at Court. To conclude, we would call attention to the personal element the copious illustrations from classical antiquity,[5] the frequent narrative opening,[6] and, finally, the occasional balanced construction[7] and epigram.[8] With regard to the last point we must bear in

[1] Ibid. pp. 269-271.
[2] Cf. *Cam. Hist. Eng. Lit.* Vol. III, p. 344 sqq.
[3] "Composed in the Castilian tongue . . . drawne into Frenche . . . and out of the French Tongue into Englishe by Sir Fraunicis Briant in the rayne of K. Henry the eyght. . . London, an 1575."
[4] E.g. pp. 42 sqq.
[5] E.g. ch. 17.
[6] E.g. ch. 1.
[7] E.g. p. 66v.
[8] E.g. p. 10v. "Therefore I conclude, that there is nothing in this worlde so certain, as yt all thinges are uncertaine."

mind that though this book was written originally in Spanish and appeared at third hand in English, the fact remains that it was known generally in its English garb, and what influence it may have had would be owing to the English translation.

The Diall of Princes, by the same author, "Englysshed oute of the Frenche by Thomas North . . . Anno 1557", seems to be a compilation of wisdom collected from the works of various pagan philosophers, especially from those of Marcus Aurelius.[1] The purpose of the book is to furnish guidance for rulers, and this purpose is accomplished by choosing Marcus Aurelius as a model prince and placing him in various imaginary situations such as will serve to illustrate the principles to be taught. Besides principles of statecraft, such subjects as marriage, the duty of noble women and princesses,[3] and eloquence[4] are discussed, always with copious examples from the classics, intimacy with which Guevara seems never to be tired of displaying. The pervading spirit of the book is pagan, though Christian elements are frequently met,[5] and the general parallel between most of the chapters and the normal essay is so very close that one is almost tempted to call it a collection of essays. Chapter 4 of the last division, "Certaine other Letters, written by M. Aurelius" on the subject "Discretion and indiscretion in Women",[6] may be cited to show that as early as 1557 we have in English an almost perfect example of the Renaissance essay.

In the same way essays continued to appear in the conduct books of the seventeenth century,[7] but we have now reached the period when the essay flourished as a separate form of literature, and we need look no longer for possible or

[1] See heading of Bk. I, ch. 1.

[2] Bk. II, ch. 1.

[3] Bk. II, ch. 17.

[4] Bk. II, ch. 25.

[5] E.g. Bk. I, ch. 9, "Of the True and Living God"; ch. 20, "Of the causes why Princes ought to be better christians then their subjects".

[6] Page 732 (incorrectly numbered 730).

[7] E.g. Opening chapter of Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman* (1622), on the subject "Of Nobility in General".

probable influences which led to its appearance. To conclude this discussion, let us merely call attention to the possibility that the essay itself might, in the hands of a man like Bacon, have disengaged itself from the conduct books, and appeared as we now know it, even if Montaigne's work had never been given to the world.

CHAPTER III

ALLIED FORMS

(i) THE APOPHTHEGM, APHORISM AND MAXIM

In this chapter we propose to discuss various forms of literature connected with the essay. It must be premised, however, that the several subdivisions of the chapter do not represent definite forms which are always distinct from one another or from other forms. When we speak of a maxim, an aphorism or a character, it must be understood that the application is only to the most usual form to which these terms are applied.

The New English Dictionary defines the apophthegm as "a terse, pointed saying, embodying an important truth in a few words; a pithy or sententious maxim". The aphorism is: "1. A 'definition' or concise statement of a principle in any science; 2. Any principle or precept expressed in a few words; a short pithy sentence containing a truth of general import: a maxim." The maxim is defined as " . . . 2. A proposition (esp. in aphoristic or sententious form) ostensibly expressing some general truth of science or experience. 3. A rule or principle of conduct: also, a precept of morality or prudence expressed in sententious form." It is not our purpose, nor are we called upon to distinguish carefully between these three various forms of expression. It is sufficient for us to note that all these have a common underlying idea—a sententious observation or enunciation of a principle, and when we recall that this kind of expression is one of the elements noticed as being a very common characteristic of the essay, the reason for the present discussion will be apparent.

A study of sententious sayings from almost any point of view is confusing. We shall here consider these three forms, first, as they are applied to government, and secondly in their more general application to human experience. First, then, let us examine briefly the maxim (a term we shall frequently

use in a general sense to include all three) as applied to states, princes, and governments. Typical examples of the political maxim are found in Charles Quarles' *Observations concerning Princes and States upon Peace and Warre.*[1] This seems to be a compilation of maxims of advice to a prince collected out of the four books called the *Enchyridion.*[2] "Observation 1" reads as follows: "The Glory of a Kingdome, is a pious and a potent Prince: The strength of a Prince, is a religious and a loyall Subject: The happinesse of a Subject, is a long-settled, and a well-establisht Peace: The fruits of that Peace, is Plenty, and all worldly Felicity." Number 54: "If thou chance to entertaine any foreigne Souldiers into thy Army, let them beare thy Colours, and be at thy Pay, lest they interest their owne Prince: Auxiliary Souldiers are most dangerous: A foreigne Prince needs no greater invitation to seize upon thy country, then when he is required to defend it." These two quotations bear no room for doubt that Quarles is thoroughly conversant with his Bacon and Machiavelli. Entirely wanting in the maxims, however, is Bacon's brilliant simile or metaphor, probably by design. The date of the "Observations", 1642, bears its own significance.

We shall next examine two books already mentioned in tracing the history of the essay.[3] In his preface to the *Quintessence of Wit* (1590), Hitchcock excuses himself "for that I have not called the same rather experiments, advertisements, maximies, axiomies, precepts or sentences, then conceits." Regarding the aim of the book he says: "This work . . . will be of great helpe and aide to those that be studious . . . I propose to helpe and yield aide to men of accomplishment . . . drawing substance foorth of histories . . . " The nature of the contents is indicated by the headlines on the first page: "Politick Conceites and sentences . . . out of the most famous writers in the Greek, Latin and Italian tongues, to benefit those that commaund in matters of state

[1] *Complete Works*, ed. A. B. Grosart (1880), Prose, pp. 53 sqq.

[2] E.g. No. 29 of the "Observations" is identical with No. 17 of *Enchyridion*, I[illegible]

[3] See p. 66 above.

and Ciuil Gouernment." These observations are usually very short, varying from three or four to as many as thirty-five lines, the shorter being simply apophthegms; in all 803 paragraphs are crowded into 98 pages. Frequently we find a "sequence" of several "sentences" on the same subject. For example, 297–299 and 788–790 deal with "Counsel"; 800–2 with 'Honour". The opening sentences of No. 297 on the subject of "Counsel" will serve as an example of the general quality of these apothegms. "In taking of counsell, many thinges are to be had respect unto, but principallye two, prudence in him that hath to receive counsell, and fidelitie in him that is to give counsell: for so much, as counsell being nothing else but a well considered discourse of certaine thinges whether they are to be doone, or not to be doone, etc." While this book of political aphorisms suggests Machiavelli and Bacon on every page, the paragraphs are no more and no less than a collection of maxims. They are almost entirely devoid of illustrations, and in this respect especially differ from the *Aphorisms Civil and Military* of Robert Dallington. This book, like the former, consists of a series of maxims of advice to a prince, but the severely sententious character of such a collection is relieved by illustrations from history. Thus, for example, the fifth aphorism of the second book reads: "It is therefore an ill grounded deliberation in a Prince, to engage himself in an action, the successe whereof can be but sleight and of small moment, whereas the miscarriage may beget dangerous effects to him and his State." Then follows, in a manner that reminds the reader of Fuller's *Holy and Profane State*, an example from the career of Ferdinand, King of Naples, taken from Guiccardini's History. If Dallington had intermixed illustration with aphorism in a more informal way, he would have produced a work with many points of similarity to a collection of essays.

Sir Walter Raleigh's *Maxims of State*[1] presents a much closer parallel to the essay than any of the books just mentioned. In general this work consists of a number of defini-

[1] *The Works of Sir Walter Raleigh*. Oxford, 1829. Vol. viii, p. 1.

tions, minute subdivisions of the different elements of the state along with rules for government. Frequently, however, we find passages, such as that on the "Founding of a State",[1] which in their treatment of the subject rather closely resemble some of Bacon's essays. The main difference between Raleigh's method in the passage mentioned and that of Bacon, for instance in the essay *Of Judicature*, is that the former is devoid, not of illustration, but of quotation and literary style for its own sake. We find, for example, many sentences in Raleigh's work corresponding to Bacon's. "A Judge ought to prepare his way to a just sentence", but nothing corresponding to the following clause, "as God useth to prepare His way, by raising valleys and taking down hills". In this particular instance Raleigh's maxim has advice of the most indirect kind only, as against the direct admonition of Bacon's essay, but in the section "Particular rules"[2] direct advice is proffered, and examples from English, classical and Biblical history are cited.

Of maxims of general morality we have plenty of examples in the *Proverbs* of Solomon, the *Sayings* of Confucius, *The Way* of Láotze and the *Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*. Coming down to our particular period we find very much the same kind of aphoristic observation in the four books of Quarles' *Enchyridion* already referred to. The first of these books consists mainly in advice for a prince; the remaining three are of general application. For example, Number 19 of the second book reads: "The way to subject all things to thy selfe, is to subject thy selfe to Reason: then shalt governe many, if Reason governe thee: Wouldst thou be crowned the Monarch of a little world? command thy selfe." In this connection we should make a passing reference to Francis Osborn's *Advice to a Son*[3] partly because some of the sections are mere apophthegms,[4] and partly be-

[1] Ibid. p. 5.
[2] Ibid. p. 13.
[3] *Works*. Vol. I, pp. 1, sqq.
[4] E.g. I, 18. "When Business or Compliment calls you to write Letters, consider what is fit to be said, were the Party present, and set down that."

cause he speaks of them as aphorisms in the preface to the second part. This work, however, will be considered more in detail below.

Another class of general maxims consists of those in which sheer "wit" is the predominant feature. To this class belong the "*Witty Apophthegms*[1] delivered at several times . . . by King James, King Charles, The Marquis of Worcester, Francis Lord Bacon, and Sir Thomas More". These consist for the most part of an anecdote followed by a sage reflection[2] for which the incidents of the story furnish the occasion. Sometimes, however, the apophthegms stand alone: "If the Pope may erre as a man but not as a Pope, I would know why the Pope doth not instruct or reform the man, or wherefore the man doth not require the Pope's instruction"[3] Bacon highly commends the practice of jotting down striking passages from one's reading. "Julius Caesar did write a Collection of Apophthegmes as appears in an epistle to Cicero. . . . It is a pity his book is lost; for I imagine they were collected with judgment and care . . . Certainly they are of excellent use. They are 'mucrones verborum, pointed speeches,' Cicero prettily calles them 'salinas, saltpits'; that you may extract salt out of, and sprinkle it where you will. They serve to be interlaced in continued speech. They serve to be recited upon occasion of themselves. They serve if you take out the kernel of them, and make them your own."[4] Bacon's *Apophthegmes*[4] are a collection of the witty sayings of various men which he has jotted down, for the purposes indicated in the foregoing quotation. They are usually introduced by an anecdote, but very frequently by the simple words "Thales said"[5] or "Chilon would say". It is evident that maxims of this kind are somewhat nearer to the essay than those in Quarles'

[1] London, 1658.

[2] *Witty Apophthegms*, p. 9, No. 20.

[3] Ibid. p. 13, No. 25, cf. p. 158, No. 30 (Sir T. More).

[4] *Works*, ed. Spedding, Vol. VII, p. 123. Preface to *Apophthegms New and Old*.

[5] "Thales being asked when a man should marry, said; 'Young men not yet, old men not at all'". Cf. *Essay* viii.

Enchyridion, since they frequently possess, in addition to the aphorism, the elements of anecdote and the easy familiar style that we observe in the essay. Of the same nature as Bacon's apophthegms, though often more sententious, are many of the shorter passages in Jonson's *Timber*.[1] For example, Number 28: "Afflictio pia Magistra— Affliction teacheth a wicked person some time to pray: prosperity never." Jonson's practice differs from Bacon's in that, while the latter acknowledges his creditors, the former usually does not, and the consequence is that we often think we are reading Jonson's original observations, whereas we are actually reading a quotation from Quintilian or some other classical author.[2]

It is evident that apophthegms of the kind we have been discussing, excellent though they may be as "'mucrones verborum' to be interlaced in continued speech", are yet considerably removed from the essay. In the first place, by themselves they are too short. Further, a mere collection of them about a given subject does not allow of development. Quarles' aphorisms of advice, for example, have in themselves essay qualities, but yet no number of them grouped together about a common topic would form an essay. A succession of observations of a sententious nature would doubtless throw light upon a particular theme, but there would be lacking the element of progressive thought which we look for in the essay. This point was referred to in speaking of the "proverb-group"[3] as furnishing a parallel to the essay. In the same way apophthegms of "sheer wit", while generally interesting, would never of themselves permit a theme to progress, as will be shown when we come to discuss the character.[4] After a very few of either kind of "sententiae", the mind becomes wearied and needs to be relaxed. The sententious style must be enlivened, and the meaning enlightened by illustration, by quotation, or by simile or metaphor from the writer's own mind. In other words, while aphorism is

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[1] *Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. F. Cunningham (Lond. 1875), Vol. IX, p. 131.
[2] See *Ben Jonson: Discoveries*. Maurice Castelain, Paris, 1906.
[3] Pp. 34, *supra*.
[4] Pp. 94, sqq. *infra*.

generally to be looked for in the essay, it is not to be so prominent as to be a source of fatigue to the reader's mind. Raleigh's *Maxims* fail in the opposite direction. They end with scientific analysis and occasional illustration, being thus deficient in the sententious general truth that arrests attention as the mind passes from point to point in the development of the theme.

(ii) THE COMMON-PLACE BOOK

The reference in the preceding section to Bacon's purpose in compiling his *Apophthegmes* leads us to consider the Common-place Book as a *genre* in some respects closely allied to the essay. The large number of references to the practice of keeping a book in which are written down for future use striking passages in one's reading or personal observations of men, makes it pretty certain that most literary men kept a common-place book.[1] To this branch of literature belong two works of which the fame has lasted to our own day the *Table Talk*[2] of John Selden, and Ben Jonson's *Timber*. The two differ widely as regards the manner of their composition. As noted above, *Timber* is a compilation by Jonson's own hand of striking passages from his extensive reading; *Table Talk*, on the other hand, is a collection of wise sayings informally delivered by John Selden, copied down by his amanuensis, the Rev. Richard Milwood, and published in 1689, thirty-five years after Selden's death. These two books thus represent two large classes of literature, the "common-place book" and the "ana-books" as Mr. Waters[3] calls them, the greatest example of which is Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. They are alike in this respect; and here we note their relation with the essay books, that in the form the "sayings" were jotted down or spoken they were not intended for publication. In other words, the observations in this kind of book are quite in-

[1] See Oxford Eng. Dict., s.v., Common-place Book, and quotation from Bacon above.
[2] Ed. S. H. Reynolds, Oxford, 1892
[3] *John Selden and His Table Talk*, ed. Robert Waters. N.Y. 1899. P. 18.

formal, showing little evidence of care in the arrangement of material. A glance at the Table of Contents of either will satisfy one that the material for essays is there. For example, under the letter P in the Table of Contents of *Table Talk* we note this series: Patience, Peace, Penance, People, Philosophy, Pleasure, Poetry, and in the *Discoveries*,[1] Claritas patriae, Eloquentia, Amor et Odium, Injuria, Beneficia, Valor rerum, Memoria. The answer to the question whether these are essays depends not so much upon method and treatment as upon the extent of treatment.

Some of Selden's observations are merely witty apothegms, as, for example, that on "Friends" (45): "Old Friends are best. King James used to call for his old shoes, they were easiest for his feet." "Minister Divine" (88), on the other hand, extends to more than 1300 words. As a rule, the various chapters consist of unconnected thoughts grouped about a common subject. Thus, on the theme "Bible, Scripture" (5), we find a series of fourteen observations, which are mutually independent but which might be so arranged and connected as to entitle the chapter, on the score of development at least, to the name of essay. A great many of the "talks" have to do with contemporary events and conditions, especially controversial religious and political questions of the day. Thus we find a succession of chapters on the subjects "Bishops before the Parliament", "Bishops in Parliament", and "Bishops out of the Parliament".[2] Chapter 89 on "Money" begins very much in the way of the essay, and in fact a little rearrangement of the material would almost make an essay out of it, but just at the end Selden introduces the great controversial question of contemporary politics—shall king or parliament have control of public finances? The element of information in Selden's "talks", while it separates them from the essay proper, allies them with what we may call the "essay of information".[3] The chapter on "Opinion" (95) comes as near as any to the normal essay. This "talk" contains about 350 words,

[1] Sections 56–61.
[2] Chapters 6–8.
[3] Cf. Bacon's *Of Vicissitude of Things.*

is introduced by a short, somewhat sententious utterance, is full of the author's personality, has a classical allusion, and has no more than a distant reference to controversial questions. The connection between the four sections is not close, yet if they were not numbered we should not perhaps feel the incoherence so much.

Ben Jonson's *Timber*, like Selden's *Table Talk*, deals with a variety of matters. The larger part is taken up with the discussion of poetry and composition, and from the disposition of this material it would seem as if the author had actually spent considerable care in arranging it with a view of giving it either to the world or to the young writers who looked upon Jonson's *dicta* as oracles. This part would naturally call for treatment with the "critical essay". In the other sections of the *Discoveries* we find much in subject, mood, and treatment that allies them with the essay. Frequently the spirit is bitter, but this element is usually confined to such sections as refer to the reception Jonson's writings have received at the hands of the people.[1] On the other hand, some of the sections are almost essays, or require only a little elaboration to entitle them to that name. Numbers 13-18 deal with the subject of counsel, and were the divisions or headings omitted so that the composition would read continuously, and a little care bestowed upon the arrangement of the material, we should have a piece very closely resembling one of Bacon's essays. Of the single sections "Memoria" (62) most closely approaches to the essay. This piece contains about 300 words, is full of the personal element, is introduced by a striking sentence and contains a reference to Seneca.[2] From all that has been said it is quite evident that Ben Jonson's *Timber* (the title suggests the "tentative" element of the essay) in many instances approaches in form, manner, and substance the works of the essayists whom he affects to scorn.[3] Had Jonson deliberately set himself to prepare the *Discoveries* as a volume of essays, there is no

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[1] E.g. Number 45.

[2] The whole piece is really a paraphrase of Seneca. See Shelling's edition of *Discoveries*, pp. 101–2.

[3] Cf. p. 15 above.

doubt that his mind, trained in ordering material for the drama, would have rejected the discursive method which he censures in Montaigne, and in all probability would have produced something very nearly akin to Bacon's *Essays*.

(iii) ADVICE TO A SON

Under this head are to be considered two works that closely ally themselves with the conduct book already discussed, and the essay of advice, a common form in Bacon's *Essays*. These works are Sir Walter Raleigh's *Instructions to his Son and to Posterity*,[1] and Francis Osborn's *Advice to a Son*.[2] These would have been considered with the conduct books, but that they were written after 1597, and, moreover, present close parallels to the essay of advice as noted above. The title of Raleigh's treatise suggests that it was prepared for publication. It consists of a series of ten chapters for the most part of about essay length, each containing advice as to some situation of life or point of conduct. Chapter 1 deals with "Choice of friends", chapter 2 with "Choice of a Wife", chapter 3, with the proposition that "Riches are not to be sought by evil means". Chapter 7 is little more than an aphorism, "Exceed not the humour of rags and bravery, for these will soon wear out of fashion: but money in thy purse will ever be in fashion; and no man is esteemed for gay garments but by fools and Women". It is quite evident that Raleigh has the Proverbs of Solomon in mind while he writes. The whole tone of the book is that of direct, serious advice, supported, rather than enlivened, by quotations mostly from the Bible.

Osborn's *Advice to a Son . . . In Two Parts. Under These General Heads. I Studies, II Love and Marriage, III Travel, IV Government, V Religion* was written between 1656 and 1658. The book seems to have had considerable popularity and to have established Osborn as a man of letters.[3] Each of the five divisions is subdivided into sections

[1] *Works*. Vol. VIII.
[2] *Works*. Vol. I.
[3] Cf. D.N.B. "Francis Osborne."

varying in length from 24 to about 1500 words. As has already been pointed out in this chapter a number of these sections are mere apothegms, but as usual Osborn, in this kind of work as in almost every other kind that he attempted, approached the essay form. As has been noticed elsewhere,[1] his style is discursive and obscure, and although not devoid of wit, this latter element is generally smothered in long involved sentences. There is also a note of cynicism which we shall find also in his character-essays.[2] Section 25 of Part II comes as near as any of the *Advice* to being an essay. The subject "Libraries" is treated in about 1500 words. In substance the section says that libraries are generally more for show than for use, and that the reader is to take warning not to believe histories excepting when they are probable. The cynical tone pervading the piece is foreign to the normal essay. The illustrations, as a rule, are from modern history, though the classics are not without some recognition. Thus the composition presents several points of contact with, and several of divergence from, the normal essay. Yet we must say that it does not differ materially from Osborn's own essay, or from his characters either for that matter. Moreover, the work serves to show how the sections of a book of advice might in the proper hands become real essays.

(iv) THE MEDITATION, CONTEMPLATION, AND SERMON

As has been pointed out in the preceding chapter, the term "meditation" is usually applied to a short composition which reveals the writer's inner experience. There is no good reason why the word should not be applied to such a composition as Bacon's essay *Of Truth* and many others of a similar character, but the fact remains that the term has been almost exclusively associated with a short series of reflections of a devotional nature. It is still commonly used in pulpit utterances as a modest word for sermon. It is our purpose in this section to show how, while still preserving its usual sense, it

[1] *Infra*, pp. 113 sqq.
[2] Ibid.

is frequently applied to a kind of composition that closely resembles the essay.

In the first place, it is evident that in the minds of certain writers there was not a hard and fast line drawn between these two forms of literature. John Robinson's *Essayes or Observations Divine and Moral*[1] "collected out of holy Scriptures, ancient and modern writers . . . tending to the furtherance of knowledge and virtue", is a case in point. It is sufficient to note here that the author speaks in the preface of "this kind of study and meditation". That is, the word is used to designate a collection of essays, many of which are of a religious or devotional nature. Again, Walter Montagu, in his letter to the printer, speaks of his *Miscellanea Spiritualia or Devout Essays*[2] as "these my Meditations". The whole book is a series of twenty-one "treatises," each of which is divided into several "essays" of a purely devotional character. From the Epistle Dedicatory to the Queen and the prefatory address to the court the author makes plain his purpose—to try in some degree to make amends for a frivolous or wicked life by composing in retirement these devotional pieces. He makes no comment on the use of the word "essay", which is unfortunate from our point of view, because the sections are not at all in the spirit or style of the ordinary essays.

On the other hand, John Harris uses the word "contemplation" for a similar devotional meditation, while he calls observations in the ordinary philosophical mood "essays". The title of the first section of his *Miscellanies*[3] is "Contemplation and Love: Or, the Methodical Ascent of the Soul to God, by Steps of Meditation". The general plan consists of a meditation on some phase of the problem, "The End of Man", followed by a prayer. It is to be noted that Harris's essays are almost entirely moral observations in the manner of the pagan philosophers, while the "contemplations" are deeply

[1] 1638.

[2] Wm. E. Axon: *The Licensing of Montagu's Miscellanea Spiritualia* in *The Library*. New Series. Vol. II, 1901, pp. 260 sqq.

[3] *A collection of Miscellanies consisting of Poems, Essays, etc.* (written 1678) Fourth ed. (Lond. 1706), pp. 235 sqq.

religious, if not Christian, in matter and spirit. Ezechiel Culverwell's *Time Well Spent in Sacred Meditation, Divine Observations, and Heavenly Exhortations*,[1] and Quarles' *Judgement and Mercy for Afflicted Souls, or Meditations, Soliloquies and Prayers*[2] are in the ordinary manner of the devotional contemplation.

In Bishop Hall's *Meditations and Vows*[3] the individual pieces are, as a rule, much shorter than in the works previously mentioned. One of the shortest will give a general idea of all. "It is a vainglorious flattery, for a man to praise himself; an envious wrong, to detract from others: I will speak no ill of others, no good of myself."[4] The main features of Hall's *Meditations* are illustrated here. They are a clear, incisive style, especially in the opening sentence, and carefully balanced constructions, as a further example of which this sentence will suffice: "The fear of what may come, expectation of what will come, desire of what will not come, and inability of redressing all these, must needs breed him continual torment."[5] Another element, not apparent from quotations given, is a predilection for figures such as. "The world is a stage, every man an actor; and plays his part here either in a Comedy or a Tragedy. The good man is a Comedian; which, however he begins, ends merrily; but the wicked man acts a Tragedy: and therefore ever ends in horror."[6] The vows at the end of the *Meditations* connect this collection, and many similar collections, with the essay of advice in general and with Felltham's *Resolves* in particular. Yet even with so many qualities in common with the essay, Hall's *Meditations* do not approach the latter form very closely. The meditation on "Temporal Things"[7] is perhaps as much like an essay as any. It contains about 420 words, it begins abruptly and has the pointed style of the

[1] London, 1635.
[2] London, 1646, ed. by Grosart (1880), Prose, pp. 60 sqq.
Works of Joseph Hall. Oxford, 1837. Vol. VIII.
[4] Ibid. Cent. II, 55.
[5] Ibid. Cent. III, 13.
[6] Ibid. Cent. II, 30.
[7] Ibid. Cent. III, 9.

normal essay. Yet the element of self-communion, the general illustration instead of a particular reference, surround it with an atmosphere that is foreign to the essay.

Bacon's *Meditationes Sacrae*[1] were written in Latin and published in 1597 along with the *Essays* and the *Colours of Good and Evil*, probably to fill out what would otherwise have been a very thin volume. The subjects at once suggest those of the *Essays*: "De Operibus Dei et Hominis", "De Columbina Innocentia et Serpentina Prudentia", "De Spe Terrestri", "De Impostoribus", "De Atheismo", "De Haeresibus", etc. The subjects themselves suggest a somewhat more religious colouring than do those of the *Essays*, and generally speaking, the spirit or mood is more devoutly meditative than that of the more famous collection. Of this devoutly religious treatment the "Meditatio De Atheismo" is a good example. For the text of this meditation Bacon has chosen the words: "Dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus", and in the method of the scholastic sermon he divides his subject into three parts, dwelling upon the ideas suggested by the words (1) "in corde", (2) "dixit", and (3) "insipiens". Orthodox though the form may be, there is evidence that Bacon's mind did not work in a way essentially different from that in which it worked when he wrote the *Essays*. For instance, this sentence: "In physicis et illud affirmo, parum philosophiae naturalis, et in ea progressum liminarem, ad Atheismum opiniones inclinare: contra, multum philosophiae naturalis, et progressum in ea penetrantem, ad religionem animos circumferre"; which appears in an English guise in the essay "Of Atheism": "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." The actual text, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God", is quoted in the essay, and we further note that Bacon brings into his religious "meditation" the statesmen and politicians that play so large a part in the *Essays*. In short, the "sacred" element of Bacon's "meditation" is more apparent than real.

[1] *Works*. Vol. XIV, pp. 59 sqq. (English translation follows the Latin.)

The "Meditatio De Spe Terrestri" might have been transferred, in an English version, to the *Essays* and no one would ever have suspected that it was originally intended for any other collection. Like the other meditations, it is of about the average length[1] of Bacon's essays. The text is introduced abruptly: "Sensus purus in singula meliorem reddit conditionem et politiam mentis, quam istae imaginationes et progressiones animi." Perhaps there is a little more of close reasoning than we find in the *Essays*, yet the quotations both of prose and verse, and the sentence, "Quare satis leviter finxere poetae spem antidotum humanorum morborum esse, quod dolores eorum mitiget, cum sit revera [illegible]censio potius et exasperatio, quae eas multiplicari et recr[illegible]re faciat", are quite in the style of the essay. The C[illegible]an element does not appear; there is nothing in this pie[illegible], not even excepting the last sentence, that might not have been written by an enlightened pagan.

To form a connection between the sermon and the essay w[illegible] again have recourse to Francis Osborn. His third essay is [illegible]itled "A Contemplation on Adam's Fall", and consists [illegible] a theological discussion of the relative guilt of Adam a[illegible] Eve. It thus allies itself with the devout meditation or contemplation. The nature of the subject, however, the length (over 4,000 words), and the fact that it is not so much a communion with one's self as a discussion for the help of others,—all these elements tend to ally the essay with the sermon. But, to be just to Osborn, attention should be called to the fact that this composition is not rhetorical, attacking no vicious line of conduct, nor even the opinions of others. In other words, it is written in the tolerant mood of the essay.

The sermon in general has much in common with the "meditation", but from the nature of the case is ordinarily more explanatory, and since it is presumably written with a view to delivery before an audience, is more rhetorical than the meditation. The rhetoric may be in the direction of exhortation or of invective. In sermons originally written

[1] *Ca.* 500 words in Latin, *ca.* 650 in Eng. translation.

with a view to publication—practically the only kind now available—emphasis is naturally placed upon the style, and when the preacher is not haunted by a vision of the sin of the world, style may become the chief interest. Even in Hall's sermons we note many of the stylistic qualities which have been pointed out in his *Meditations* and which are especially prominent in his *Characters*.[1] Sermons of the type criticized by Eachard[2] are as far removed from the normal essay as they are from the normal sermon, yet the fact that preaching in those days had so little spirituality suggests that perhaps a few divines, whose lack of devotional fervour was made up for by an intellectual appreciation of the classics, might at least have preached orthodox morality in a form resembling the essay.[3]

(v) THE LETTER

Something has been said in the first chapter[4] about the significance of the literary "Epistola" in the early Renaissance. The letter has been pressed into the service of almost every kind of literature—poetry, history, philosophy, theology, literary criticism, and fiction. No apology is required for the epistolary form since its use has been sanctioned, so far as modern writers are concerned, by the practice of such men as Horace, Cicero, Seneca, Erasmus, Saint Paul, and Saint Bernard. To no particular *genre* does it more closely ally itself than to the essay. Montaigne,[5] Cornwallis,[6] and Cowley[7] use the letter form in their collections. Mary Astell's *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*[8] is a letter of 148 printed

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[1] *Charac*[illegible] *Virt*[illegible]*es and Vices.* 1608.
[2] *Grou*[illegible]*ons of the contempt of Clergy and of Religion Enquired into.* Eig.
[3] In A[illegible]ge was made against the orthodox Unitarian preachers in the eigh[illegible], and against the Liberal or Radical Unitarians by the orthodox Calv[illegible] the nineteenth century, that their sermons were mere essays.
[4] Pp. 2 sq[illegible]
[5] E.g. Bk. I, 25; Bk. II, 38.
[6] No. 39.
[7] No. 10.
[8] Second ed. London, 1696.

pages, and the words "Essays and Letters" on title-pages[1] is a very common occurrence. It is needless to say that most of the epistles we shall consider, whether open or private letters, were written for the purpose of publication.

Three patent elements of the letter ally it with the essay. The first is its informality. When one friend writes to another he does not expect his epistle to be submitted to a critical examination as to its form and style, and when a writer chooses to call a product of his pen which he intends for publication a letter, he thereby in a sense modestly disavows responsibility for the arrangement of the matter and the style of presentation. Besides informality, two other elements to be looked for in the letter are spontaneity and egotism.[2] The first of these is to be desired in almost every form of literature, and the second is especially appropriate to the personal letter, since, from the nature of the case, the person addressed is, or is supposed to be, interested in the writer's personal experience. Both spontaneity and egotism are eminently characteristic of the personal essay in general and of Montaigne's *Essais* in particular. Ordinarily we expect the essay to have more of a literary character than the letter, and when the letter possesses literary at the expense of epistolary merit, it becomes, as Mr. Rannie points out,[3] an essay in letter form. Mr. Rannie has perhaps the elaborate essay of the nineteenth century in mind, nevertheless there is much truth in what he says.

In accordance with the method used in defining the essay, quotations will be given from the prefaces of some of the letter-writers in order to show how close was the alliance between the two forms, in their minds at least. The editor of Guevara's *Familiar Epistles*,[4] in his preface to the reader, describes the contents of the book as "rules for Kinges to rule, counsellers to counsell, magistrates to gouverne, prelates

[1] E.g. Francis Osborn: "Essays, Paradoxes . . . Letters, Characters, etc." *Works*, Vol. I. Also Gilden's edition of "Miscellaneous Letters and Essays on Several Subjects". 1694.

[2] David Watson Rannie: *Letter Writing as a form of Literature in Ancient and Modern Times.* The English Essay, 1895

[3] Ibid. p. 3.

[4] *The Familiar Epistles of Sir Antonie of Gueuera*: translated . . . by Edward Hellowes, . . . at London, 1584.

to practise, capteines to execute, souldiers to performe, the married to followe, the prosperous to prosecute, and the poore in adversitie to bee comforted, wherein he delicately toucheth with most curious sayinges, and no lesse Philosophie, how to write or talke with all men, in all matters at large, with matter so apt, so learned, so merrie, and also so grave with instructions of behaviour, with thy better, with thy equall, with thy friende, with thy foe, with thy wife, seruant, and children". The *Letters* themselves will be examined below to show how closely Guevara approached the essay in practice. Charles Gilden, the editor of *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays*,[1] prefaces the following remarks concerning the contents: "I have intermixt things Historical, Moral, Amorous and Gallant, with the rougher Critical Discourses. Some will gratifie the Fancy, others the Judgment, or at least I design'd they should." So much for the miscellaneous nature of the contents.

James Howell has something to say, at least by implication, of his conception of the letter. In an epistle to Sir I. S.[2] he censures "our next transmarine neighbours", whose "stile is so soft and fleshy, that their Letters may be said to be like bodie without sinews, they have neither art, nor arteries in them. . . . There is no strength of matter, nothing for the Reader to carry away with him, that may enlarge the notions of his soule: One shall hardly find an apothegm, example, simile, or any thing of Philosophy, History, or solid knowledge in a hundred of Them". Plainly, Howell would have letters contain many of the points of style that we have already noticed in the essay. Arbuthnot, writing at a period when the essay had already advanced a considerable way on the road of the treatise,[3] goes even further than Howell, and says at the end of *An Essay on the Usefulness of Mathematical Learning:* "I ask your pardon for the omission of Ceremony

[1] "By several Gentlemen and Ladies." Lond. 1694. (All in letter form.)
[2] *A New Volume of Letters*, p. 2.
[3] Cf. Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesey*, and Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding.*

in these papers, having followed rather the ordinary way of Essay than Letter."[1]

It seems unnecessary to speak here of the essays of Cowley and Cornwallis that happen to be written in epistolary form. Montaigne's essay *Of the Education of Children*[2] differs not materially from the rest of his book, excepting that it is addressed "To Madame Diane de Foix, Comtesse de Gurson", and occasionally the address is repeated by the word "Madame"; but no one reading the final paragraph would suppose the composition had begun as a letter. It begins in essentially the same manner as the great body of his essays—with a sententious observation. On account of the nature of the "occasion" there is more direct didacticism here than in the ordinary essay of Montaigne. The other instance of a letter appearing in the Frenchman's collection is the digression inserted in the body of the essay *Of the Resemblance of Children to their Fathers.*[3]

Most important for our purpose are those collections of letters which in style and substance resemble essays. First among these we shall consider Guevara's *Familiar Epistles*, translated into English in 1584. The passage already quoted from the preface shows the variety of the matter treated, and it further points to the close connection between this work and the conduct books discussed in the preceding chapter. Some of these letters are addressed to great men of the Spanish court, but others are mere fictions, as, for instance, the correspondence between the Emperor Trajan and Plutarch.[4] The following list will give an idea of the subjects treated in the book: "The conduct of a Gentleman",[5] "Court Customs",[6] "Ire",[7] "Envy",[8] "Origin and History of the city of Numantia",[9] "Manner of Ancient Writing",[10]

[1] "In a letter from a Gentleman . . . ", 1700, in *Miscellaneous Works*, Glasgow, 1751.
[2] Bk. I, ch. 25.
[3] Bk. II, ch. 37.
[4] Cf. Ticknor, op. cit., ii, 14-16.
[5] Hellowes' Translation, p. 40.
[6] Ibid. p. 40.
[7] Ibid. p. 114.
[8] Ibid. p. 109.
[9] Ibid. p. 30.
[10] Ibid. p. 52.

an exposition of the text "My Yoke is Easy", "An Exposition of the Psalme which sayth, 'Let the living descend into hell'". In this list will be noticed material for the sermon, the disquisition, and the essay, and in fact, all three mod[illegible] of treatment are found. On the side of the essay we may note the moderate length, the first six subjects, the personal element,[1] the constant tendency to give advice, the manner of introducing stories, and the copious allusions to classical authors.

Richard Brathwait, author of the *Essay upon the Five Senses*, has a letter, or what purports to be one, "delivered in a satisfying character to his friend, upon his then happy solemnized spousals with his dea. Panarete".[2] This letter setting forth the "Author's Op[illegible]ion of Marriage" begins: "Sir . . . I will labour therefore to satisfy your demands exactly, making experience my directress . . . ", and then proceeds to discuss the subject of marriage in excellent prose. While there are no obtrusive tricks of sty[illegible] the letter in parts suggests the character; as, for instance, the passage describing the faithful wife: "She makes her husband's reputation her principal subject, and chooseth rather to die than it should die. . . ." The balanced constructions, the tendency to aphoristic sayings, the frequent references to classical antiquity, and a quotation from Homer, all point to the essay quality of the piece. There are several Biblical allusions throughout the epistle, but there is little to indicate the deeply devotional mind which we notice at work in the *Essays on the Five Senses* until we reach the very end, where he concludes: "Methinks marriage, as it is a type betwixt Christ and his Church, the state politic and her head; so it is a nearer combining of the body to the soul. . . Sir, God send you joy." These three elements, the opening and closing in the style of the letter, and the sentence just quoted are the only points to indicate that this composition is anything else than a regular essay. We should be inclined

[1] Ibid. p. 52. Note also the humorous introduction—reference t[illegible] [illegible]nability to read his friend's letter.

[2] Brydges' *Archaica* II, Pt. 6.

to say that it is much more an essay than even the so-called *Essays* written by the same author.

James Howell is one of the few early English letter-writers whose popularity has continued to our own day. His *Epistolae Ho-Elianae* are a collection of observations on the commonplaces of life, on foreign courts, languages and people, in fact on almost every topic that suggested itself to the author while he travelled from country to country. We are interested in two kinds of letters which we discover in his collection as furnishing a parallel to the essay. Reference has already been made to the letter to "Sir I. S."[1], which treats of letter-writing. "Sir", it begins, "it was a quaint difference the Ancients did put twixt a Letter and an Oration, that the one should be attird like a Woman, the other like a Man." The author then proceeds to give his opinion of what a letter should be: "Indeed we should write as we speake, and that's a true familiar Letter which expresseth on's mind as if he were discoursing with the party in succinct and short tearmes." He classifies epistles as "Narratory, Obiurgatory, Consolatory, Monitory, or Congratulatory", and explains the characteristics of each. Three elements only make this piece differ from the regular essay: the formal opening and closing, the somewhat bitter criticism of would-be "epistolizers", and the final sentence which gives the occasion of the letter. On the other hand, the subject, the length, the opening narrative sentence, the rough classification of letters and the tone of advice are all clearly essay qualities The same observations might be made of several others of the collection, for example, of the letters addressed to F. B. (p. 68) on the subject of "the Nature of Women"

Another class of letters contained in Howell's collection is that which we might designate as the "essay of information", the "essay of origins", or the "historical essay". In the letter "to the right Honourable the Lo. Cliff[ord?]"[2] the author discusses in a very learned way the subject of "drinks" in various parts of the world—Germany, Asia,

[1] *New Volume of Letters*. Lond. 1647.
[2] Ibid, pp. 132-147.

China, Africa. Following this he writes a succession of letters[1] dealing with the origin and growth of the different languages of Europe. The first[2] of this "sequence" deals with the languages of Great Britain, the second[3] with the languages of the Netherlands, Denmark, Russia, the third[4] discusses the language of the Greeks, the fourth[5] that of Rome, the fifth[6] the Romance tongues, etc. It will be seen that while these subjects are not those that we find discussed in the typical essay of our period, they are very similar to the kind of subject treated with greater learning and with much greater charm by Sir William Temple towards the end of the century, in his essays *Upon Ancient and Modern Learning* and *Upon Poetry*.

A brief examination of the Letters of Francis Osborn will show their relation to the essay. These letters deal with such subjects as duelling,[7] fame in war,[8] and the folly of trusting great men.[9] They are addressed to definite persons, and the pronoun "you" is found frequently throughout. The letter to "Mr. —— in hope to disswade him from going a Colonel under Count Mansfield",[8] is occasioned by an incident in contemporary life, yet the main discussion concerns the "Selfishness of Great men". The references are chiefly to English history rather than to the classics, but this may be accounted for by the supposition that Osborn, not being a University graduate, was not sufficiently conversant with the classics to allude to them, or else that he purposely refrained from parading scholarly learning, preferring to draw examples from modern history. In the next section we notice that Osborn was almost hopelessly confused as to the difference between the character and the essay, and here we can find no essential difference between his essays and his letters, the

[1] Ibid, pp. 147 sqq.
[2] Ibid, pp. 147–152.
[3] Ibid, pp. 153–156.
[4] Ibid, pp. 157–160 (section of book missing).
[5] Ibid, pp. 168–174.
[6] Ibid, pp. 174–180.
[7] *Works*. Vol. I, p. 153.
[8] Ibid, p. 157.
[9] Ibid. p. 162.

subject-matter, the general interest and the style being about the same in both forms.

In this section attention has, of course, been directed to letters of a particular kind, namely, those which in subject-matter and style resemble the essay as we have defined it, since our object has been to show how the literary epistle often does not differ essentially from the normal essay. No account has therefore been taken of the great number of epistles bearing on contemporary events, such as many of Howell's *Epistolae Ho-Elianae* and Sir Dudley Digge's collection in the *Compleat Ambassador*,[1] just as in the preceding chapter no account was taken of the letters of Cicero and Erasmus.

(vi) THE CHARACTER

One form of literary prose that strikingly resembles the essay in many ways is the character. Normally the character is a brief composition consisting of sententious, epigrammatic, often paradoxical sentences, describing a person or thing not as an individual but as typifying a class. The purpose is usually didactic, and the spirit in the greater number of cases is satirical. Ordinarily there is little or no development of the subject, the author's aim being to describe and define by heaping together as many compact, witty, epigrammatic sentences as the brief space at his disposal will permit. One author who writes both characters and essays says his characters differ from essays "in that they discourse not, but give you only the heads of things in general, and that so briefly, as every line is a sentence and every two a Period to avoid Superfluity in Words and Matter".[2]

I shall here quote an extract taken at random from one of the Overbury collection to illustrate what might be considered as a normal character:

"*A Puritan*.[3] Is a diseased piece of apocrypha, bind him to the bible, and he corrupts the whole text; ignorance and fat feed are his founders; his nurses,

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[1] London, 1655.

[2] Richard Flecknoe: *A Collection of the Choicest Epigrams and Essays*. Lond. 1673.

[3] *The Miscellaneous Works in Verse and Prose of Sir Thomas Overbury*. Tenth Edition, 1756, p. 119.

railing, rabbies and round breeches; his life is but a borrowed blast of wind, for between two religions as between two doors he is ever whistling. Truly whose child he is, is yet unknown, for willingly his faith allows no father, only thus far his pedigree is found,—bragger and lie flourished about a time first; his fiery zeal keeps him continually costive, which withers him into his own translation, and till he eat a school-man he is hide-bound," etc.

This is clearly not the essay style. Here we have not the arm-chair philosopher meditating in his study. For the essay, child of meditation, is not "born with teeth", as this child of Overbury's mind clearly is. Furthermore, it is not the habit of the arm-chair philosopher to "thread the labyrinths of his penetralia" in search of a fugitive letter or of one more brilliant conceit to add to the collection already amassed. On the contrary, if the epigram appears, it comes unsought, and is on that account the more welcome. Moreover, the nature of the meditation is to follow unsystematically a thread of suggested thoughts, not to search for all the possible ways of stating a few ideas. We note, further, that the author of the character concerns himself with the transient qualities of a particular class—transient in the sense that all religious dogmas are ever in a state of flux; the essayist, on the other hand, generally deals with permanent truth such as "religion", "hypocrisy", and "faith".

It would appear from the original description of the character, and from the example quoted, that apart from its length it offers few parallels to the normal essay. This in a sense is true when we consider only the normal character and the normal essay. Like other literary forms, however, the character is plastic, and it is the object of the present discussion to show how, in the hands of certain writers, it unconsciously became fused with the essay. That the writers themselves were aware of its close affinity with the latter form is evidenced by such titles as *Characters upon Essays* (Nicholas Breton); *Essays and Characters of a Prison and Prisoners* (Geoffrey Mynshul); *Microcosmography, or a Piece of the World discovered: in Essays and Characters* (John Earle); *Micrologia, Characters or Essayes of Persons, Trades and Places*[1] (M., R.).

Some of the points of difference between the essay and the character have been implied in the preceding paragraphs.

[1] 1629. See *Cam. Hist. Eng. Lit.* Vol. IV, p. 522.

In addition, it may be said that the normal character does not vary in length to the same extent as the normal essay. Occasionally we find characters containing fewer than one hundred words,[1] while compositions of this kind as long as Overbury's *Hypocrite*[2] are extremely rare. This, of course, is what we should expect from the nature of the case. Neither the ingenuity of the writer nor the assimilative power of the reader is equal to the task, on the one hand, of preparing, on the other, of digesting too prolonged a repast of wit, epigram, and paradox. The essayist, on the contrary, is not bound to observe any particular method or style, and consequently may expand his "raw and undigested" ideas to any length without necessarily wearying either himself or his reader. In fact, the development of the topic that will make the essay something more than a maxim would of necessity call for a more extended treatment than could be given within the compass of a hundred words.

From the time of Theophrastus the foibles of contemporary life form the stock-in-trade of character-writers. Though it was not until after the outbreak of the Civil War that the character was used as a weapon for political and religious controversy, references to such questions are very frequent before the year 1640. Beside the Puritan, Overbury satirizes the Jesuit[3] and Precisian,[4] and Earle has his gibe at the Papist,[5] the Brownist,[6] and the Puritan.[7] The essay, as has been observed above, deals rather with permanent inner truth, and as a consequence it is very rarely that we find references to contemporary life of any kind.

Again, the essay and the character differ in the use that was made of them after they had begun to appear as separate pamphlets. By this time, of course, the terms had lost their original significance. The character became a favourite title

[1] E.g. Overbury: *Wife with Addition of New Characters* (15th impression, Lond. 1638); *Pedant*. Earle: *Baker*.
[2] *Ca.* 1225 words.
[3] Morley, op. cit., p. 86.
[4] Ibid, p. 60.
[5] Ibid, pp. 168, 195.
[6] Ibid, p. 195.
[7] Ibid, p. 209.

for controversial pamphlets, both political and religious, after the outbreak of the Great Rebellion. On the other hand, only one essay is mentioned in the Thomason Tracts,[1] "a catalogue of Pamphlets, books and newspapers relating to the Civil War, Commonwealth and Restoration . . . 1640-1661". The explanation of this fact is simple. From its beginning the character had been used as a vehicle for satire or invective, consequently when men, white-hot over the theory of divine right or of the apostolic succession, wished to expose or attack the error of their opponents, it was natural they should choose a form whose title was a sufficient recommendation to the reading public. On the other hand, the modest word "essay", implying a "tentative effort" or "imperfect offer", is about the last title a rabid Roundhead or opinionated Cavalier would use to crush his argumentative opponent. When the essay did become a weapon of controversy its use as such was limited almost entirely to the field of literary controversy. But though they differ in the use that was made of them as pamphlets, they have this point in common, that in the case of the essay reserve and moderation frequently give way to vituperation and intolerance, just as the rapier-thrusts of Earle give place to the cudgel blows of the controversial character.[2]

As has been noted above, the purpose of the characters is ostensibly didactic—to "set the glorious gloss upon the virtuous but an ignominious mark upon the vicious".[3] The method of teaching was pedagogically sound in that it was essentially objective. The object was described so that the reader would wish to shun such conduct as would make him liable to a similar satirical handling. This objectivity frequently led the character writers into coarseness of imagery, natural in describing a person of coarse disposition. The essay presents marked differences in regard to all these elements. As has been pointed out in the first chapter, the

[1] Ed. G. K. Fortescue, 1908. *An Essay Towards a Settlement*, 1659.
[2] Cf. *An Assembly Man.* Harleian Miscellany, V, p. 98. *Character of an Oxford Incendiary.* Ibid. V, p. 497.
[3] S. Person: *An Anatomical Lecture on Man in Essays and Characters*, 1664, quoted by Prof. Greenough of Harvard University.

essays are frequently didactic, but their didacticism is usually in the form of direct or indirect advice, as, for instance, in Bacon's *Essays* and Felltham's *Resolves*. The treatment is abstract rather than concrete. The satiric spirit is almost entirely absent from the essay, and very rarely does the English essayist trespass on the borderland of impropriety.

It is when either form diverges from the norm that it begins to show similarities to the other; but even the "regular" essay bears many points of resemblance to the "regular" character. In point of length they are almost the same, the average character corresponding roughly with the short essay. In point of style it may be said that what is a constant element in the character is a variable quantity in the essay. Bacon's essays are full of epigrams, yet these are not packed so closely together that the mind is diverted from the contemplation of the subject to admiration of the author. The same observation applies to Fuller's *Holy and Profane States* and many other essays, though few essayists ever approach Bacon and Fuller in respect of judicious intermixture of epigrammatic expression and rambling meditation.

Again, in origin the essay and character have interesting parallels. As has already been shown, the essay has its prototype in classical and Biblical literature, and this is also true of the character. In the *Wisdom of Solomon*,[1] Ch. vii, we find the following:

> "For wisdom is more moving than any motion: she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore can no defiled thing fall unto her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness. And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun and above all the order of stars; being compared with the light, she is found before it. For after this cometh night: but vice shall not prevail against wisdom."

This is nothing more nor less than what Nicholas Breton would have called a "Character upon [an] Essay". Wisdom personified is described by a succession of epithets and attri-

[1] Churton, *The Uncanonical and Apocryphal Scriptures*, p. 239.

butes in a style at once terse, picturesque, and epigrammatic. Many other instances might be pointed out in the *Apocrypha*, such as the "Character of Truth", I Esdras, iv, 35-40,[1] though none is so well sustained as the example we have quoted.

Examples of the character in classical literature are found scattered through Aristotle's *Ethics*, Bk. IV, and in his *Rhetoric*, Bk. II. The character has this advantage over the essay, that whereas the latter can trace its pedigree at least as far back as Seneca and Plutarch, it did not get its distinguishing title until modern times. The former, on the other hand, can boast a name that originated with the *Characters* of Theophrastus,[2] the disciple of no less a man than the immortal Aristotle. The two forms seem to have suffered similar vicissitudes in the Dark and Middle Ages, and both experienced a glorious revival at the turn of the sixteenth century. Montaigne's collection, published in 1580 and translated into English in 1603, did the same service for the sporadically appearing essay material as Casaubon's Latin translation of Theophrastus in 1592 did for the native character material—crystallized the form, and gave it a name. Casaubon further gave the character writers a classical model to follow, and Montaigne's collection, while it defied direct imitation, was an object of emulation for later essayists.

There is yet another general way in which the character and the essay resemble one another. It has been pointed out[3] that the essay proper often appears imbedded in a longer work, as, for instance, the essay on the "Choice of Friends" in Cicero's *De Amicitia*.[4] Other instances of the sporadic essay have been noticed in the *Apocrypha* and in English prose literature. Furthermore, we sometimes find essays scattered here and there in collections of characters. As a rule, when this occurs the essay is of that peculiar type which

[1] Churton, op. cit., p. 45.
[2] Ed. R. C. Jebb, 1870.
[3] See ch. II above.
[4] Translated by Shuckburgh, pp. 173-177.

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we shall discuss below as the essay-character, but occasionally we find a real essay. A good example of this sporadic appearance is the essay on "Religion" in "J.F.'s" collection,[1] *The Times Anatomiz'd in Several Characters* (No. 29). This composition has very few of the qualities of the normal character, but, on the other hand, has many of the characteristics of the normal essay. There is but one defining sentence, and that not the first; the subject shows considerable development: religion is described, true and false religion distinguished, the impossibility of mixture in true religion pointed out, and the religion of the period described by a quotation from Erasmus.

So, too, we find characters here and there in collections of essays, and, as in the parallel case just discussed, these compositions are generally what we shall call character-essays. Feltham's intention is clearly to write a character of the "Envious Man",[2] of "Puritans",[3] and of a "Valorous Christian",[4] and in part he succeeds very well. Soon, however, the mind of the essayist asserts itself over that of the would-be character-writer, the attention ceases to be focused on the object, and gradually the descriptive definition of the character loses itself amongst the "observations" of the essay. Chapter 63 of the second Century is an instance in point.

Here and there in the midst of longer works, essays, characters, discourses, we find imbedded characters just as we found essays imbedded in works of larger scope. As we should expect, these characters have not as a rule the same definiteness at the beginning or end that we are accustomed to look for in the character belonging to collections. An "approach" is generally necessary since the subject is not boldly announced. Examples of the character under these circumstances are, the "Object of Flattery" in Cornwallis's *Essays*;[5] the "Good Draper" in Scott's *Essay of Drapery*;[6]

[1] London, 1647.
[2] *Resolves*. Ed. 1636. Cent. II, 63.
[3] Cent. I, 5.
[4] Cent. II, 13. (See below.)
[5] Essay 49.
[6] P. 3.

"A Pedant", "A Beau", "Vanity" (12 in all) in *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*[1] by Mary Astell; "An Arrogant Man", "Affected Man", and the "Gadder", in *Horae Subsecivae;*[2] "Virtue", the "Child of Virtue", and "Valor", in Tuvil's *Vade Mecum;*[3] the "Immoderate Man" and the "Parasite" in Jonson's *Timber;*[4] "Detraction", "Calumny" and a "Gossip", in Brathwait's essay on *Detraction;*[5] the character, portrait, or "Characterism" of a Pope in Osborn's *Discourse Upon the Greatness and Corruption of the Court of Rome.*[6] A few of these are normal characters, some are essay-characters, and others partake rather of the nature of the portrait. As a rule, however, whenever the writer consciously turns from his main subject to character writing, the tone, whatever it was before, becomes satirical,[7] excepting, of course, where the author is dealing with "Characters of the Good".[8]

It remains to show how these two forms often become so completely fused that one can scarcely tell whether the result is a character or an essay. We shall begin with Nicholas Breton's *Characters upon Essays, Moral and Divine.*

In his dedication to Sir Francis Bacon, Breton says: "I have read of many Essays, and a kind of Charactering of them, by such, as . . . were but imitators of your breaking the ice to their inventions."[9] Clearly he had essays in mind when he wrote this collection with its strange title. A glance at the Table of Contents shows that the subjects are the commonplace themes of essays: wisdom, learning, knowledge, peace, valour, truth, fear, etc. Another glance at the contents shows that he has treated these subjects in the style of the character. These "Characters upon Essays" are

[1] Pp. 27, 68, 60, respectively.
[2] Pp. 9, 33–47, 116–119, respectively.
[3] Pp. 1–4 and 19–22, 22–25, 172 respectively.
[4] Ed. Schelling, pp. 28, 51 respectively.
[5] *Essays upon the Five Senses: . . . with a pithy one upon Detraction . . .* Ed. Sir E. Brydges in *Archaica*, Vol. II, pp. 57–58, 61–62, 62, respectively.
[6] *Works.* Vol. I, p. 56.
[7] E.g. the characters in *Horae Subsecivae* (see above).
[8] E.g. the characters in Tuvil's *Vade Mecum* (see above).
[9] 1615. Ed. by Sir E. Brydges in *Archaica*, Vol. I, 1815.

what were before referred to as "essay-characters"—short compositions in the style of the character upon abstract themes such as are commonly the subjects of essays. In Breton's collection the subjects alone suggest the essay; to make his subjects lend themselves to character treatment, the writer usually personifies the qualities by speaking of them as "he", or "she", though frequently as "it".

To show how these essay-characters differ from the ordinary essay, two of Breton's may be examined and compared with two of Bacon's on the same subjects. Breton first defines *Truth* as "the glory of time, and the daughter of eternity", and then proceeds to cram into three sentences ten such definitions. He next speaks of her qualities: "her truth is pure gold, her time is right precious," etc. Then follows a series of statements giving us further information about this goddess, Truth. "She is honoured in love, and graced in constancy . . . ; she hath a pure eye, a plain hand, a piercing wit, and a perfect heart. . . . In sum, I will thus conclude in the wonder of her worth", and in his grand finale he uses two kinds of alliteration with the inevitable "figure of four". Bacon, in his essay *Of Truth*,[1] introduces the subject with a sentence that immediately arrests attention: "'What is Truth'? said jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer." He then proceeds to develop the subject. Some men, such as the philosophers of old and the "discoursing wits" of the present day, care not for truth. The reasons for this are the labour of finding out truth, the obligations it imposes upon the conduct, and an innate preference for lying. Yet truth is the "Sovereign good of human nature", since it is the gift of God and the only secure abiding place for men. In the sphere of "civil business" truth is universally allowed to be honourable and lying disgraceful.

When we compare these two compositions we note that Breton is extremely lavish of his witty sentences; on the other hand, that Bacon uses comparatively few epigrams or

[1] No. 1.

apophthegms, but always introduces them with telling effect. Breton personifies truth as "she", but his abstract definitions and descriptions prevent his subject from ever becoming more than an abstraction; Bacon does not personify, but speaks of truth as "it" throughout. Breton's treatment shows no development of the subject, the changes noted in the outline being merely changes in point of view for variety of statement. In Bacon's *Truth* there is a real though a somewhat rambling development of the subject. The former ends with the regulation character formula "in sum", while Bacon's essay ends as it began, with a striking quotation.

If we examine the subject of *Death* as treated by the same two writers we find similar differences of treatment. Breton personifies without creating a person; sometimes he speaks of death as "he", sometimes as "it". The development, as usual, consists of a series of epigrammatic sentences, and ends with the inevitable closing formula, "I will thus conclude". In addition to this we note that Breton makes an attempt at humour in treating a serious subject, which shows that his interest is not in the subject itself so much as in his method of presentation. Bacon, on the other hand, makes no attempt at personification, develops the subject roughly in a serious spirit, and ends with a Latin quotation.

Little more can be said of Breton's method in essay-characters. He constantly personifies, but always fails to make his subject more than a mere abstraction. He comes nearest to objectifying his treatment in *Learning*. About one-half of this composition consists of images of concrete things; but there is no real personification, as the following definitions will show: "She is the key of knowledge . . . the storehouse of understanding . . . the exercise of wit."

In the case of Breton's *Characters upon Essays* the reader would never have any doubt as to the classification: they are clearly characters with nothing of the essay about them excepting the subject. In the compositions next to be considered, however, we often have real doubt as to whether, in the writer's mind, the piece is a character or an essay.

The general plan of *Essayes and Characters of a Prison and Prisoners*[1] is an essay on some feature of prison life, followed by a character written on the same subject. For example, the *Essay of a Prison* is followed by a *Character of a Prison; Of Prisoners* followed by a *Character of a Prisoner.* The first thing to be noted is that these subjects are such as we ordinarily find in character books,[2] and suggest character rather than essay treatment. Secondly, in the majority of cases the essays are somewhat longer than the characters, and therein are in accord with the usual practice.

We shall now examine some of these essays and characters in pairs to see what, in the author's mind, was the difference between the two forms. The essay *Of Prisoners*[3] contains about 800 words. It begins with a personal note, "I could wish that everyone that comes to a prison", etc. The treatment shows a certain development of the subject: prisoners who do not deserve to be in prison are first dealt with, and then prisoners who are deservedly punished. Within each of these two subdivisions there is a kind of development. The first part consists mainly of reasons why men, unjustly imprisoned, should take comfort. In the second part, dealing with "Prisoners of another nature", the cause of their imprisonment is stated, the hopelessness of their obtaining compassion is expressed in an apostrophe, and some words "all of gall" are addressed to the prisoners in the hope of amending their conduct. Part II, which is much shorter than Part I, resembles the character in the bitterness of spirit and in the tendency to describe the prisoners' guilt in a succession of short sentences. The tone of the whole essay is serious, and, like so many of its kind, consists mostly of advice from one whose experience entitles him to give such advice.

The character, on the other hand, begins in the orthodox way with a definition, epigrammatic, alliterative, and humorous. "A prisoner is an impatient patient, lingering

[1] Geoffrey Mynshut (first printed 1618).
[2] More frequently after than before 1618.
[3] P. 17.

under the rough hands of a cruel phisitian, his creditor having cast his water knowes his disease, and hath power to cure him, but takes more pleasure to kill him." Then follows a series of comparatively short sentences describing in definition or simile various elements of a prisoner's experience. The style is objective, the spirit inclines to be humorous, and the didacticism is indirect. As we find constantly in the character, the writer's attention is centred upon his mode of expression rather than upon his ideas and feelings concerning the subject.

Turning now to the essay *Of Keepers which go abroad with Prisoners*[1] and the *Character of Keepers*,[2] we find the conditions in many respects reversed. The essay is much shorter than the character, the former containing about 230 words as against 400 words in the latter. The essay, for the most part, consists of good advice to the prisoner as to his conduct towards the keeper; the keeper is described as a knave in a spirit of bitter satire. In this respect the corresponding character differs only in referring to keepers in general, that is, it is written in the plural throughout while the other is written in the singular. The essay shows the regular character tendency to pile together a number of concrete images in order to describe the object. He is an "expectant courtier" who "faunes upon thee" as a dog fawnes upon a butcher; he is an archer who "shootes at two whites, thy person and thy purse". In neither composition can there be said to be real development of the subject, but even in this respect the character has the advantage of the essay. In the former the writer, speaking in the first person, brings forward from his own experience an instance to prove the statements he has made regarding prisoners, and about midway he drops into a conversational, narrative style. "There are aboundance of these snakes which lie lurking in this place whose chiefest felicity", etc. In short, the character rather tends towards discursiveness, the essay towards compactness in style.

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[1] P. 5.
[2] P. 56.

Here we see that Mynshul has largely lost sight of any real difference between the two forms he pretends to use. As in the case of Breton, however, the fusion of the two kinds is almost entirely in the direction of the character. The subjects are taken from contemporary life of a low type, and therefore lend themselves to satirical treatment. The spirit is that of bitter humour frequently verging upon invective; and the attitude of alootness or unimpassioned detachment which we have been accustomed to find in the normal essay is entirely absent.

We shall next consider certain characters which, since they partake more of the nature of the essay than the character, we shall call character-essays. Hall[1] has three characters in his collection which, though not in any proper sense essays, will serve to introduce this part of the subject. *Flatterers*, *The Presumptuous*, *The Ambitious*, are all introduced by sentences defining the abstract qualities of flattery, presumption, and ambition respectively. Here the real essay quality ends, since in each case the body of the composition consists of descriptions of the type of person designated by the title. The style, it is true, is not objective as in the normal character, but with the exception of *The Ambitious* there is no development of the subject. In this character there is a general unfolding of the subject inasmuch as the ambitious man is described in the various stages of his rise, but unless one were examining the piece very closely one would not suspect that it was anything else than a character.

Here we might glance for a moment at one of Bacon's essays as representing a considerable number of his collection. *Of Ambition* (No. 36) begins with a definition of the passion. At the third sentence Bacon speaks of ambitious men, and with the exception of a single sentence he discusses such men to the end of the essay. This, of course, is what we expect from Bacon. It is not his practical nature to soar aloft amongst nebulous ideas. Hence he accepts ambitious

[1] Joseph Hall: *Characters of Virtues and Vices in Two Books*. 1608.

men as a fact, examines their motives, sees the possibilities for good in these motives, and advises his Prince so to direct the ambition of his subjects that while satisfying their desire for advancement, his own position will be made more secure. One does not hesitate to call this piece an essay. The ideas involved in ambition are unfolded; the treatment, it is true, is objective, but the use of the plural instead of the singular tends to dissipate the attention, so that the mind is not permitted to remain fixed upon one person as typical of a class.

Another essay *Of Ambition*, contained in *Horae Subsecivae*,[1] bears some resemblance to Bacon's essay. It begins in the manner of the characters thus: "*Of Ambition.* It is an unlimited desire, never satisfied. A continuall proiecting without stop. An undefatigable search of those things wee wish for, though want not. No contentment in a present state, though fortunate, and prosperous." The next paragraph begins the discussion of the ambitious man, who is described as being "in a kinde of continuall perambulation . . . "; then follows for about two pages a general character of ambitious men with advice to princes to avoid persons of this disposition, to refuse them employment "as pernicious and incendiary". At page 13 the author turns again to make observations on the abstract quality, but throughout the essay most of the discussion deals with ambitious men. As in the case of Bacon's essay, the attention is not focused upon a particular class by a succession of compact, descriptive and definitive sentences in the style of the character. On the contrary, the style is very diffuse. The composition rambles along through about 2500 words in a conversational way with an occasional Latin quotation and here and there an illustration from classical antiquity—altogether in the manner of the essay. On the other hand, the closing like the opening paragraph recalls the character. "To conclude, men that have good aymes and ends in aspiring, are not so expressely Votaries to the Publique", etc. In short, while

[1] P. 11.

one has no hesitation in calling the composition an essay, it has a sufficient number of the qualities of the character to justify our calling it a character-essay.

Owen Felltham has several character-essays scattered through his *Resolves.* Taking one as an example, *What a vertuous Man is like, in the puritie of a Righteous Life,*[1] we find that it begins in the manner of a character. Such a man is said to be "a Light-house set by the Sea-side, whereby the Mariners both saile aright, and avoid danger". His attributes are described or defined in successive sentences—his good carriage, example, glorious memory, happiness, and his mighty deeds. This suggests to the author the other kind of man "who hath lived lewdly and dies without repentance". He apostrophizes this "monster", showing him the magnitude of his sins. But this apostrophe takes the attention from the subject of the piece, and leads naturally to the concluding "Resolve". Thus is destroyed the impressions made by the character elements—the style of the first part, the voice of the reformer crying out against sin, and references to "such as have beene the inventors of unlawfull Games and Callings that are now in use".

Amongst the characters of John Stephens is one *A Friend.*[2] The real subject of the piece, however, is rather "The Relationship between Friends", or simply, "Friendship".[3] The character qualities of the composition are a succession of sentences, each of which makes a statement about the elements of friendship, and a predominating tendency to speak of the man who embodies or illustrates these elements. While there is no real development of the subject as we have it in Bacon, nevertheless certain phases of the relationship are briefly noticed. For example: "His honour is true love: which being so, hee loues because he *will not*, and not because he *cannot* alter: That man *cannot alter*, who cannot with honesty disclaime affection; as being tyed with dotage or fauours above merit and requitall: But friends

[1] Bk. II, 24. Ed. 1636, p. 351.
[2] Bk. II, 22, p. 401.
[3] See also Earle's *Acquaintance* for a similar character-essay.

will not which signifies that their loue depends vpon approbation of the naked man. A Friend therefore must be freely chosen, not painfully created." This is not very elaborate development of the subject, but it shows that the writer is not solely concerned with making unconnected witty or sententious assertions about friendship. It shows further that while he speaks of "a friend" and "friends", his eye is not fixed on any object, but, on the contrary, that his mind is given rein to speculate upon the permanent inner truth implied in the title. Even where successive sentences attribute this and that quality to a friend, the effect of the character style is dissipated by the intervention of considerable explanatory material separating the sentences. Little or nothing can be inferred from the absence of the satiric spirit, since the nature of the subject practically demands a favorable attitude on the part of the writer, and moreover, it is not Stephens' method to take any half-way position; either the object of his attention is all right or it is all wrong. Furthermore, the piece abounds in the personal element we generally associate with the essay; many passages, in fact, remind one of Emerson's treatment of the same subject. The composition is therefore a character-essay with the essay characteristics so preponderating that, notwithstanding the subject and the collection in which it occurs, one is inclined to call it an essay without reservation.

It is an unalloyed pleasure to turn from the reading of orthodox character books to the perusal of Thomas Fuller's *Holy* and *Profane States*.[1] The pleasure is largely due to the subordination of the character elements in these sketches to the essay treatment. That Fuller was aware of the general essay quality of the compositions in his book is shown in the preface *To the Reader*: "As for the matter of this Book, therein I am resident on my Profession. . . . For curious method, expect none, Essays for the most part not being placed as at a Feast, but placing themselves as at an Ordi-

[1] *The Holy State*, 1642. Bound with *The Historie of the Holy Warre*, 1640. See also incomplete edition by Rev. Alex. Young, D.D., in *The Library of Old English Prose Writers*, Vol. I, 1831.

nary." The characters of the *Profane State*, as we should expect since they deal with types of bad people, show more of the elements that essentially belong to the character than the pieces in the *Holy State*. As our purpose here, however, is to show the fusion of the essay and the character, we shall consider only the latter collection.

The pieces composing the *Holy State* have many of the elements which justify their being called characters. The subjects are regular character-titles: "The Good Wife", "The Good Servant", "The True Church Antiquary", "The Ambassador", "The Good Sea-Captain", etc. Almost without exception they begin in the way we have been accustomed to find in Earle, Overbury and the rest: "*The Good Parent.* He beginneth his care for his children at their birth"; "*The Good Child.* He reverenceth the person of his parent . . .", etc. A collection of these descriptive sentences which appear at the opening of the successive paragraphs would form something very much like a normal character. Thus the *Character of the Good Servant* would read:

"He is one that out of conscience serves God in his master, and so hath the principle of obedience in himself. He doth not dispute his masters lawfull will, but doeth it. He loves to go about his busines with cheerfulness. He dispatcheth his business with quicknes and expedition. He disposeth not of his masters goods without his privity or consent: no, not in the smallest matters. His answers to his master are true, direct, and dutiful. Just correction he bears patiently, and unjust he takes cheerfully. Because charity is so cold, his industry is the hotter to provide something for himself, whereby he may be maintained in his old age."

In such a character one misses the balance and epigram one expects to find in a composition bearing this title; yet the paragraphs formed by expanding these topic sentences show a wealth of the "curious method" disclaimed by Fuller.

On the other hand, these characters have many of the elements of the essay. Not only is there development within the paragraphs themselves, but there is a conscious development of the subject throughout the whole piece. *The Constant Virgin* is a good illustration. The topic sentences of the first four paragraphs show her attitude towards the single and married state, and her reasons for choosing the former. The next two speak of her conversation—her preference for

silence as against bold discourse, and her blush of shame at the wanton discourse of others. This leads the writer to consider the subject of blushing in three paragraphs. The next paragraph comments on the wisdom of her taking no vow against marriage, and the composition fittingly closes with observations on her life and death. Again, in the opening sentence of *The True Gentleman* Fuller plainly states the plan he proposes to follow thus: "We will consider him in his birth, breeding and behavior", and proceeds in the following paragraphs to describe the true gentleman under these headings.

The style of the *Holy State* suggests the essay rather than the character. Apart altogether from the appended "lives", the separate pieces abound in anecdote from classical literature, Biblical story, church and contemporary secular history, and are enlivened by many a witticism. "The Good Widow", for instance, "though going abroad sometimes about her business . . . never makes it her business to go abroad." Such observations are not of such frequent occurrence that they fail to strike with pleasant surprise, and moreover, they do not give the impression that the author has tortured his wit to produce an epigram.

Finally, the personal element is fairly prominent in the *Holy State*, as in the following instance from *The Good Child*: "He observes his [father's] lawful commands and practiceth his precepts with all obedience. I cannot therefore excuse St. Barbara from undutifulness, and occasioning her own death. The matter was this . . ." Again, in *The Virtuous Lady*: "We read how a daughter of the Duke of Exeter invented a brake or cruel rack to torment people withal, to which purpose it was long reserved, and often used in the Tower of London, and commonly called (was it not fit so pretty a babe should bear her mother's name?) the Duke of Exeter's Daughter. Methinks the finding out of a salve to ease poor people in pain had borne better proportion to her ladyship, than to have been the inventor of instruments of cruelty." The personal element does not appear so much in the use of the pronoun "I" as in the conversational tone of passages like these which reveal the kindly soul of the writer.

In the compositions we have so far considered, the elements of essay and character have been mingled in varying proportions. In the pieces now to be examined the character is all but completely submerged in the essay.

Richard Flecknoe's portrait of the author[1] illustrates how close may be the connection between the portrait and character, on the one hand, and the personal essay[2] on the other. This piece is in the form of a letter, "To the Lady . . . " presumably written in answer to a request to write a portrait of himself. Unlike the essayists, he very modestly speaks of himself in the third person and thereby emphasizes the egotism he seeks to conceal. In a "portrait" of about 1500 words he describes his physical appearance rather briefly, and then proceeds to discover his "interior". His memory, he says, is poor, therefore he "must shoot flying"; he writes better than he speaks, his mind is neither very good nor very bad; he hates business, shuns the high ways of the vulgar and the by-ways of religion; he "loves all things chearful, splendious, and noble, and hates Sectaries most of all because they are otherwise". Thus in the most candid fashion he writes of himself, finally leaving off lest he be thought to make an apology rather than a portrait, and to write his life rather than his character or disposition. With the exception of the scheme of using the third person in order to speak more frankly, there is no striking difference between this so-called portrait and Cowley's essay "Of Myself", or many of Montaigne's pieces. Yet we must note this general difference, that whereas it is a habit of Montaigne to speak of himself, Flecknoe does not ordinarily intrude his personality into his work. The result is that the egotism which pleases in the one case, because natural and unaffected, rather obtrudes itself upon us as a foreign and therefore somewhat distasteful element in the other.

[1] *Heroick Portraits with other Miscellaneous Pieces.* Lond. 1660.

[2] Two other characters of Flecknoe's that partake of the nature of the essay are "Of Raillerie" in *Enigmaticall Characters all taken to the Life* (Lond. 1658), and "Old Age" in *A Collection of the Choicest Epigrams and Characters.* Lond. 1673.

Francis Osborn has received in this treatise an amount of attention quite incommensurate with his importance as a writer, because his compositions show points of contact between various forms related to the essay. Two of his pieces, *A Character of Honour* and *Valour and Cowardice*, under the general title of "Characters"[1] are almost pure essays. In the former the only suggestion of the character-treatment is a single defining sentence about the middle of the piece, a tendency to paradox (not unknown to the essay), a certain cynicism of tone inseparable from the paradoxical treatment of the subject, and a distant reference to the religious controversies of the day.

On the other hand, the abstract subject of "Honour", discussed in 1200 words (*ca.*), is considerably developed in a haphazard way. The treatment is abstract rather than objective, yet the piece does not lack the concrete illustrations we are accustomed to find in the essay. While the personal element is not prominent it is not entirely wanting: "I never thought it Prudence or Discretion, to articulate over severely on the want of Modes I have had the Good, or Ill Fortu[n]e to be Born and Bred under. . . ." The style is extremely obscure. The sentences for the most part are long, without any attempt at balance, alliteration or euphuism, and while throughout the composition occasional epigram is not lacking, the treatment of the topic is far removed from the succession of sharply epigrammatic statements we find in the ordinary character.

Most of the qualities present in the character of "Honour" are also to be found in the following character of "Valour and Cowardice". While numerically the character elements seem on paper almost to counterbalance the essay qualities, one comes from the reading of these two pieces with the impression that they are not characters at all but rather paradoxical essays. The only element which makes us hesitate to call them essays is a prevailing cynicism of tone not ordinarily associated with the dispassionate essay.

[1] *Works.* Vol. II. *Characters and Letters*, etc.

Thus two forms which normally differ essentially in subject, method and spirit merge into one another. It is probable that the obscurity of style noticed in the works of Osborn is merely an indication of an obscurity of thought which is responsible for his failure to distinguish between the two forms. When, however, we consider the fusion of the character and essay in the hands of other men more skilled than Osborn in the use of English prose, we are inclined to suspect that by the middle of the seventeenth century there was a general confusion between the "anatomies", "characters" and "essays" of virtue, valour, honour, wealth and the like, and that there was a growing tendency to apply these titles indiscriminately to what Breton would probably have called "characters upon essays".

(vii) THE ANATOMY

Under this heading we do not mean to treat longer works like Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, but only four short pieces published in a volume whose title-page reads as follows: "Cottoni Posthuma: Divers Choice Pieces of that Renowned Antiquary, Sir Robert Cotton. . . . By F. H. Esq; London, 1651." The pieces referred to have their own title-pages: "Valour Anatomized in a Fancie: By Sir Philip Sidney, 1581. London, printed in the year 1651" (p. 321), and "Sir Francis Walsingham's Anatomizing of Honesty, Ambition and Fortitude. Written in the year 1590. London, printed in the year 1651" (p. 329).

The term "anatomy" evidently signifies an analysis of the quality indicated in the title, as well as of the personality of the individual pursuing it. The first of the pieces, "Valour Anatomized in a Fancie", has all the earmarks of the essay. It opens with a sententious, epigrammatic observation: "Valour towards Men is an Emblem of Ability, toward Women a good quality signifying a better"; it wanders along in the most desultory manner, discussing the privileges valour gives men, its advantages over clothes and wit in winning ladies' favour, and the distinction between false

and true valour. There are two references to the classics, and the style is throughout sententious and epigrammatic. In fact, there is just a little too much aphorism for the normal essay. The author's evident concern about his style makes one suspect that he is trying to imitate a writer like Earle rather than Montaigne. In short, the composition is a character-essay with the essay qualities so strongly predominating that a casual reader would not suspect it to be anything else than an essay.[1]

The pieces ascribed to Sir Francis Walsingham are not essentially different from the former. At the beginning of "Honesty", the first of the series, the author inserts a general introduction in which he speaks of the haphazard arrangement of the thoughts. One sentence is significant as showing his intentions of writing a whole series of similar pieces. "Somewhat I am resolved to write, of some Virtues, and some Vices, and some indifferent things." The three "Anatomies" of honesty, ambition, and fortitude (the last perhaps unfinished) show a general development of the subjects in language aphoristic and epigrammatic, without being enlivened or explained by quotations or illustrations. The character tone of the pieces is therefore somewhat more in evidence than in "Valour", though here again the fact must be

[1] This piece has a curious history. In the eleventh edition (not available) of Over[illegible]'s *Characters*, 1622, there appeared an "Essay of Valour", which is doubt[illegible] same as the piece bearing the same title in the 16th edition of Overb[illegible] *[illegible]fe with Additions of New Characters.* (See Morley's *Character Writin[illegible] Seventeenth Century*, pp. 100-103.) The beginning of this composition is [illegible] from the "Anatomy". "I am of opinion that nothing is so potent either to procure or merit Love, as Valour . . . To speak of it in its selfe, it is a quality which he that hath, shall have least need of," etc . . . For about 280 words we have a "Character of Valour" which does not occur in the piece ascribed to Sidney. From the words "Nothing is more behovefull for that sex" to the end, it is identical with the "Anatomy" of the *Cottoni Posthuma.* Again, in *Juvenilia or Certain Paradoxes and Problems written by John Donne*, edited in 1652 by his son, the "Essay" appears exactly as in the Overbury collection with the exception of two words. (The *Dict. Nat. Biog.* states that the second edition of the *Juvenilia* appeared in 1633.) Without the inserted character, the piece, of course, reads much more like an essay. The "Anatomy" contains less than 1000 words; the essay with the character, about 1225 words. With regard to this piece, I have communicated with Prof. Feuillerat of the University of Rennes, who is now preparing an edition of Sir Philip Sidney's works. It is his opinion that the style is not that of Sidney, though of course the date on the title-page may be correct.

emphasized that the casual reader would not suspect these compositions to be anything more or less than essays.

If the authorship and dates of these pieces were authentic, we should have included them as prototypes of the essay —nay, even quoted them as instances to prove that the essay actually existed in English literature several years before Bacon's first edition appeared. Notwithstanding the title-pages, however, and the fact that Sidney's and Walsingham's names appear at the end of the respective "Anatomies", the *Dictionary of National Biography* says of the first that it is "doubtfully assigned to Sidney", and makes no mention of the second amongst the writings of the great English diplomat. We are forced, therefore, to consider these merely as allied forms which appeared in the year 1651.

CONCLUSION

To analyse, classify and otherwise discuss works of such a general character as philosophic reflections on virtue, humility, arrogance, riches and the like—the most natural subjects in the world for a man with a speculative turn of mind to write about in his commonplace book—may perhaps seem a futile task. But the reader should remember that, as has been pointed out in the chapter on Prototypes, both ancient and mediaeval men of letters cultivated this kind of writing as a distinct form of literature. It did not get a name of its own until Montaigne's collection appeared towards the end of the sixteenth century, but after Bacon's first edition in 1597 the word *Essays* on the title-page of a volume had a tolerably definite meaning for English readers.

Various forms, such as the meditation, the character, and the letter, originally had, or in process of time developed, many points of similarity to the essay, so that we sometimes find these terms used as alternative titles. In the third chapter of this study an attempt has been made to seize the essential differences between these forms and the essay as well as to show how they often merged with the latter; and if this part of the discussion has accomplished its purpose

we should now be able to use freely such terms as "character", "aphorism", "meditation", etc., in describing and classifying the work of the seventeenth century essayists.

A final word to justify what may still seem to some our arbitrary application of the term. Let us take a glance at the field of literature enclosed by the general title "essay". A full discussion of English essays would have to deal with three main divisions of the subject. In the first place, it would have to take account of the periodical essay of the eighteenth century, which really carries on the old tradition of Montaigne, Bacon, and Cowley, with this general difference, that Steele, Addison, and Goldsmith playfully satirize contemporary life, whereas their seventeenth century predecessors as a rule talk in a dispassionate way of abstract truth. In the second place, it would have to take account of the "pamphlet" essay, such as the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, the ancestor of the review essay of Carlyle, Macaulay, and Arnold, the *Essays and Reviews* by the opponents of the Oxford movement, and the scientific essays of Huxley. Finally, it would have to deal with books of essays resembling those of Bacon and Cornwallis, which continued to appear sporadically in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus is opened to our view a field of literature that includes contributions on almost every conceivable subject. The impossibility of adequately treating within the limits of a short study matter so extensive is sufficient justification for limiting our discussion to compositions of which the essays of Bacon and Cowley are the best type in English,—essays in the original sense of the term.

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